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Vlad the Impaler, the Truth Behind the Myth: His Youth and Fight Against the Ottoman Empire

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Abstract

Vlad Țepeș “the Impaler” is the most famous figure of the Romanian Middle Ages. Sadly, his world fame is due to Bram Stoker’s 1897 novel. For over 120 years, imagination proved to be stronger for the public at large than historical truth. We do not wish to get into an argument regarding the myth of the cruel, bloodthirsty or even vampiric prince. It is neither the place nor our role to venture onto such moving sands. What we have been concerned with is the openness with which Romanian specialists have dealt with this hero of the Middle Ages, whom they have thoroughly explored. Still, the enthusiasm and willingness to turn Vlad the Impaler into a hero, into a man of moral probity beyond his epoch, have made historians treat the first part of his life tersely and even insufficiently interpret aspects of his glorious moments, i.e. the confrontations with the Ottoman Empire. His period is therefore a puzzle whose pieces must still be arranged. That is what we are going to do in this study, namely to bring forward some additional facts of his tumultuous existence by reviewing some of the most important hypotheses issued in historiography and by permanently relating to the foreign context of his policy.

Keywords: Vlad Țepeș, peregrination, Transylvania, Ottoman Empire, Hungary, tribute, sultan’s campaign.

1. Youth years and his peregrinations (1431-1456)

Who was Vlad the Impaler? That is a question which still needs many answers. Historians have tended to support the theory according to which he was the second legitimate son of the voivode Vlad Dracul and his lady, Anastasia, one of the daughters of the Moldavian Prince Alexander the Good.¹ However, legend, taken as such by some specialised writings, has it that Vlad was in fact the offspring resulted from Vlad Dracul’s affair with a noblewoman from Transylvania and came into the world in the city of Sighișoara, in the late 1431 or the beginning of the next year. We should note the birth date, which cannot be doubted, hence we consider that folk tradition tried to find in Transylvania a common ground, an anti-Ottoman battlefield for three emblematic figures of Romanian history, whose lives intertwine within the space bounded by the Carpathians: John Hunyadi (voivode of Transylvania, governor of Hungary, captain general of Hungarian armies), Vlad the Impaler and Stephen the Great (ruler of Moldavia).

¹ Virgil Ciocâltan, *Între sultan și Împărat: Vlad Dracul la 1438*, in *Revista de Istorie*, XXIX, 1976, nr. 11, p. 1782.

Despite this somewhat idyllic history, the first part of Vlad the Impaler's life was not easy. His father, Vlad Dracul, had carried out a hesitant policy. A Christian, Vlad Dracul had been crowned at Nuremberg by Sigismund of Luxembourg, the Roman-German Emperor,² but once he became a ruler of Wallachia, he was forced to renounce his convictions. The Turkish force exerted tremendous pressure on the Wallachian state, which had become a transit area for the Ottoman armies on their way to Transylvania and Hungary.

The Wallachian ruler's political oscillations caused anger at Adrianople, so, in 1442,³ Vlad Dracul was forced to leave his two minor sons, Vlad and Radu, as hostages of the Turks, in the fortress of Eğrigöz, identified on an arid plateau in the Anatolian Mountains.⁴ The exile was actually a genuine prison from which there were no chances of escaping. There are no clear data about these years in the life of the young princely offspring. In terms of historical logic and considering the subsequent course of events, we may assume that here Vlad the Impaler, aged 11-12, learnt the Turkish language, acquired military and political knowledge and was trained to be used as a strong claimant to the throne of Wallachia.

The events involving his family, the Basarab family, were to bring him to the forefront of Romanian politics sooner than expected. His father's closeness to the Ottoman Empire hastened his removal from the Wallachian throne. The plan was set up by the mighty governor of Hungary, John Hunyadi, who broke into Wallachia leading a powerful army and ordered the decapitation of Vlad Dracul and his firstborn, Mircea, in December 1447.⁵ Late Wallachian chronicles would mention the terrible tortures they had been put through when the older brother of Vlad the Impaler had been buried alive.⁶

About half a year after these events, against the background of the great defeat suffered at Kosovo Polje by the Christian army led by John Hunyadi himself, Sultan Murad II decided to appoint Vlad the Impaler as the head of the Wallachian country. The memoirs of the Serbian janissary Constantin of Ostrovitsa include some of the conditions of this appointment: comity and yearly presence in the capital of the Empire to pay the tribute.⁷

Surprisingly, the Ottoman Empire would passively accept the removal of its protégé two months later. The specialised literature would advance the idea that Vladislav II, the former prince, reoccupied the throne with some help from Moldavia. This theory was supported by a paragraph of the Byzantine chronicler Laonikos Chalkokondyles, which mentioned that an envoy had been sent to the Prince of Moldavia, Peter II, to negotiate peace and alliance by marriage.⁸ It is hard to accept that such negotiations were carried out overnight, so we do not exclude the assumption that Vladislav II may have been re-enthroned with the tacit consent of the Ottoman Porte.

Just as unexpectedly, during his short reign from October to November of 1448, young Vlad had had time to send a letter to Transylvania announcing he would make peace with John

² Constantin Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică a domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova. a 1324-1881, I Secolele XIV-XVI*, Editura Enciclopedică, București, 2001, p. 92.

³ Virgil Ciocâltan, *Între sultan și împărat...*, p. 1781.

⁴ Raymond T. Mc Nally, *În Anatolia pe urmele viitorului voievod*, in *Magazin Istoric*, XVIII, 1984, nr. 10, p. 51.

⁵ I. Thuroczî, *Chronica Hungarorum*, în *Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum*, ed. I. G. Schwandtner, Viena, 1746, p. 259.

⁶ *Letopisețul Cantacuzinesc. Istoria Țării Românești*, Editura Academiei, București, 1960, p. 4, 205,

⁷ *Călători străini despre țările române*, vol. I, cared by M. Holban, Editura Academiei, București, 1968, p. 125-126.

⁸ Laonic Chalcocondil, *Expuneri istorice*, translated by V. Grecu, Editura Academiei, București, 1958, p. 65.

Hunyadi after his return from the anti-Ottoman campaign.⁹ The document puts a different light on the lack of Turkish support Vlad would feel after losing the throne, once he returned to the capital of the Empire, Adrianople.

Under the shelter of the imperial court, the wandering prince intended to wait for the right moment to regain power. The lack of a reaction from the sultan strengthens the idea of a conjunctural understanding with the new voivode of Wallachia, Vladislav II.

Vlad's option of leaving the Ottoman Empire points to the fact that his life must have been in danger. In fact, the wish of Prince Vladislav II to rid of a young pretender, who had already ascended to the throne and benefited from the Turks' favours, is perfectly explainable in the spirit of the age.

The former prince deemed the best decision to take was to go to Moldavia. The presence of the ex-voivode in Moldavia remains one of the most mysterious stages of his peregrinations that lasted almost eight years (1448-1456). The chronology of events seems uncertain due to the lack of documentary information that should clarify the political circumstances in which the young princely claimant was involved.

Admitting that Vlad the Impaler went straight to Moldavia, in the early 1449, he would find the minor Alexander the Young, who was under the protection of Poland, on the throne. Alexander, barely 11 years of age when he had ascended to the throne of Moldavia, had no ability to manage the country's affairs that were in the hands of the boyars of the Princely Council. With their assistance, Vlad must have obtained the consent to stay in Moldavia. Most of these boyars had Polish sympathies and it is but natural to think that he was received and accepted rather as a former protégé of the Ottoman power with which the Kingdom of Poland was in peaceful relations.

