

MIRCEA THE ELDER, RULER OF WALLACHIA, DIPLOMAT AND MILITARY LEADER

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Abstract: *The author of the article, based on the information provided by several historical sources (Ottoman, Bulgarian and Serbian chronicles), as well as the interpretations formulated in some researches (articles, written works, etc.) of the historians, and not only, over time, tries to bring to the readers' attention the approach of diplomacy and a military expedition of the Wallachia ruler, Mircea the Elder, beyond the northern border of the Ottoman Empire, located on the southern shore of the Danube River.*

The article is a research, on some events from the time of Mircea's reign, between 1389-1394, without claiming of trying to clarify details which are not yet known, even if the research will not be in agreement with some of the historical researchers.

Keywords: *Ottoman campaigns; Wallachia; Akinci; robbery raids; the expedition of Mircea the Elders' army.*

Introduction

Romanian and foreign historians paid a lot of attention to the diplomacy promoted by a state ruler, but with emphasis on the way he understood and acted to defend his country against the dangers represented by the will of Great Powers to occupy thereof. This is why we will deal with some aspects of the relationships of Mircea the Elder, ruler of Wallachia between 1386 – 1418 (*figure no.1*), with his neighbors and the Ottoman Empire, but also with a less known expedition against ottomans, for which expedition a great interest and diversity of opinions exist. The ruler was and will remain in our history and the world's as a brilliant diplomat, as well as a great military leader, through the way he faced the Ottoman danger and more.

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1. External politics of Ruler Mircea the Elder.

Mircea, in its 32 years reign over Wallachia, managed to survive due to an agile mix of diplomacy and war. He was a skilled diplomat, both in relationship with Hungary and Poland, countries with which he made alliances to fight against Ottoman expansion, but also to protect his country against the interference of these two in his internal affairs.

In 1389, Mircea concluded an alliance with the ruler Petru Mușat of Moldavia¹, through which he will manage, in the same year, to conclude an alliance with King Vladislav II of Poland, directed against Sigismund of Luxembourg, in case the latter would have started a war with one of the two countries. The treaty between the Polish king and the Romanian ruler was concluded from equal positions, as between two sovereigns.

After the defeat, capture and death of Sultan Bayezid I by Timur Lenk, following the Battle of Ankara in 1402, the Ottoman danger was removed for a while. In this situation, the ruler Mircea will be involved, for quite a long time, in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire, especially in the fights between the pretenders to the throne,² managing to effectively prevent Ottoman expansion to the north of the Danube and becoming a prominent figure of the Christians fight in the Balkans.

In 1406, after the meeting in Severin, in which King Sigismund demanded from Mircea the citadel of Licostomo (Chilia Veche)³ the relationship between Hungary and Wallachia get worse. To counter an eventual military campaign of Hungarian King, the Wallachian Ruler renews the treaty with Poland in 1410.

With the kings / tzars south of Danube and with the Ruler of Transylvania, the Ruler of Wallachia had good neighboring relationships, bringing them into the anti-ottoman alliances.⁴

¹ Mihai Manea, Adrian Pascu, Bogdan Teodorescu, *Istoria Românilor din cele mai vechi timpuri până la revoluția din 1821*, Ed. Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 1997, p. 231.

² Nicolae Iorga, *Studiile istorice asupra Chilie și Cetății-Albe*, PDF, București, Institutul de Arte Grafice Carol Göbl, 1900, p. 66-69, disponibil la <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nico...>, accesat la 10.01.2020

³ Petre P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân*, Ediția a II-a, Editura Corint, 2000, p.38.

⁴ Nicolae Iorga, *Op. cit.*, p. 67.

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Figure no.1. Wallachia in the times of Mircea the Elder⁵

2.Expedition of Mircea the Elder to Karînovași

Some of this ruler's military campaigns are not known or little known due to the lack of records from chroniclers of those times, and those in the archives of former great empires, whose troops trampled the land of our forerunners, are difficult to discover or have many inaccuracies.

There is often talk of an expedition of Mircea the Elder against an Ottoman camp on the territory of Bulgaria, and the opinions of historians are contradictory. The expedition in debate of historians is the one from 1393, according to some historians, and 1394, after others, to Karînovași.

To understand the necessity of this expedition for Mircea the Elder, it is necessary to briefly examine the historical context of the times in which the event happened.

⁵ User:Anonimu, disponibil la File:Tara Rumaneasca map.png, <https://ro.wikipedia.org/wik>, accesat la 11.01.2020.

After the Battle of Kosovopolje (Kosovo) in July 15th, 1389, when the anti-ottoman coalition is defeated, Bayezid I starts a campaign between 1391 - 1392, (figure no. 2) dismantles the Tsardom of Vidin, occupies the citadels of the southern Danube shore, establishing the northern border of Ottoman Empire on the river.