The appointment of Bogdan II as a ruler, at the end of 1449, with military aid from Transylvania, did not change the situation of the former prince of the Wallachian state. The support granted by Bogdan II, a Christian prince, was argued starting from the existence of some kinship, as Vlad may have been his maternal nephew.¹⁰

Besides, Wallachia had been the shelter of the current ruler of Moldavia in his youth years full of danger, at the very court of Prince Vlad Dracul.¹¹ The return of this favour remains a hypothesis to consider.

Moldavia's rapport with Hungary and the anti-Ottoman front is reaffirmed by means of two alliance treaties concluded with John Hunyadi, in the early 1450, amid intense Polish military actions aiming to re-enthroned Alexander the Young.

The struggles for preserving the Moldavian throne proved difficult, with Poland's claimant managing to occupy the capital, Suceava, temporarily, while Bogdan II would retain control of some part of Moldavia including the city of Roman. Most likely, Stephen, the ruler's son, the future prince Stephen the Great, took part in the armed confrontations, especially since he would use the experience gained in the decisive battle of Crasna, 6 September 1450, decades later, in another famous clash with the Poles: the battle of the Cosmin Forest, on 26 October 1497.¹² The good relationships between Vlad the Impaler and Stephen during the peregrinations following the year 1451 may prompt us to believe that the former participated actively in the Moldavian-Polish

⁹ C. Șerban, *Relațiile lui Vlad Țepeș cu Transilvania și Ungaria*, in *Revista de Istorie*, tom. 29, nr. 11, 1976, p. 1701-1702.

¹⁰ Nicolae Stoicescu, *Vlad Țepeș*, Ed. Academiei, București, 1976, p. 33.

¹¹ Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria lui Ștefan cel Mare povestită neamului românesc*, București, 1904, p. 43.

¹² C. Rezachevici, *Cronologia critică...*, p. 517.

fighters. During his detention years, he had become skilled at handling weapons, which was of much use to a ruler like Bogdan II, who was almost always on the battlefield.

After only one year of respite, the former voivode of Wallachia was again put in a dangerous situation. On the night of 15-16 October 1451, Bogdan II fell victim to a plot and was assassinated at Răuseni. The shock must have been all the greater since the murder had been planned by a less known pretender, Peter, also supported by the Poles through the former Prince Alexander, with whom he was supposed to share the power. Vlad the Impaler was in danger for the first time since his arrival in Moldavia. The fidelity towards the dead prince created a barrier between the new power and his claims.

The transformations that Moldavia was experiencing prompted Vlad to leave these places with young Stephen, heading for the south of Transylvania.¹³ The evolution of relationships between the great powers in the area was not favourable either. The conclusion of the Treaty of Adrianople, on 20 November 1451, between the Ottoman Empire and Hungary was holding back Vlad the Impaler's plans, consolidating the position of the prince of Wallachia, Vladislav II.

Due to the deft policy of maintaining the balance between the two forces, the Wallachian state would secure significant guarantees following the signing of the 3 years' armistice. Wallachia would pay tribute to the Porte, while the other two states would guarantee Vladislav II his reign and non-involvement in domestic affairs.

To Vlad the Impaler, the situation seemed hopeless. Maybe that is why he went for the extreme solution: attack Wallachia and seize power. The information emerges from a document sent by John Hunyadi to the Transylvanian city of Braşov, on 6 February 1452, in which he demanded that the former prince be sent back to Moldavia and not be granted military support, because he was trying to stand against Vladislav II without his knowledge and will.¹⁴ Such an action would put Hungary and the Turkish-Hungarian treaty in a delicate position. If the document of 6 February hinted about a return to Moldavia of the Wallachian claimant, John Hunyadi's next letter, of 30 March 1452, sheds more light on this case.¹⁵ In it, the voivode of Transylvania would announce the heads of Braşov that Vlad had returned to Moldavia.

His coming back to Moldavia, viewed in terms of these two documents, is indubitable. The situation here was tense following the power struggles between Alexander the Young and Peter Aron. Obviously, at the time of his return, the power was in the hands of the former, for it is hard to accept that Peter Aron would have agreed to provide shelter to the ex-ruler of Wallachia.¹⁶

His stay in Moldavia must have been short. The conflict between Hungary and Wallachia caused by the monetary reform introduced by Vladislav II, in the autumn of 1452, by which the Wallachian ducat was assimilated to the Turkish akçe, completely changed the situation of the former voivode. The return of Vlad the Impaler to Transylvania must have occurred in the context of this rupture, therefore in the late summer of 1452.

¹³ Leon Şimanschi, *O cumpănă a copilăriei lui Ştefan cel Mare: Reuseeni, 15 octombrie 1451*, in vol. *Ştefan cel Mare și Sfânt-Portret în istorie*, Editura "Muşatinii", Putna, 2003, p. 45.

¹⁴ *Documenta Romaniae Historica, D, Relatiile dintre Țările Române*, vol. I (1222-1456), volume create by Ştefan Pascu, Constantin Cihodaru., Konrad G. Gundisch, Damaschin Mioc, Viorica Pervain, Editura Academiei R.S.R., Bucureşti, 1977, 424.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 425.

¹⁶ Şerban Papacostea, *Cu privire la geneza și răspândirea povestirilor scrise despre faptele lui Vlad Țepeș*, in *Evul mediu românesc*, Ed. Corint, Bucureşti, 2001, p. 119.

Prince Vlad arrived in Transylvania under the wing of the great protector of Christian Europe, John Hunyadi and it was only a matter of time before the captain of the Hungarian army sent him to rule Wallachia.

What today may seem a paradox was commonplace in those days. Vlad the Impaler accepted the protection and support of the man who had actually had his father and brother killed. Furthermore, we have reasons to believe that his anti-Ottoman policy, so praised during his second reign, relied on the principles instilled by the very person who had proved, on the battlefield, that Turkish armies were not invincible.

Here, in Transylvania, John Hunyadi, Vlad the Impaler and Stephen the Great would helplessly watch the fall of the Byzantine Empire and each in his own way would draw the necessary lessons from this great defeat of Christianity. John Hunyadi understood that only a general mobilisation of Christian forces could stop the Ottoman colossus that was heading for the centre of Europe; Vlad the Impaler realised that power came from the inside and only a consolidated country might have been able to withstand the Turks; and Stephen the Great was aware that diplomacy should come first in the relationships with the greatest power of south-eastern Europe.

It is equally clear that an action plan was worked out in order to strengthen the anti-Ottoman front on the Danube by appointing two princes, who had not been under the influence of the crescent moon empire, as rulers of Romanian countries. Amid the campaign for the defence of the city of Belgrade, John Hunyadi would not forget to place a small Transylvanian army corps at Vlad the Impaler's service in order to penetrate into Wallachia and dethrone Vladislav II.

2. Vlad the Impaler and foreign policy directions in his second rule (1456-1462)

So, at the age of 25, after a journey that seemed endless, Vlad the Impaler ascended to the throne of Wallachia again – a reign which would make him famous all throughout Europe and would bring him, as it becomes those who write history, the laurels of glory and the bitter taste of defeat.

Seizing power did not mean the onset of the anti-Ottoman policy. The situation of Christianity was still delicate despite the victory of Belgrade and there were signs that the Ottoman Empire, under the reign of Mehmed II, would become the most powerful state in this part of Europe.

However, Wallachia was meant to be the last outpost of Christianity on the Danube front and, in order for that to happen, Vlad the Impaler realised that a good internal organisation was needed. This programme included some measures to increase trade efficiency by establishing stricter relationships with the main commercial centres of Transylvania, Braşov and Sibiu, alongside of tough measures taken against the boyars that seemed to support a policy of understanding with the Turks. Feudal justice was to be enforced by the prince by means of a practice that was to bring him fame, although it was quite spread in mediaeval Europe, i.e. impaling.

The policy of Sultan Mehmed II after the failure at Belgrade did not avoid the Black Sea basin and the Romanian space. As early as 1454, a fleet had been sent to the Black Sea to establish a trade blockade, with the expected results: the capitulation of Moldavia, the other Romanian state, and of the Genoese colony of Caffa. The pressure was doubled by Poland's moving the centre of its political focus from the Black Sea towards the Baltic Sea, following the claims

made in the area by the Teutonic Order. This movement meant that Poland's anti-Ottoman policy became a closed chapter.¹⁷

The difficult international conjuncture made Vlad the Impaler take firm actions with a view to consolidating the anti-Ottoman front. On 6 September 1456, the Wallachian ruler concluded a vassal treaty with King Ladislaus of Hungary.¹⁸ The formal nature and the proclaimed fear of the Turkish threat reveal the rush in which the document was signed. In the face of the ever-increasing Turkish pressure, Vlad the Impaler needed security guarantees that could be provided, in that political context, only by the traditional ally: the Kingdom of Hungary.

This aspect can be noticed in the letter sent to the chiefs of the powerful city of Braşov, on 10 September 1456, in which Vlad the Impaler drew attention to the Ottoman legations that had come to Wallachia in an attempt to obtain the neutrality of the Wallachian state with a view to initiating plundering actions in Transylvania.¹⁹ However inconsistent Turkish initiatives were for the moment, the Wallachian state was not on such a strong foreign position as to ignore these signals and adopt a trenchant attitude.

The Wallachian country policy, in relation to the Ottoman Empire and Hungary, had been duplicitous for almost a decade and the abandonment of this system promoted by the former voivode Vladislav II could only be achieved gradually.

Wallachia accepted the Ottoman suzerainty through the regular payment of tribute, as revealed by the chronicle of the Serbian janissary Constantin of Ostrovitsa. Here it is mentioned that the son of Dracula came two years in a row to the emperor's court to bring the tribute. After simple calculations, taking into account that in 1459 Wallachia was to postpone the payment of contributions,²⁰ it follows that 1457 and 1458 were the years when Vlad the Impaler presented himself at Adrianople.

The acceptance of Turkish vassalage deteriorated the relationships with Hungary that wished Wallachia's position had been one of open hostility in its affairs with the High Porte. One of the first testimonies of the state of tension between the two countries is the document of 17 December 1456 in which King Ladislaus V demanded Braşov to help the pretender Dan seize the Wallachian throne, as Vlad the Impaler had broken his promises made to Hungary. The Hungarian king's attitude can also be analysed in the light of Vlad the Impaler's having renounced a firm anti-Ottoman policy, especially since Hungary was increasingly pressed by western powers to re-open hostilities with the Turks.

During this time, Vlad the Impaler resolutely went through all the stages needed to organise the country in order to start an open conflict with the Ottoman Empire, for he was sure that at the moment of the decisive confrontation no domestic disturbance should happen.

The first turning point occurred in 1459, when Wallachia ceased to pay tribute to the Ottoman Empire. The action was not sudden and did not entail reprisals from the Turks as a result of the negotiations initiated by Vlad the Impaler.

The first proofs in this respect come from 1460, when there was an exchange of messages in which the voivode justified to the sultan that he was unable to pay, following the

¹⁷ Şerban Papacostea, *Moldova, stat tributar al imperiului otoman în secolul al XV-lea: cadrul internațional al raporturilor stabilite în 1455-1456*, in *Evul Mediu Românesc*, p. 113-114.

¹⁸ *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor culese de Eudoxiu Hurmuzaki*, volumul XV, partea I, 1358-1600, publish by Nicolae Iorga, Bucureşti, 1911, p. 45.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 46.

²⁰ Nicolae Iorga, *Acte și fragmente cu privire la istoria românilor*, Bucureşti, 1897, p. 12.

campaigns in Transylvania, which was providing shelter for claimants to the throne of Wallachia.²¹ Mehmed II believed the Wallachian prince or perhaps he was preparing the campaign against Trebizond, the last remnant of the Byzantine Empire, and would not engage additional troops in solving the problems in Wallachia.

The next year's negotiations were conducted in different circumstances. Having returned victoriously from the campaign against Trebizond, in the autumn of 1461, Mehmed II received the deputation from Wallachia, but sent an answer by which he summoned Vlad the Impaler to present himself to the High Porte with the residual tribute.

The Turkish chronicler Tursun Beg recorded the prince's request to send one of his commanders to the Danube to protect the country for fear that the nobility, with the help of Hungary, should bring someone else to the throne.²² Another version is that of the Byzantine chronicler Laonikos Chalkokondyles. He recounts that Mehmed II sent the bey of Nicopolis Hamza Pasha only to capture the prince, but Vlad the Impaler had got used to this trick since the years of his captivity. Accompanied by a part of his cavalry troops, he thwarted this plan, caught the Turkish commander and impaled him.²³

A letter from Vlad the Impaler to King Matthias Corvinus, dated 11 February 1462,²⁴ confirms this course of events: the Romanian prince captured the small Ottoman army in a battle near the fortress of Giurgiu, which, on this occasion, was again under the rule of Wallachia. It was, first and foremost, a strategic gain, for Giurgiu, raised by Vlad's grandfather, Mircea the Elder, played an important role in defending the Danube line in the face of Turkish armies.

If we accept this development, we can establish that in the second part of 1460 Vlad the Impaler had lost the Turks' trust and that the mission of Hamza beg was actually to seize the entire territory of Wallachia and turn it into a pashalik.²⁵

Taking advantage of the surprise element, Vlad the Impaler continued his offensive and crossed the Danube to the southern bank, penetrating into the Turkish territory, burning towns and important fortifications such as Dârstor, Sistova, Rahovo, causing losses of over 20,000 people to the Turks, as mentioned in the 1462 letter to the King of Hungary.²⁶

3. The war against the Ottoman Empire (1462)

When Vlad the Impaler entered the war against the Ottoman Empire, he did it as a great army commander. On 4 March 1462, the ambassador of Venice in Buda pleaded the doge for subsidies for Hungary, which had to go to Transylvania in order to support the glorious deeds of the Wallachian voivode.²⁷

What is important to mention is that Wallachia's going into the anti-Ottoman battle should be viewed in a broader context, that of the crusade against the Turks preached by Pope Pius

²¹ *Cronici turcesti privind țările române*, Extrase. Volumul I, prepared by M. Guboglu și M. Mehmet, Editura Academiei Române, București, 1966, p. 68.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 125-126.

²³ Laonic Chalcocondil, *Expuneri istorice*, translated by V. Grecu, Editura Academiei, București, 1958, p. 72.

²⁴ Ioan Bogdan, *Vlad Țepeș și narațiunile germane și rusești asupra lui. Studiu critic*, București, 1896, p. 76.

²⁵ Ștefan Andreescu, *Vlad Țepeș Dracula*, Editura Enciclopedică, ediția a II, București, 1998, p. 106.

²⁶ Nicolae Iorga, *Scrisori de boieri-Scrisori de domni*, second edition, Văleni de Munte, 1925, p. 166-167.

²⁷ I. Bianu, *Ștefan cel Mare. Câteva documente din arhivele de stat de la Milan*, in *Columna lui Traian*, 1, 1883, p. 34-35.

It ever since 1459, at the beginning of his popedom. Within this front created on the Lower Danube, Hungary was supposed to play the main role, while Wallachia was the spearhead. The gap of the defensive line on the Danube was Moldavia, which, following the treaty signed with Poland, would leave the anti-Ottoman camp in 1459 and along with it the plan that the governor of Hungary, John Hunyadi, had established at the time of the siege of Belgrade in order to support the ascension to the throne of Vlad the Impaler and Stephen the Great.