Figure no.2. Danube Citadels before the ottoman campaign 1391 -1392⁶

Amongst the occupied citadels there was Silistra, as well as the southern part of Dobrotitsa's territory (Dobruja of that time had a different configuration compared to today, A.N.), that being under the rule of Mircea even since 1388 (figure no.3).⁷

⁶ T. Yılmaz Oztuna, *Başlangıcından Zamanımıza Kadar, Türkiye Tarihi*, 3 Cilt, Hayat Kitapları, IV. I.Sultan Murad Bakanlar I Fethediyor (1354-1389), p. 62, PDF, disponibili la http://turuz.com/storage/Turkologi-2-2019/6964-3Türkiye_Tarixi-3-Yılmaz_Oztuna-1964-284.pdf, accesat la 12.01.2020.

⁷ Nicolae Iorga, *Op. cit.*, p. 64 - 65.

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Figure nr. 3. Despotate of Dobruja in 1370⁸

In the autumn of 1391, an Ottoman army corps, led by a pasha (Firuz-bei) crosses the river and, for the first time in history, undertakes robbery raids on the territory of Wallachia, returning with countless loot and riches.⁷ Through these incursions, ordered by Bayezid I, no economic objectives were targeted, but rather political and military objectives, the Sultan seeking to diminish the voivode Mircea's active role he had assumed in undermining the Empire's expansion plan.⁸

Because in the south of the Danube, the voivode Mircea the Elder can no longer have allies in the fight against the Turks, to stop their expansion to central Europe, and Hungary and Poland sought to extend their influence over Wallachia, wanting to rule the Danube branches, realizes that these incursions are nothing more than a warning of the Empire for the next stage of the conquests and consequently, the conquest of Wallachia.

⁸ Istoria Dobrogei, disponibilă la https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Istoria_Dobrogei, accesată la 12.01.2020.

After the campaign of 1391-1392, Bayezid leaves an army corps (Akinci*) in Bulgaria and begins preparations for the campaign of conquest in northwestern Anatolia against the Emir of Castemuni.⁹

Given that a large part of the Ottoman army is no longer present in the south of the river, Mircea decides to attack the remaining Akinci corps.

3. What do the sources and historians say about this expedition

The great historian Nicolae Iorga, in the paper “*Studiile istorice asupra Chilie și Cetății-Albe*”, recalls an expedition in year 1393, of the great ruler, as a response to the Sultan Bayezid’s military campaign of 1391-1392.

„The next year (1393), „the provocation of Mircea follows, taking advantage of the Sultan absence, who was busy with preparations of battle against the emir of Castemuni. Although he promised tribute, he crosses the Danube and loots the « Cadin planes» or Cariuovasis.”¹⁰ The same source tells us that Bayezid answers, crossing the river in Wallachia, through Nikopol. The Little Nikopol is occupied, the ruler being chased until Arges. Here, he chooses a strong position that Bayezid does not dare to attack... During this campaign, the battle of October 10th, 1394, at Rovine, took place, in which Mircea was victorious, but as Tepeș in 1462,* and Michael in 1595,** he could not make use of that victory and had to retreat in the mountains, towards.¹¹

The historian Constantin C. Giurescu, in *Istoria Românilor*, describes the expedition of Mircea the Elder in the southern Danube,

⁹ T. Yılmaz Oztuna, Başlangıcından Zamanımıza Kadar, Türkiye Tarihi, 3 Cilt, Hayat Kitapları, IV. I.Sultan Murad Bakanlar,I Fethediyor (1354-1389), V. Ildirim Sultan Bayezid Anadolu Birliği,ni Gerçekleştiriyor, pp. 71-72, PDF, disponibil la http://turuz.com/storage/Turkologi-2-2019/6964-3Türkiye_Tarixi-3-Yılmaz_Oztuna-1964-284.pdf, accesat la 14.01.2020.

¹⁰ Nicolae Iorga, *Op. cit.*, p.65.

* Bătălia de la Tîrgoviște (16/17 iunie 1462) denumită și *Atacul de noapte*, cea mai importantă confruntare între domnul Țării Românești, Vlad Țepeș (1456 – 1462) și sultanul Mahomed II (1444 – 1446, 1451 – 1481).

** Bătălia de la Călugăreni (12/13 august 1595) și Marele vizir Sinan Pașa (1569 – 1596).

*** Precizarea cronologică este a cronicarului Sa'adeddin.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

showing that, ...in 1390*** the ottomans operated in the Bulgarian tsardom of Vidin. In 1391, «Firuz-bei, as well, leaving Vidin pashalik and crossing Danube, made an incursion into Wallachian lands that were ahead and then brought all kinds of spoils to the Sultan's court. These unmeasurable riches and spoils**** were used for charity settlements»...tells Saadeddin. It was an expedition of testing and warning. An ottoman attempt to occupy Silistra by surprise is failing. Mircea reacts and attacks the ottoman garrisons in the area of Karinovasî (Kavarna after some opinions); chroniclers admit, significantly, that the voivod return in Wallachia, «after sending some Muslims in martyrs world and some in slavery» (Mehmet Neşri) *****.¹²

The historian Petre P. Panaitescu, in the paper *Mircea cel Bătrân*, shows that in the year 1391, „...From Vidin Firuz decides to cross Danube into Wallachia; predatory herds on swift horses passed like lightning through Romanian villages, taking slaves and fortunes and returning as fast as they had come.”¹³

In the year 1393, after the fall of Bulgaria and conquest of citadel of Silistra, taking advantage of absence of Bayezid from the Danube, „Mircea sent his soldiers across the River in Dobruja. The chronicle admits that the ruler's armies devastated the land called Carinovasin, in which one may probably see Cavarna, after the medieval name Cavurna, meaning the southern Dobruja. Silistra was not retaken, but a great number of Muslims were killed or taken and transported across Danube in slavery in Wallachia. The Turkish chronicle* describes this event as a disaster.”¹⁴

***Cronicarii otomani folosesc frecvent adjectivele și calificativele pentru a sublinia succesele Porții, ca și pentru a ponegi pe adversari.

**** După Saadeddin atacul lui Mircea a avut loc tot în 1391; datările din cronicile otomane sunt, nu o dată, aproximative.

¹² Constantin C. Giurescu, Dinu C. Giurescu, *Istoria Românilor*, vol.2, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1976, p. 71.

¹³ Apud Petre P.Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân*, p. 236, [www. Dacoromanica.ro](http://www.Dacoromanica.ro), pdf., disponibil la www.academia.edu, accesat la 14.01.2020.

* Leunclavius, *Historiae Musulmanae turcorum de monumentis ipsorum es scriptae libri XVIII*, Frankfurt, 1591, col. 319-320, și Neşri, trd. Noldke, *Op.cit.*, XV, p. 338-339.

The historian Tahsin Gemil, in the work entitled *Românii și Otomanii în secolele XIV-XVI*, shows that Sultan Bayezid I, after the battle of Kosovo in 1389, ordered the first crossing of the Danube by Ottoman troops.

During these expeditions, one of the viziers, namely Firuz bey, conquered Vidin with the Akinci troops and undertook actions to plunder many towns in Wallachia, returning with a very rich prey and numerous slaves.

In the spring of 1391, Bayezid was in the ottoman campaign to conquer north-western Anatolia, more precisely the emirate of Kastamonu - Sinop.¹⁵

As an answer to these expeditions, there is the..., *brave attack of Mircea the Elder** against the Akinci base of Karînovasî, ...action that had as result the destruction thereof.*¹⁶

Aurel Decei, historian specialized in the history of Near East, and mostly ottoman civilization, in the paper *Expediția lui Mircea cel Bătrân împotriva acîngiilor de la Karînovasî (1393), în Relații româno – orientale*, researching the ottoman chronicles related to Mircea's expedition against the Akinci corps in Karînovasî, states that voivod Mircea attacked swiftly in the year of 1393, „without being able though to have a closer identification”¹⁷. The author returns and tries to identify the place where the Akinci corps was annihilated, using linguistic arguments. As a result of this analysis, he identified Karînovasî as being Karinâbâd or Karnabad, a small

¹⁴ Petre p. Panaitescu, *Op. cit.*, p. 240.

¹⁵ Apud, Tahsin Gemil, *Op.cit.*, p. 98 – 100.

** Mustafa Ali Mehmet, în *Cronici turcești privind Țările Române*, vol. 1, 1966, p. 39, face referire la incursiunea lui Mircea la Karnovasî, fără a preciza, din punct de vedere geografic, locul unde se află și numărul oștenilor ce s-au înfruntat.

¹⁶ Tahsin Gemil, *Op.cit.*, p. 103 -105, citat din cronica lui Neşri, ed. Fr. Taeschner, I, p. 85-86.