The narrative sources²⁸ which mention the aid given to Stephen the Great by Vlad the Impaler in 1457 are rather ambiguous and therefore we do not know for sure if the ruler of Moldavia gained the longest reign in the Romanian Middle Ages (1457-1504) due to an anti-Ottoman military project in which Wallachia and Hungary had been actively involved.²⁹ Regardless of the motivation, the Moldavian prince Stephen the Great moved away from the anti-Ottoman front, thus causing an estrangement from Wallachia and Hungary.

The second important moment of 1459 is connected to the full conquest of Serbia after the fall of the last redoubt into the Ottomans' hands: the Smederevo fortress. Vlad the Impaler needed to get out of this circle created by the states surrounding his country, which were either under Turkish rule or in a relationship of subordination.

The decisive step was taken through the conclusion of the treaty with Hungary, a moment that cannot be accurately placed in time, but could not go beyond 1460 either. The treaty sanctioned, according to existing data and in keeping with the customs of the age, a matrimonial alliance, with Vlad marrying a sister of Matthias Corvinus.³⁰

In the letter of 11 February 1462, the Wallachian prince asked Hungary for help before St. George's Day, which was impossible to accomplish considering that Matthias Corvinus would convoke the nobiliary Diet on 10 May and the most optimistic scenario was that the army should have been ready to cross the Carpathians in late August. The crisis of Wallachian manpower seems obvious, as Vlad the Impaler had managed, according to data, to raise about 15,000-20,000 people, most of them from the boyar cavalry troops.

In the spring of the same year, Mehmed II had started extensive preparations for war, with an army which was not as large as that sent against Constantinople, but which numbered around 60,000-80,000 soldiers and a war fleet of 25 triremes and 150 transport ships³¹ that set off to conquer the key-fortress of the Wallachian defence on the Danube: Chilia. It was not the only assault that the mighty Danubian fortress had to face. In full sultanic campaign, Chilia was attacked on land, on 28 July 1462, by the Moldavian army, most likely because Stephen the Great was trying to prevent a Turkish conquest of the fortress.

In early June 1462, the Turkish army crossed the Danube and was attacked by the Wallachian troops in an attempt to stop the stationing of artillery – an unsuccessful action which required inland retreat. In his memoirs, the Serbian janissary Constantin of Ostrovitsa recounts that the Turkish shots routed the Wallachian army.³²

The failure on the Danube decided the Wallachian strategy for the entire campaign. The defensive system of Wallachia had been designed, ever since the previous century, depending on the relief, with the final resistance in the pre-mountainous and mountainous forested area,

²⁸ *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI publicate de Ioan Bogdan*, revised and completed edition by P. P. Panaitescu, editura Academiei, București, 1959, p. 15, 28, 49, 61.

²⁹ Marian Coman, Ovidiu Cristea, *Istorie paralele, istorii convergente. Moldova și Țara Românească în 1457 și 1476*, in *Analele Putnei*, XI, 2015, 1, p. 106.

³⁰ Nicolae Iorga, *Scrisori de boieri-Scrisori de domni*, p. 164.

³¹ Matei Cazacu, *Dracula*, Editura Humanitas, București, 2008, p. 199-200.

³² *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. I, p. 127.

where women and children were usually dislocated.³³ The destruction of water and food supplies in the path of the Turkish army added to it.

Actually, Vlad the Impaler avoided any confrontation in the open, as he was aware of the enemy's superiority and engaged only in skirmishes against the detachments that strayed away from the main army in search of supplies.

The most important episode of the campaign featured the Wallachian ruler who, on the night of 17-18 June 1462, launched an attack on the Turkish camp with a view to assassinating Sultan Mehmed II. According to the Turkish chronicler Enveri, an uproar burst and the attack was repelled by the Rumelian troops which set off in pursuit of the Wallachian cavalry, causing them heavy losses.³⁴

Although the attack did not cause significant damage to the Ottoman army, it created panic, increased by another moment that remained in the memory of chronicles. A few kilometres from the capital of Târgoviște, the Sultan and his army found a field full of impaled Turkish prisoners. Apparently the impact was so powerful that, according to some Byzantine sources, Mehmed II stated he could not take the land of a man who knew how to use his rule and his subjects so well.³⁵

Until the junction with his fleet, which occurred in the port of Brăila on 29 June 1462, Sultan Mehmed II fought one single important battle, in the Buzău area, mentioned in Turkish and Byzantine sources. In terms of the number of forces involved, it seems to be the most terrible confrontation of the campaign for the submission of Wallachia. The chronicler Tursun Beg stated that here there was already a small army of Vlad the Impaler, which was supposed to defend the border with Moldavia³⁶ and which had probably been consolidated by the voivode, thus numbering 15,000 men. The departure of Mehmed II from Wallachia some days after this event makes us assume that the Turks had not gained the expected victory this time either.

Following this campaign, which was rather odd for a mediaeval confrontation, one might wonder who could be declared a winner. If we relate to biased Turkish sources, the victory belonged to the Sultan. Still, the purpose of the campaign, namely the removal of Vlad the Impaler and turning the country into a pashalic, had not been attained. On the other hand, we cannot ignore the fact that the Wallachian ruler did not win any battle and, therefore, the indecisive result of the whole action seems to be the most natural to support.

If we consider the subsequent course of events, we may establish that Mehmed II managed through diplomatic channels to achieve what he had not by war. Barely two months after the war against Wallachia, the Sultan's protégé, Radu the Handsome, Vlad's brother, would occupy the throne with the help of a small Ottoman army. It is the result of intense negotiations with the great Wallachian boyars and especially of the distinctive position proposed by Vlad the Impaler. In anticipation of the Hungarian support, he was willing to continue the fight with the Turks while the internal forces considered the action doomed to failure from the beginning. This is the equation of the rapid loss of power which entailed Vlad's retreat to Transylvania and ultimately the loss of the throne. Moreover, militarily and strategically, the claimant Radu had the Danubian

³³ Sergiu Iosipescu, *Carpații sud-estici în evul mediu târziu (1166-1526). O istorie europeană prin pasurile montane*, Muzeul Brăilei-Editura Istros, Brăila, 2013, p. 327.

³⁴ *Cronici turcești privind țările române*, I, p. 42.

³⁵ Laonic Chalcocondil, *Expuneri ...*, p. 289.

³⁶ *Cronici turcești privind țările române*, I, p. 69.

frontier in his hands, with its important points Brăila and Giurgiu and, most likely, he had reached some agreements with Braşov and the Saxons.³⁷

4. Conclusions

Starting from these premises, we may state that the failure of Wallachia's anti-Ottoman actions and, implicitly, the removal of Vlad the Impaler from the throne were influenced by two developments at the level of international relations.

Firstly, it is the attitude of Venice, which after the fall of Constantinople chose to adopt a neutral position in its relationships with the Ottoman Empire. The position of the Republic of the Lagoons was clearly formulated in the letter sent to the papacy, on 30 October 1458, pointing out that Venice would not act against Ottoman Empire unless there was a well-established system of alliances.³⁸

The next extremely significant step was taken a year later, at the Council of Mantua, when Venice requested, in exchange for its participation in a possible anti-Ottoman coalition, the payment of all war expenses, the dispatch of 8,000 people to equip its vessels and the organisation of an army of 50,000 horsemen and 20,000 footmen that was supposed to go to Hungary.³⁹

Due to the unacceptable conditions, the crusade plans promoted by Pope Pius II had no practical finality and the anti-Ottoman front established on the Danube border received no assistance from the West.

The second moment which deprived the Wallachian country from a reliable ally against the Turks was entailed by the complications that had emerged in the Central Europe and which involved Hungary. The German Emperor Frederick III of Habsburg, through the guardianship exerted on his nephew, Ladislaus V, the Hungarian king, aimed to annex Austria, Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, Hungary and Czechia, thus creating an empire capable of successfully opposing western European states.⁴⁰

The ascension to the Hungarian throne of King Matthias Corvinus changed these plans and led to the exacerbation of the conflict, which reached its climax in 1459, when Frederick III was himself elected King of Hungary with the help of a strong internal nobiliary party.⁴¹ In such circumstances and under threat of an attack from the Roman-German Empire, Matthias Corvinus maintained, only theoretically, the idea of an anti-Ottoman action alongside Wallachia despite subsequent pressures from the papacy and Venice. In order to justify the subsidies sent by the two royal powers, the King of Hungary levelled allegations of betrayal at the Wallachian voivode, accusing him of collaborating with Sultan Mehmed II.

Therefore, we may conclude that the entire international political context in the years of the second rule acted against Vlad the Impaler, who found himself gradually involved in an unequal conflict with the Turkish power, a conflict which finally was to lead to a more obvious subordination of Wallachia to the High Porte in the second half of the 15th century.

³⁷ Hurmuzaki, vol. XV/I, p. 58.

³⁸ Eugen Denize, *Vlad Țepeș, lupta antiotomană și Veneția. Câteva considerații*, in *Revista Istorică*, nr. 3-4, 1995, p. 379.

³⁹ Nicolae Stoicescu, *Vlad Țepeș*, p. 87.

⁴⁰ Ileana Căzan, *Dușmani de temut aliați de nădejde. Țările române în epoca lui Ștefan cel Mare în contextul politicii central-europene*, ed. Minerva, București, 2004, p. 12-13.

⁴¹ Șerban Papacostea, *Cu privire la geneza și răspândirea povestirilor scrise despre faptele lui Vlad Țepeș*, p. 130.

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The Position of the AU and its Member States in the Global Condemnation of the Russia-Ukraine War

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Abstract

International crises such as the war in Ukraine bring about significant changes not only in paradigms, but also in alliance systems. The return of war as a means of regulating international relations has greatly aggravated the interests of Western powers and the African continent, which is at the geopolitical forefront of the war in Ukraine. This study aims to identify the position of the African Union (AU) and its member states on the Russia-Ukraine conflict. It highlights the AU's institutional position at the outset of the conflict, before analyzing the positions of its member states, sometimes in contradiction with the principles of the AU and the United Nations (UN), calling for the immediate cessation of the war initiated by Russia. Similarly, the study shows that African countries, in their mixed positions have a more cynical view of a world order whose rules seem to be determined by the West and it is this difference in perspective that may explain the indulgence of some African states towards Russia.

Keywords: position, African Union, Russia-Ukraine conflict.

1. Introduction

The Bandung Conference of 1955 was an act of will by the majority of African peoples to reaffirm their neutrality in a world bipolarized by the Cold War. While it was thought to be over, the return of the traditional war between states, materialized by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, raised the debate on the position of the African Union (AU) and its member states, which once again opposed the capitalist bloc (NATO) and the communist bloc (Russia), while Africa, over time, became a fertile ground for cooperation on all sides with these two bastions of hegemony and belligerence. The United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution A/ES-II/L1 on Wednesday, 2 March 2022, at 11:55 a.m. New York time. This resolution demanded that Russia immediately cease the use of force against Ukraine.¹ The outcome of this vote was very interesting, especially as far as Africa is concerned. However, the term “position” in this study refers to the opinion, sentiment and attitude of the AU, and its member states towards this war, which has been so divisive on the international scene. In this sense, it would not be superfluous to openly ask the

¹ UN General Assembly Resolution ES-11/1 is a resolution of the eleventh emergency special session of the UN General Assembly, adopted on 2 March 2022. It deplores the invasion of Ukraine by Russia and demands a complete withdrawal of Russian forces and a reversal of its decision to recognize the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Lugo People's Republics.

question: what was Africa's position on the Russian-Ukrainian war? Such a question seems interesting at the political level because it reveals once again the serious disagreements that still undermine the African states since independence and the schism that still exists between the vision of the AU and that of its entities, which at the geopolitical level contributes to seeing the still lightness of this meta-entity. In order to answer this question, on one hand, we will present the institutional position of the AU at the beginning of this conflict, before analyzing, on the other hand, the positions of its members, who were at times at odds with each other and with the General Assembly of the United Nations in condemning and calling for an immediate ceasefire to the war launched by Russia.

2. The institutional position of the AU as a meta-entity of African integration

The current Chairperson of the African Union and President of Senegal, Macky Sall, and the Chairman of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, expressed their deep concern about the serious and dangerous situation created in Ukraine at the time of the Russian invasion. In a statement published on the AU's website and the official Twitter account, they called for respect for Ukraine's territorial integrity and national sovereignty (A) and urged the use of diplomatic negotiation mechanisms for an immediate ceasefire and a return to peace (B).

2.1 *AU call for respect of Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty*

The institutional position adopted by the chairperson of the AU on the Russian-Ukrainian war was based on elements of great concern to the international community and to African states, namely; respect for territorial integrity (1) and national sovereignty (2).

2.1.1 *The demand for respect of Ukraine's territorial integrity*

The concept of territorial integrity emerged as a general principle of international law in the 19th century, according to which a nation's ownership of a given territory confers exclusive rights and prohibits others from violating that ownership.² Today, we find the protection of territorial integrity explicitly mentioned in the UN Charter as an essential component of the prohibition of the use of force, as emphasized in Article 2(4), which states that "all members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations."³ The principle in Article 2(4), and with it the concept of territorial integrity is reiterated and elaborated in important UN General Assembly declarations, including the 1970 Declaration on Friendly Relations and the 1974 definition of Aggression. Respect for territorial integrity is thus a principle of international law according to which the borders of a state, territory or province must be respected. It is enshrined in several international texts, reaffirmed in famous judgments of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and supports the obligation of a state to defend its borders and any part of its territory.

Territorial protection in international law is guaranteed by the following principles: The inviolability of territory; the prohibition or nullity of territorial acquisitions by force; the stability of borders established by treaty (regardless of the fate of the treaty); the inviolability of borders inherited from colonization or any regular process of state succession. In accordance with the rules of international law, the AU, which is also the heir to Africa's history of territorial

² G. F. Martens, *Einleitung in das positive Europäische Völkerrecht*, 1796, p. 65.

³ Article 2(4) of the UN Charter.

invasions under the aegis of colonization, could only oppose an invasion of Ukrainian territory and condemn all attempts to violate the territorial integrity of a state whose history reveals the difficulties of separation from the former USSR and the Soviet influence on its national construction. For this reason, President Macky Sall and President Moussa Faki Mahamat, expressed their deep concern about the dangerous situation in Ukraine and called for a return to peace.⁴ In addition, the AU through the voice of its President, also called for respect for national sovereignty, another cardinal element for the existence and survival of a State.