¹⁷ Aurel Decei, *Expediția lui Mircea cel Bătrân împotriva acîngiilor de la Karînovasî (1393)*, în *Relații româno – orientale*, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1978, p. 153.

town south of the Balkan Mountains, which Bulgarians call today Karnobat.¹⁸

The historian Andrei Pogăciaș, in the article *Războaiele lui Mircea cel Bătrân*, states that, according to the Ottoman chronicles, immediately after the victory in Kosovo in June 1389, the Ottoman army, under the command of Vizier Firuz Bei, after conquering Vidin, dismantled the Bulgarian Tsar of Tarnovo (1393) and took possession of the cities of Nikopol, Silistra, Ruse and probably, Turnu, crossed the Danube in Wallachia, making robbery incursions and returning with very rich prey and numerous slaves.

Taking advantage of the situation in which Sultan Bayezid was in Anatolia with the entire army, the voivode Mircea will carry out the "famous but ignored attack on the base of the Akinci from Karînovasî, most likely the current city of Karnobat, south of the Balkan Mountains." ¹⁹

Professor Ionel-Claudiu Dumitrescu proposes another scenario showing that, "The Akinci troops forced the Danube in 1394, after the annihilation of the Bulgarian tsardom, and began the primitive accumulation of goods through robbery ... leading to the decrease of the economic and military potential of Wallachia. Voivod Mircea plans and executes an expedition ... in the depths of the enemy territory ... with only the participation of the mobile cavalry units* (figure no. 4),...managing the

¹⁸ Aurel Decei, *Istoria Imperiului otoman până la 1656*, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1978, p. 62.

¹⁹ Andrei Pogăciaș, „Războaiele lui Mircea cel Bătrân”, *Historia*, disponibil la <https://www.historia.ro> › general › articol › razboaiele-lui-mircea-cel-batran, accesat la 15.01.2020.

* Andrei Pogăciaș, *Op.cit.*, „grosul armatei muntene era format din cavalerie, împărțită în cavalerie ușoară – arcași călare – și cavalerie grea dotată cu armuri, cămăși de zale, coifuri, lănci, aceasta fiind formată din boieri și probabil mercenari străini.” disponibil la <https://www.historia.ro> › general › articol › razboaiele-lui-mircea-cel-batran, accesat la 12.01.2020.

total surprise and double circling in a hollow ... ” 20 called Karînovasî, destroying the fearsome troops of Akinci.



Figure no. 4. Cavalry of the smaller army of Voivod Mircea the Elder.²¹

4. How can one explain (how was possible) the expedition of Mircea in the hypothesis formulated by historians?

Analyzing the statements made by historians, based on the information in various chronicles, it is proved that the expedition of Mircea the Elder against *Akinci**, south of Danube, took place.

The year of expedition is most probably 1393**, after the conquest of Vidin, dissolution of the Bulgarian Tsardom of Târnovo and taking under

²⁰ Prof. Ionel-Claudiu Dumitrescu, „Bătălia de la Karînovasî rămâne cea mai mare victorie românească din punct de vedere al caracteristicilor teoretice”, *Historia*, <https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/batalia-de-la-karinovasi-o-batalie-poate-mai-importanta-decat-cea-de-la-rovine-pentru-mircea-cel-batran>, accesat la 15.01.2020.

²¹ Andrei Pogăciaș, *Op.cit*, disponibil la <https://www.historia.ro> > general > articol > razboaiele-lui-mircea-cel-batran, accesat la 15.01.2020.

* denumită în cronicile vremii corp, bază, pâcuri, garnizoane de achingii.

** după unii autori în anul 1392, iar după alții 1394 sau chiar 1395.

possession the citadels of Nikopol, Silistra, Ruse and probably Turnu, when the robbery incursions of Akinci could affect the military and economic potential of Wallachia.

The locality where the Akinci were and where Mircea's cavalry attacked is Karînovasî, indicated by all sources, but which most historians place south of the Balkan Mountains (figure no. 5), in the current Bulgarian city of Karnobat, located at a distance 450 km from the capital of Wallachia, Curtea de Argeş. This identification is made for the first time by the historian Aurel Decei, using linguistic arguments ... *He formulates the hypothesis that Karînovasî is formed by «ova» meaning «field, camp, valley» and «âbâd» in Farsi meaning «inhabited, cultivated, productive place»*²². Thus, looking for Karînovasî at south of the Balkan Mountains, he identifies it with the name of today's Bulgarian town Karnobat, located 350 km from Curtea de Argeş, the capital of Wallachia.

But there are also historians (Constantin C. Giurescu, Petre P. Panaitescu) who think that Karînovasî could be Kavarna east of Balchik, i.e. today's city of Varna, located on the Black Sea coast, located on the territory of Bulgaria, 350 km from Curtea de Argeş.

²² Wikipedia, Karînovasî, disponibil la <https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kar...>, accesat la 16.01.2020.

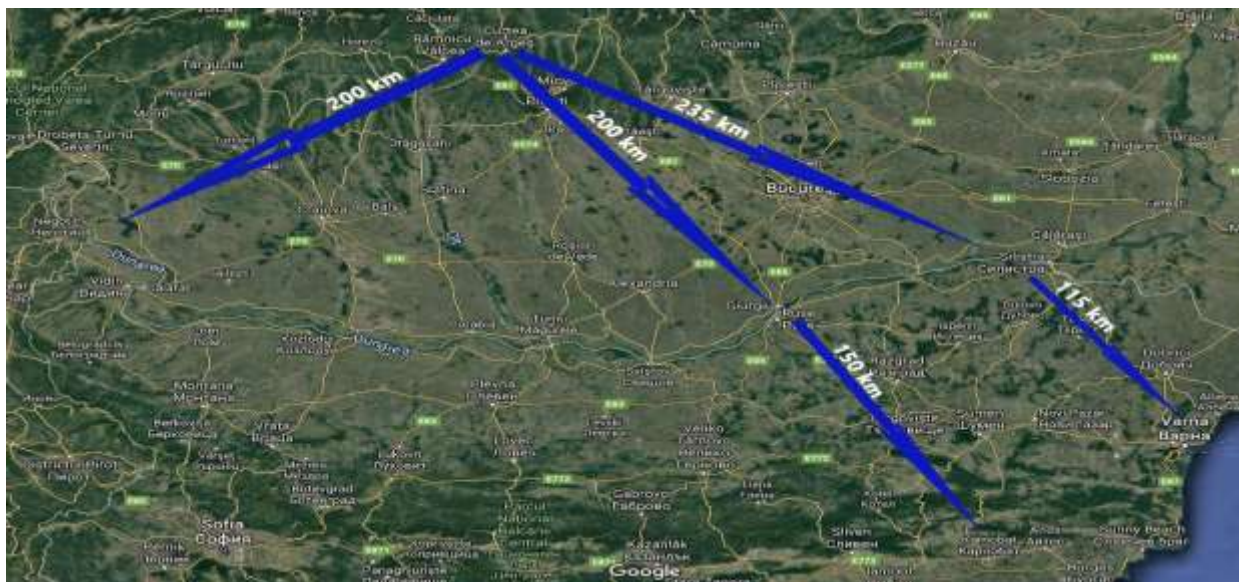


Figure no. 5. Karînovasî and its position in different geographical areas

Another localization of Karînovasî name and place is done by the **French philologist of Romanian origin Emil Turdeanu**, who thinks that *...,in Turkish Karînovasî means «field of Karina»*²³. To identify this place, Nicolae Iorga proposed the *field of Cadin or Cariuovasis*. So he is convinced that *"the name Karina is a transcription of the Serbian name of the Krajina region that stretches along the right bank of the Danube from Derdap to the mouth of the Timoc, meaning «the Krajina Plain»,*²⁴ located in Serbia, about 200 km away from Curtea de Argeş.

How did Mircea the Elder manage to execute this expedition?

Let us analyze the scenarios formulated by historians.

The historian Andrei Pogăciac says that *„It is to assume that Mircea had spies in the Balkans, who reported that the Rumelia army is in campaign in Anatolia with Bayezid.*

²³ Emile Turdeanu, Les luttes des roumains pour l'indépendance. La défense du Danube, du XIV au XVIe siècles, *Rumanian Studies*, pp.10 – 11, disponibil la <https://books.google.ro> > books, accesat la 15.01.2020.

²⁴ Ibidem.

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„ The raid, the route of which is unknown, was made with a large army, «moving like the Nile and captivating like a torrent», «frightening like clouds», and «fast like a torrent», as the Ottoman chronicler Kemal Pasha Zade writes in his chronicle. Once Danube was crossed, the Wallachian troops began to burn and destroy all the localities along the way, divided into several groups, all heading towards Karînovasî. Mircea destroyed and plundered the city and its surroundings, killing many Muslims and taking many prisoners... According to other Ottoman chroniclers, the attack was carried out at the request of Anatolian emirs to lift the pressure on their states. The plot worked, Bayezid returning urgently to Rumelia, to punish the Wallachian, who had attacked at a very short distance from the capital Edirne (between the two cities are, in a straight line, about 200 km). At the same time, Bayezid wanted to secure its northern flank, given that from the east of Anatolia, also called by the Emirates hostile to Bayezid, the great army of the powerful Timur Lenk was approaching.”²⁵

Professor Ionel-Claudiu Dumitrescu proposes another scenario showing that this „ ... takes into account the main events precisely dated and a rigorous corroboration of Christian documents with the Ottoman ones ... The campaign was correctly planned, with the participation only of the mobile cavalry units, managed to achieve total surprise and double encirclement in a hollow...