2.1.2 *The call to respect Ukrainian national sovereignty*

The word sovereignty is derived from the Latin words *superanus, sui juris, esse suae protestatis*, and *summa protestati* meaning supreme or paramount.⁵ It is one of the most important elements of the state because it gives legal status to the actions of the state. It is sovereignty that allows the state to exercise legitimate control over all laws, rules, policies and decisions. Sovereignty can therefore be defined as the situation of an unconditional power that is not subject to any external or superior authority and that acts only according to its will. In international law, it is synonymous with independence and self-determination. Sovereignty has two main dimensions: political and economic. In the political dimension, it implies the freedom of any state, subject to its international obligations, to choose its ideology, its political regime, and its strategic and military alliances. From an economic point of view, sovereignty implies the freedom to choose its economic system, to define its economic relations with other states on a bilateral or multilateral basis, to exploit its natural resources in the interest of its populations in accordance with the principle of the permanent sovereignty of states over their natural resources, as laid down in UN General Assembly Resolution No. 1803.⁶

Sovereignty entails the sovereign equality of States, a cardinal principle of the international legal order, the capacity to engage in international legal acts, including the conclusion of treaties, and the capacity to answer internationally for one's acts and omissions within the framework of responsibility. As for its protection, the sovereignty of a state is basically protected by the principle of non-intervention or non-interference in the affairs of the state and by the principle of state immunity abroad.⁷ The Russia-Ukraine conflict arose out of Ukraine's desire to join a strategic alliance, in particular NATO, and Russia's strong reaction to prevent such a situation for alleged security reasons, although many saw this invasion as an unwavering Russian desire to maintain strategic influence over a lost territory. Once again, the AU disagreed with this approach to the use of force and therefore recommended respect for the national sovereignty of this independent state, which had legitimate needs and requirements for strategic projection.

⁴ Statement from Chair of the African Union, H. E. President Macky Sall and Chairperson of the AU Commission H.E Moussa Faki Mahamat, on the situation in Ukraine consulted at <https://au.int/sites/default/files/pressreleases/41529-pr-english.pdf>.

⁵ Cambridge University Press, "Sovereignty" consulted at <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/tallinn-manual-20-on-the-international-law-applicable-to-cyber-operations/sovereignty/6BA0C5B9829FD15D997B8C973C395E16>.

⁶ Resolution 1803 (XVII) provides that states and international organizations shall strictly and conscientiously respect the sovereignty of peoples and nations over their natural wealth and resources in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles contained in the resolution.

⁷ State immunity is a principle of international law that is often relied on by states to claim that the particular court or tribunal does not have jurisdiction over it, or to prevent enforcement of an award or judgment against any of its assets. State immunity derives from the theory of the sovereign equality of states, as a consequence of which one state has no right to judge the actions of another by the standards of its national law.

2.2 *The AU's position on the application of international law*

International law is a system of legal rules that regulates the legal status and related subjects of international law, as well as the legal status of other persons and relations of international interests.⁸ International law regulates the conduct of international entities and it is on the basis of the principles of this law that the AU condemned the Russian invasion and called for its respect (1), while advocating the settlement of this conflict through diplomatic channels (2).

2.2.1 *The AU's call for respect for international law*

In accordance with the prohibition of the use of armed force in the event of a dispute between States, as enshrined in the Charter of the UN, the AU strongly condemned the Russian attacks because, as a member of the UN and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, Russia must abide by the rules. This is codified in the principle of *pacta sunt servanda*, which means that any treaty in force is binding on the parties to it and must be implemented in good faith.⁹ In fact, the prohibition of the use of force in international law is a principle that emerged at the end of the 19th century with the Hague Convention. This convention was established to encourage states not to resort to armed force in the event of a conflict and to favor peaceful means of settling disputes between states. This principle of international law is enshrined in Article 2(4) of the UN Charter and, in addition to the prohibition of the use of force in the settlement of disputes, the Charter also enshrines the principle of sovereignty, which states that no state is above another in law, that all states are equal and that no state has the right to interfere in the internal affairs of another state or even to undermine the sovereignty of the latter. However, Russia interfered by supporting the secessionist regions of Ukraine and also undermined its sovereignty and integrity by invading the country. The AU therefore respects democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law, which are principles enshrined in Article 4(m) of its Constitutive Act. For this reason, why on 24 February 2022, in Addis Ababa, President Macky Sall and President Moussa Faki Mahamat, while expressing their deep concern about the dangerous situation in Ukraine called on the Russian Federation and other regional or international actors to fully respect international law.¹⁰ Following the condemnation, in accordance with international law, the AU called for a return to peace by peaceful means.

2.2.2 *The recommendation to use diplomatic means to resolve the conflict*

The UN Charter had already settled the question of inter-state disputes in Article 2(3), which states that “all members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace, security, and justice are not endangered.”¹¹ This article is better explained in Article 33 of the same Charter, which states that “the parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice”.¹² As most of its members are parties to this Charter, the AU, as the representative

⁸ R. Alqamoudi, “The concept of international law”, *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, Volume 11, 2021, p. 520.

⁹ Vienna Convention on the law of treaties, 1996, Article 26.

¹⁰ Statement from Chair of the African Union, H.E President Macky Sall and Chairperson of the AU Commission H.E Moussa Faki Mahamat, on the situation in Ukraine consulted at <https://au.int/sites/default/files/pressreleases/41529-pr-english.pdf>.

¹¹ Article 2(3) of the UN Charter.

¹² Article 33 of the UN Charter.

institution of this large group, through the Chairperson of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, Macky Sall, and the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, in a communiqué issued on 24 February 2022, urged the two parties to establish a ceasefire and start political negotiations under the aegis of the UN and to protect the world from the consequences of a planetary conflict.¹³

The AU is therefore an institution that respects international texts and as such condemned the Russian act. In accordance with the principle of *pacta sunt servanda*, the AU called on Russia to respect international law in the resolution of the conflict, as Russia is bound by the UN Charter and other signed international conventions and must apply them in good faith. It should be noted, however, that the member states of the African Union, in their sovereignty, took different positions in the global condemnation of the Russia-Ukraine war.

3. The *intuitu personae* position of African states on the Russia-Ukraine war: The case of the UN General Assembly Resolution of 2 March 2022

Intuitu personae is a characteristic of a contract that is considered to have been concluded essentially because of the personal qualities of its co-contracting party. In other words, the position in consideration of the person (African States) and as such restricts the ability to assign the position to a third party. In this section, we will enumerate the individual votes of the African States and show the motives or justifications for these choices.

3.1 *Condemnation of the war and abstention by many African states*

The 54 African countries (27.97% of the total vote) had a considerable influence on the vote on the resolution against the Russian invasion adopted on Wednesday 2 March. However, the African vote in the General Assembly was less unanimous than in the Security Council. While some African states voted for and against the resolution, other countries were conspicuous by their abstentions.

3.1.1 *African states that voted for the resolution and those that abstained*

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is one of the tensest situations in international relations since the end of the Cold War. These tensions were evident during the deliberations and voting by UN members on resolutions calling on Russia to end its invasion and withdraw its forces from Ukraine. The resolution against the Russian invasion adopted on Wednesday 2 March, received a massive 141 votes in favor from the 193 member states of the UN General Assembly. Despite the call by the President of the AU and Senegal, Macky Sall, and the AU Commission, Moussa Mahamat Faki, for an immediate ceasefire and openness to political dialogue under the auspices of the UN in order to ensure peace and security in the world, the African votes were less unanimous in the General Assembly than in the Security Council.

The majority of African countries clearly sided with Ukraine – 28 out of 54 (51.85%). But almost a third of them abstained from taking sides (17 out of 54), assuming that abstention is halfway between yes and no. The group of 28 African countries in favor of the resolution were: Benin, Botswana, Cape Verde, Chad, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mauritania,

¹³ Statement from Chair of the African Union, H.E President Macky Sall and Chairperson of the AU Commission H.E Moussa Faki Mahamat, on the situation in Ukraine consulted at <https://au.int/sites/default/files/pressreleases/41529-pr-english.pdf>.

Mauritius, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Tunisia, Zambia, Somalia, Seychelles, and Sierra Leone.

Conversely, 17 African countries chose to abstain from the vote. These included Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Congo Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Madagascar. That is, a total of 17 countries out of 54 (31.48%).