It was well known that the Ottomans preferred to retreat in winter at the end of October, on Saint Dumitru, to avoid frostbite and the loss of horses accustomed to dry frosts. Voivod Mircea the Elder had to let the enemies enjoy the prey taken, to feel safe, to consider the leader of Kara Eflak a coward. The wasp had to calm down. It is possible to rely on the development of the holy holiday of Christmas. The appearance of extreme weather phenomena (frost and blizzard) may have strengthened the belief of

²⁵ Andrei Pogăciaș, „Războaiele lui Mircea cel Bătrân”, *Historia*, disponibil la <https://www.historia.ro> › general › articol › razboaiele-lui-mircea-cel-batran, accesat la 12.01.2020.

the soldiers in complete safety. The distance from Wallachia could also be added and everything seemed perfect for a pleasant winter, spent in the family after rich catches at the expense of non-believers.*

I consider that the Wallachian troops left after January 6, 1395, after the Epiphany, crossed the Danube on an ice bridge and slipped to Karínovasî on two itineraries. The roads known with help from the merchants were crossed at a rapid pace and the surprise was total. The short days, a gloomy atmosphere or snowfall hid the march of the cavalry. The assault on the settlements in the hollow was quick from two directions, the Ottoman chroniclers being forced to recognize the massive losses among the dreaded cavalries. The lack of exact chronological data in the Ottoman chronicles does not allow us a precise date, but the battle was certain before March 7, 1395, that is, by the signing of the treaty of alliance in Brasov with the king of Hungary.²⁶

Is this kind of scenario even possible?

Let us analyze in turn the probable stages of the journey of Voivode Mircea and his army of knights.

The river was frozen and Mircea's cavalry, with unknown number of soldiers, crossed the Danube on an ice bridge. Everything is possible because it is winter and in difficult weather conditions: night darkness, low visibility due to fog, gloomy weather or snowfall, the army can slip unnoticed, through several places of passage, in a territory controlled by the Ottomans who also ruled the fortresses on the southern bank of the river. What if the river was not frozen? Also in this case one could go through the existing fords at night, because... *the two shores of Danube were closely connected by a network of fords*²⁷. *The fords across Danube were the island of Lopatna (near Brăila), Oraşul de Floci, Dârstor, Giurgiu, Şiştova,*

* Pedestraş din armata neregulată a Imperiului Otoman.

²⁶ Prof. Ionel-Claudiu Dumitrescu, „Bătălia de la Karínovasî rămâne cea mai mare victorie românească din punct de vedere al caracteristicilor teoretice”, *Historia*, <https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/batalia-de-la-karinovasi-o-batalie-poate-mai-importanta-decat-cea-de-la-rovine-pentru-mircea-cel-batran>, accesat la 12.01.2020.

²⁷ Coman Marian, *Putere și teritoriu. Țara Românească medievală (secolele IV-XVI)*, cap.1, subcap.1.4, concluzii, Editura Polirom, 2016, disponibil pe books.google.ro > books, accesat la 15.01.2020.

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*Nicopole, Țimbru and Calafat-Vidin (essential point in the trade with Ragusa).*²⁸

So, the Akinci, again with unknown number of fighters*, were south of Balkan Mountains, in the hollow of Karnobat for wintering, while in Bulgaria in winter time, with blizzard, the short days had limited visibility, a gloomy atmosphere and with snowfall in passes, the roads were not watched by ottomans, so the march of the horse riders remained out of sight.

The climate north of the Balkan Mountains is similar to that of Wallachia, while in the south, in the Karnobat hollow, it was probably similar to that of our times, i.e. a temperate climate with Mediterranean influence, where winters are cold, with temperatures between +5 and - 4 ° C, with gloomy days and rare snowfall, proper for the camping of the Akinci.

Let us even admit that Voivode Mircea benefited from the support of some spies, who would have helped him in moving the light cavalry army in the depths of the Bulgarian territory.

Under these conditions, Mircea's army (cavalry) could travel on two routes, on a distance from the Danube to Karnobat of about 150 km in a straight line, which means more than 250 km on horseback. The duration of the movement of Voivode Mircea's army is difficult to precisely estimate due to the season. Under normal weather conditions, between March and November, according to historical sources, for a horse and rider in a saddle, in a light trot, it was 6 km / h, for 8 hours a day²⁹, so up to 48 km/day, but not in winter times.

The two probable itineraries, after exiting the Balkan Mountains, could be used for a double encirclement, entrapment, and destruction of the Akinci in the Karnobat Hollow. The itineraries were probably the roads of the merchants who traded from Adrianople (EdİRne) to Country of BİRsa and

²⁸ Petre P. Panaitescu, *Mircea cel BİRtrân*, ediția a II-a, Editura Corint, București, 2000, p. 123-124.