3.1.2 *Reasons or justifications*

For the political scientist Michel Galy, a specialist in West Africa, interviewed on TV5 MONDE, the vote reveals the malaise and the division of an Africa that does not know whether it is better to follow the lead country or to abstain prudently until the last word has been spoken in the conflict. We noted some reasons that may have influenced some African countries in their vote. The group of 28 African countries in favor of the resolution consisted mainly of Western-aligned democracies such as: Benin, Botswana, Cape Verde, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritius, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, and Zambia. But the list also included some undemocratic or hybrid regimes such as Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Libya, Chad, Egypt, Mauritania, Rwanda and Somalia. However, they had one thing in common: they were Western allies, with close military ties (military bases and joint military operations against jihadists). The presence of Ghana, the country of Kwame Nkrumah, the most ardent pan-African president of his time (1963-1966), sounded like a dramatic turnaround, almost incomprehensible.

In contrast, most of the 17 African countries that abstained or, like Eritrea, voted against the resolution, are authoritarian or hybrid regimes, including; Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, South Sudan, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Some of these countries have close military and ideological ties to Russia, sometimes dating back to the Cold War, such as Algeria, Angola, Congo, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Mali and the Central African Republic. We observed that Morocco, returned to Russia what Russia did through her repeated abstention from resolutions on Western Sahara in the UN Security Council. The Moroccan Foreign Minister also said in a statement that the country remained faithful to the principle of positive neutrality.¹⁴ Algerian Foreign Minister Ramtane Lamamra referred to the concept of pragmatic neutrality, a pragmatism that takes into account an important reality: his country's extensive military cooperation with Russia. Between 2017 and 2021, 81% of the purchases of arms and defense equipment for Algeria's armed forces were supplied by Moscow.¹⁵ The Central African Republic, through public demonstrations in the streets of the capital Bangui, agreed that it was with Russia, which helped bring peace and security in the country through the intervention of the Wagner military group, while the country was in total chaos and in recent years.

There were, however, some exceptions to the rule as a number of functioning democracies such as Namibia, South Africa and Senegal, also abstained. All have strong affinities with the West. In the case of Namibia, its ruling party, the People's Organisation of South West Africa, received support from the Soviet Union during its struggle for independence. South Africa's response can also be understood in terms of its independent and non-aligned foreign policy principles which resist being drawn into great power conflicts, as well as the importance of

¹⁴ Principles of positive neutrality are the principles of peaceful coexistence, repudiation of the use of force, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, etc.

¹⁵ A. Belkaid, "Maghreb-Ukraine (1). Algeria and Morocco Refuse to Choose," consulted at <https://orientxxi.info/magazine/maghreb-Ukraine-1-algeria-and-morocco-refuse-to-choose>, 5624.

working with old friends, since the African Nation Congress (ANC) has a long-standing relationship with the Soviet Union, which supported its armed struggle and where many ANC leaders were educated or received military training.¹⁶

The case of Senegal was more puzzling, as the country is considered a favorite of Western democracies because of its long democratic tradition and close proximity to France's international positions. The Senegalese government stated that its abstention was in line with "the principles of non-alignment and the peaceful settlement of disputes. However, the official statement of its President, as Chairperson of the AU, and that of the chairperson of the AU Commission, could be interpreted as support for Ukraine's territorial integrity. These events also tested the strength of military and political alliances. Far from being an anecdote, the event was evidence of Russia's growing influence on the continent. At a time when the international community was condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the position of African countries seemed even more ambiguous.

3.2 Opposition and absence of other African states during the vote on the resolution

As in all votes, there was opposition and absence of African states in the context of this resolution.

3.2.1 List of states concerned

In this category, we noticed that only one African country, Eritrea, voted against this resolution, which condemned unreservedly the terms and intentions of this "anti-Russian" resolution, representing 1.85% of the African votes. On the other hand, in terms of absentees, the African countries stood out for their considerable representativeness. We are referring here to 8 countries out of 54 (14.81%). They include Cameroon, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau, Burkina Faso, Togo, Eswatini (the former kingdom of Swaziland in southern Africa) and Ethiopia which remains (to this day) an African empire/country that no nation colonized. These nations chose to express themselves through their physical absence from the voting room.

3.2.2 Justifications or motives

Eritrea's condemnation of the UN resolution on imperialist Russia was surprising because the country seems more like Ukraine, a young country that has long been threatened by its bigger neighbors. Eritrea gained independence from Ethiopia, a much more powerful country, in 1993, a few years after Ukraine gained independence from Russia. The country fought bloody wars for decades against successive regimes in Ethiopia, so it was expected to condemn any attempts to violate the territorial integrity of another country. However, there are several reasons for these positions in Africa. At first glance, Eritrea justified its negative vote by rejecting unilateral sanctions, which only serve to exacerbate tensions, to the detriment of the civilian population. In addition, Eritrea's vote against the UN resolution was motivated by regional ambitions, bilateral relations, geopolitical and economic interests. It should be noted that several projects have been agreed between the two countries. These include the construction of a port project, including the establishment of a logistics center in one of Eritrea's ports to develop bilateral trade, as well as mining projects, infrastructure development, and the supply of agricultural equipment between

¹⁶ The ANC is a political party which defended the interest of the black majority against the white minority during the apartheid in 1960.

the two business communities.¹⁷ Eritrea's position in support of Russia could also be explained as part of President Isaias Afwerki's decades-long anti-American policy.¹⁸

4. The reasons for voting neutrality in Africa

Still likened to the empty chair policy, the voting neutrality observed in the eight African countries can be explained on several levels. On the historical level, it is explained by Moscow's historical legacy and new African policy; by the reminiscence of old loyalties from the Cold War and decolonization periods; and by the memory of Soviet support for decolonization. Economically, it is explained by the fact that Russia is the leading exporter of wheat to Africa in general and the countries of North Africa in particular. On the other hand, it is a major player in the African security market. Between 2016 and 2020, it supplied 30% of the arms purchased by sub-Saharan African countries. Russia also signed military cooperation agreements with 20 sub-Saharan African countries including Cameroon on 12 April 2022.

At the security level, we witnessed the so-called diplomacy of mercenaryism between some African countries and Russia, epitomized by the famous Wagner group present in Libya, Sudan, Mozambique, the Central African Republic, and Mali. Strategically, Wagner's presence in Africa makes it possible to expand the Russian space at low cost. The group offers a "mercenaries/digital propaganda" package to weakened African powers and it is very active on the continent.

5. Conclusion

Arriving at the end of this analysis, it is important to recall that it was question for us to analyze the position of the AU and its member states in relation to the Russia-Ukraine war. In order to facilitate the understanding of this topic, the analysis first focused on the institutional position of the AU, which, as a meta-entity of African integration, opposed the conduct of this war and called for the respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. Beyond this aspect, the expression of the *intuitu personae* position of African states on the resolution of the UN General Assembly of 2 March 2022 which demanded that Russia immediately cease the use of force against Ukraine. It turned out that 28 African countries voted in favor of the resolution condemning the Russian invasion, some 17 African countries abstained from the UN General Assembly vote and Eritrea was the only African country to vote against the resolution. The continent's positions varied from country to country, with many states taking a "non-aligned" position. Western countries such as France and the United States were surprised by the neutrality of African countries towards the Russian invasion and some African officials justified their indifference to the Russia-Ukraine war by comparing it to the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the NATO's assassination of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. It thus became a proxy for countless examples of the West's failure to play by the rules it expected others to play. Whatever one may think, a trend is emerging: the gradual awareness among Africans of the need to do a better job of defending their own interests, rather than serving as a sound board for the defense of those of their allies. Unfortunately, there is no coordination between AU member states, let alone a common foreign policy. The gap between the remarkable normative and institutional progress

¹⁷ Agence Ecofin, "Russia negotiates the creation of a logistics center in an Eritrean port," consulted at <https://www.agenceecofin.com/investissements-publics/0409-59650-la-russie-negocie-la-creation-d-un-centre-logistique-dans-un-port-erythreen>.