* cronicile, cĂ sunt otomane, bulgare sa sĂrbe, nu dau informații despre numĂrul luptĂtorilor ce s-au Ănfruntat.

²⁹ Possible distance travelled by horse over 6 weeks?, disponibil la worldbuilding.stackexchange.com › questions, - Worldbuilding, accesat la 18.01.2020.

vice versa, and who entered through the eastern passes of the Balkan Mountains from Karnobat to Wallachia. These could be, after crossing the Danube, towards Karnobat, one: through the cities of Razgrad, Shumen, the Smeadova pass - Prilep, Lazarevo, Vălcin, Karnobat, and the other through Razgrad, Tărgoviște, the Vărbița pass - Bernovo, Singurlare, Karnobat.

Traveling on the two itineraries on the Bulgarian territory to reach Karnobat, territory occupied by the Turks, raises questions about: duration of travel, how to do it, coordination on the two itineraries, resting places and providing food for soldiers and their horses, how to equip riders and horses for travel and combat, moving in the two probably snowy passes in the Balkan Mountains. It is also stated that the movement probably took place over two months and that the voivode Mircea devastated the Ottoman garrisons in his way, and the Akinci would not have found out, being known that the Ottoman garrisons in the cities had traveling pigeons at their disposal to inform the sultan, pigeons that could send messages at a distance of 160 km in a day³⁰. Is it possible that Mircea was absent for such a long period? It is known that in Wallachia the betrayal of the boyars was a common custom and it would be possible to take advantage of his absence to enthrone another ruler, as will happen later, after the battle of on Argeș.

It is hard to offer satisfactory answers to these questions, while the historical sources do not tell anything on the matter.

The argument as to why the Akinci were south of the Balkan Mountains in the Karinovasi Hollow (climate, soldiers' clothing, and Muslim customs*), seems plausible and probably align to those times.

Once in the Karinovasi Hollow, the voivode's army could perform a double encircling maneuver to destroy the Akinci there.

³⁰ Babur Rashidzada, *I Am Timour, World Conqueror: Autobiography of a 14th Century Central Asian Ruler*, Editura - Dog Ear Publishing, 2009, p.459, cap.1, *Toward Rume, and Battle with Ildarm Bayazid*, „La o ora dupa ce am primit mesajul lui Bayazid Ildarm, un porumbel calator a adus vestea că Tugul, Emirul din Maghnesia, s-a revoltat”, disponibil la <https://books.google.ro/books?id=KfwFEEhgdsUC&pg=PA459>, accesat la 20.01.2020.

* „Turcii otomani erau o populație ce locuia pe un teritoriu cu o climă mediteraneeană și submediteraneeană, obișnuți mai mult cu verile călduroase decât cu iernile geroase și cu multă zăpadă. Mai mult, vestimentația otomană era formată în general din țesături subțiri specifice Asiei Mici, nu din blănuri ...”, argumentația este preluată dintr-un articol disponibil la ro.wikipedia.org despre *Bătălia de la Rovine (17 mai 1395)* și pe: www.historia.ro; en.wikipedia.org, accesat la 23.01.2020.

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The complexity of the expedition makes us wonder how it was possible, although it is certain that it was carried out and, as a result, it led Sultan Bayezid to interrupt his campaign in Anatolia to undertake a military campaign to punish the audacity of voivode Mircea and to conquest of Wallachia.

The historian *Petre P. Panaitescu* formulates another scenario, in which he states that, in 1393, the voivode Mircea crossed the Danube with his soldiers in Dobruja trying to reconquer Silistra, then, failing to do so, he continued his march to the southeast destroying the land called Carinvasin, probably the town of Cavurna, located on the shores of the Black Sea, destroying a large number of Muslims.

This scenario also presents many unknowns: in what season was the expedition executed and how long did it last; how many soldiers did the army of voivode Mircea count; where did they pass the river and on which route did they travel; what Akinci unit was at Cavurna and what was the number of Ottoman fighters.

On the territory of Wallachia, Mircea's army could move on several itineraries crossing the river through the existing fords or maybe with the help of ships or other means of passage. After the unsuccessful reconquest of the Silistra fortress, Mircea's army probably moved southeast to Carvuna, a town identified as the city of Varna today.

From Silistra the army probably moved on an itinerary to Dobrich, and from there to Carvuna on two itineraries, on a distance, in a straight line of more than 115 km, which meant almost 140 km on horseback, in a flat land that alternates with some insignificant level differences and that could be covered in a few days.

The climate in this area is close to that in the south-east of Wallachia and, consequently, it did not pose any particular problems regarding the distance covered by the Muntenian army, even in winter.

However, in this scenario the Ottoman forces camped south of the Danube, in the Cavurna area, could be alerted and, consequently, the Akinci could be prepared for a confrontation with the army of Voivode Mircea, but the Ottoman, Bulgarian and Serbian chronicles report that the Akinci were surprised and destroyed.

In the scenario formulated by Emil Turdeanu, the historian feels that according to the linguistic argument, the expedition of the voivode Mircea the Elder would have taken place in the plain located between the mouth of the river Timoc, the cities of Negotin, Derdap, and Prahova, i.e. in the plain of Krajina, on the territory of Serbia.

The historian wonders how Mircea could have made an expedition south of the Balkan Mountains, to Karnobat, at such a great distance from Wallachia, especially since he was entering an Ottoman occupation territory and should have faced a confrontation with one of the most feared Turkish army corps. What interest could Mircea have in venturing so far from his country, already threatened by the fall of Bulgaria and Dobrogea?

The historian argues that from the same plain, in 1391, the Akinci of Firuz bei left, in their robbery incursions into Wallachia, and therefore also from here Mircea the Elder could attack without recklessly moving away from his bases to both defend the borders and in an attempt to help his relative Sracimir of Vidin.

The unexpected attack in the southwest of Wallachia also explains the absence of Mircea de la Silistra in the southeast of the country and its fall in 1393, when the Ottomans had left a local garrison, as well as the haste with which Sultan Bayezid Ilderim organized the campaign of punishment against Wallachia in 1394 - 1395.³¹

This scenario also has its unknowns as follows: in what season was the expedition of the voivode's army; were the Akinci really here; how was it possible to surprise them when they were so close to the territory of Wallachia; on which route did Mircea's army travel and where did it cross the Danube.

We do not know exactly in what season the expedition was executed, nor under what weather conditions.

Were the Akinci camped there and what was their number? To the first part of the confusion the answer can be affirmative because, the Krajina Plain, with Derdap city, represented an area and a strategic crossroads of land and water roads, which led north and south of the Danube and which

³¹ Emile Turdeanu, *Les luttes des roumains pour l'indépendance. La défense du Danube, du XIV au XVIe siècles*, *Rumanian Studies*, pp.10 – 11, disponibil la <https://books.google.ro> > books, accesat la 24.01.2020.

allowed the Ottomans to control the area and move with the opportunity to defend the northern border of the Ottoman Empire, as well as to undertake robbery raids on the territory of Wallachia. The second part of the question cannot be answered, nor an assumption made, as there is no information to that effect.

Why would Sultan Bayezid I have left the Akinci there? Precisely for the reason shown, as well as to supervise a possible action of Voivod Mircea south of the river.

The climate of the region and, in particular, of the plain where the Akinci would have been located, was temperate continental with Mediterranean influences, which allowed them to winter, without encountering great climatic difficulties.

The motivation for Mircea's action could have been that shown by the historian, as well as for the fact that the Akinci units represented a potential danger for Wallachia.

The movement of Mircea's army on the territory of Wallachia, covered mostly on the direction of the river from Curtea de Argeş, could be done on horseback, on several routes, without the problems of providing food for soldiers and horses and without being able to be observed on the Serbian bank of the Danube.

The crossing of the river, if it were winter, could be done on ice or, during the other seasons, through the existing fords.

However, the attack on the Ottoman force in that plain could only be carried out at night and only using an appropriate tactic, such as that of the previous scenarios.

Conclusions

During the period when Mircea the Elder was the ruler of Wallachia, under his authority, its territory reached the largest extent in its history. This could only be achieved by strengthening his authority and good centralized organization.

A skilled diplomat, Mircea understood the need for a Christian coalition against the Ottoman Empire, to limit its expansion to central Europe and, consequently, to ensure the independence of the country.

The voivode's military campaigns, directed mainly against the Ottomans, took place south and west along the Danube, understanding, like no other ruler, that the best defense is beyond the country's borders, so as not to give the ottomans the opportunity to trample the land of his ancestors.

Therefore, Mircea's expedition, beyond the Danube River, is part of the logic of his strategy to defend Wallachia.

We can see that the problem of dating Mircea's expedition from 1393, is part of the logic of the Ottoman conquest of the cities on the southern bank of the Danube, the southern part of Dobruja and Silistra, when the voivode understands the actual danger of expanding this great power.

Certainly, the surprising expedition beyond the Danube of Mircea's army took place, the chronicles of the time record it, but without giving details on how he executed it. And, who knows, maybe one day, a chronicle will bring in the light of day, edifying notes on how he executed this unique expedition.



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