¹⁸ Isaias Afwerki's attitude and anti-American campaign begun after the Eritrean-Ethiopian Border war in 1998. This led to the Obama administration's sponsorship of the UN Security Council Resolution 1907 in 2009, imposing sanctions and an arms embargo against Eritrea.

of African organizations, on the one hand, and the actual implementation of strategic foreign policies and decisions, on the other, remains wide. By bridging this gap, the Russia-Ukraine conflict could be an opportunity to strengthen Africa's strategic position to better adapt to structural changes in the world order.

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“Two Distinct Creators”: Comparing Darwin’s and Wallace’s Formative Travels, and How it Influenced their Theory of Evolution

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Abstract

Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace independently arrived at similar theories of evolution by natural selection as announced in 1858. Both men had undertaken transformative travels that provided data for their conclusions. This article compares and contrasts their published travel narratives and shows how it impacted their interpretations. While Darwin’s voyage aboard the *H.M.S. Beagle* (1831-1836) was largely in the southern hemisphere temperate zone, Wallace’s (1854-1862) island-hopping expedition was confined to the Malayan (Indonesian) Archipelago. Although very similar, there were slight differences in their resulting theories of natural selection. The debates that would divide them on this issue related especially to sexual dimorphism in birds and butterflies, with examples from their travels. Both men, however, perceived the profound differences between the Australian fauna and that of the rest of the world. Wallace was able to identify the exact boundary between these two different “creations,” later dubbed “Wallace’s Line.”

Keywords: Charles Darwin, Alfred Russel Wallace, evolution, natural selection, sexual selection, Wallace’s Line, Darwin Industry.

“As a number of isolated facts soon becomes uninteresting, the habit of comparison leads to generalization.” – Charles Darwin

1. Introduction

The year 2023 is the bicentenary of the birth of Alfred Russel Wallace (1823-1913). It’s a fitting moment to revisit this lesser-known co-discoverer of the theory of evolution by natural selection, alongside Charles Darwin (1809-1882) (Figure 1). Both men undertook extensive world travels in their youth, which were the key events in their respective lives (Egerton, 2012). Moreover, they were inspired by the same books, such as Humboldt’s *Personal Narrative* and Lyell’s *Principles of Geology*. To some extent, Wallace modeled his own travel book on Darwin’s *Journal of Researches* (1839). Amazingly, their journeys of discovery did not overlap, and yet, their theories converged, in 1858. In this paper I will use a comparative analysis of their travels – Darwin on the *H.M.S. Beagle*, and Wallace in the Malay Archipelago – showing how it provided essential background for that theory.

- Darwin and Wallace independently arrived at similar theories of evolution.
- Both men undertook transformative travels that provided data for their conclusions.
- Differences related especially to sexual dimorphism in birds and butterflies.
- Wallace’s Line identifies the boundary between two different “creations.”

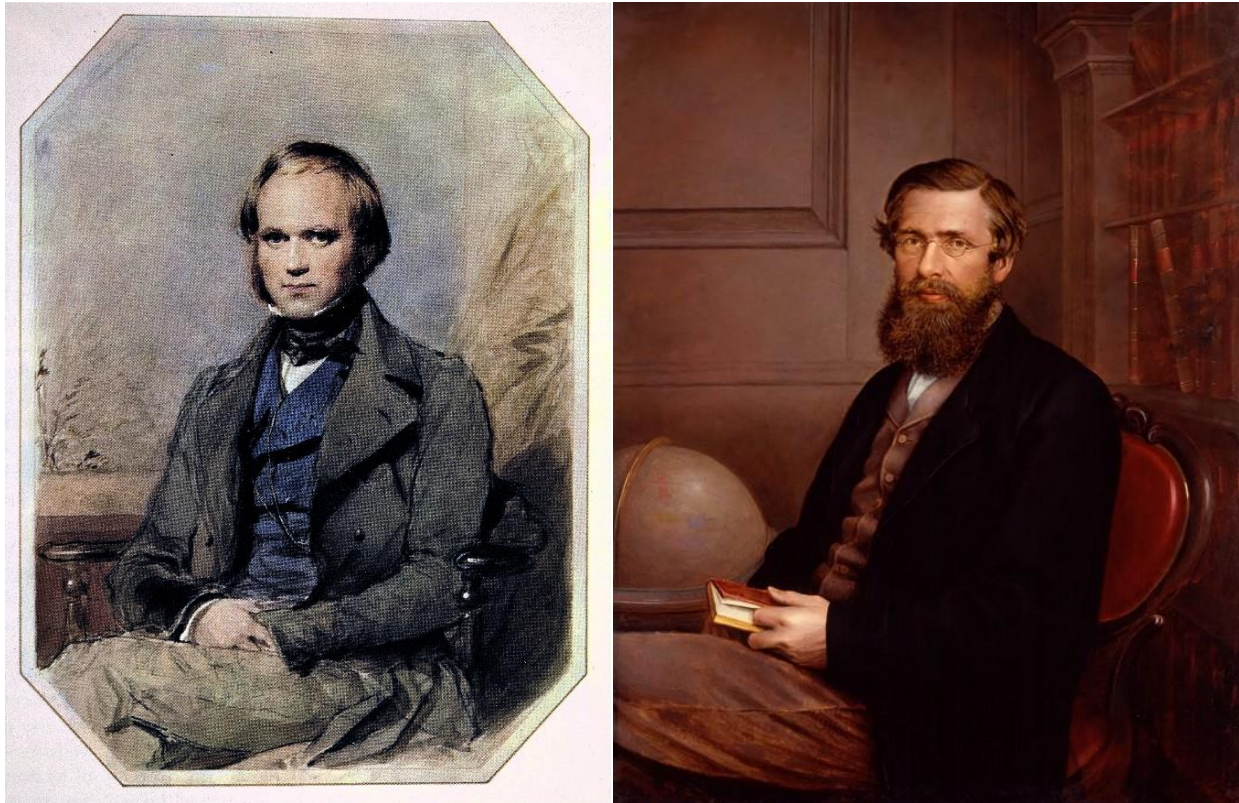


Figure 1. Charles Darwin (left) in 1840 by George Richmond, and Alfred Russel Wallace (right) in 1862. Courtesy of Wikimedia.

2. Trip comparison

First, an overall comparison between Darwin’s 5-year voyage (1831-1836) and that of Wallace’s 8-year sojourn (1854-1862). Darwin’s was the voyage of a naval vessel, the ten-gun brig *H.M.S. Beagle*, which logged 64,000 km. Whereas Wallace, upon reaching Singapore via the commercial P&O Line, used small watercraft (such as praus or mail packet ships) to get about the Indonesian Archipelago (which he called the Malay Archipelago), for a total of 22,500 km. Darwin’s narrative is chronological, traveling from east to west overall. Whereas Wallace used a regional format, progressing from west to east, but discussing his many zigzag trips among groups of islands in unified chapters (Van Wyhe, 2015: 27-28). Most of Wallace’s trip was spent within several degrees of the equator, while Darwin was mostly in the temperate zone of the Southern Hemisphere. Their nearest approach to overlap was Darwin’s stop at Cocos Keeling, in the Indian Ocean—an island inhabited by Malays, a people with which Wallace grew very familiar in Indonesia (Figure 2).

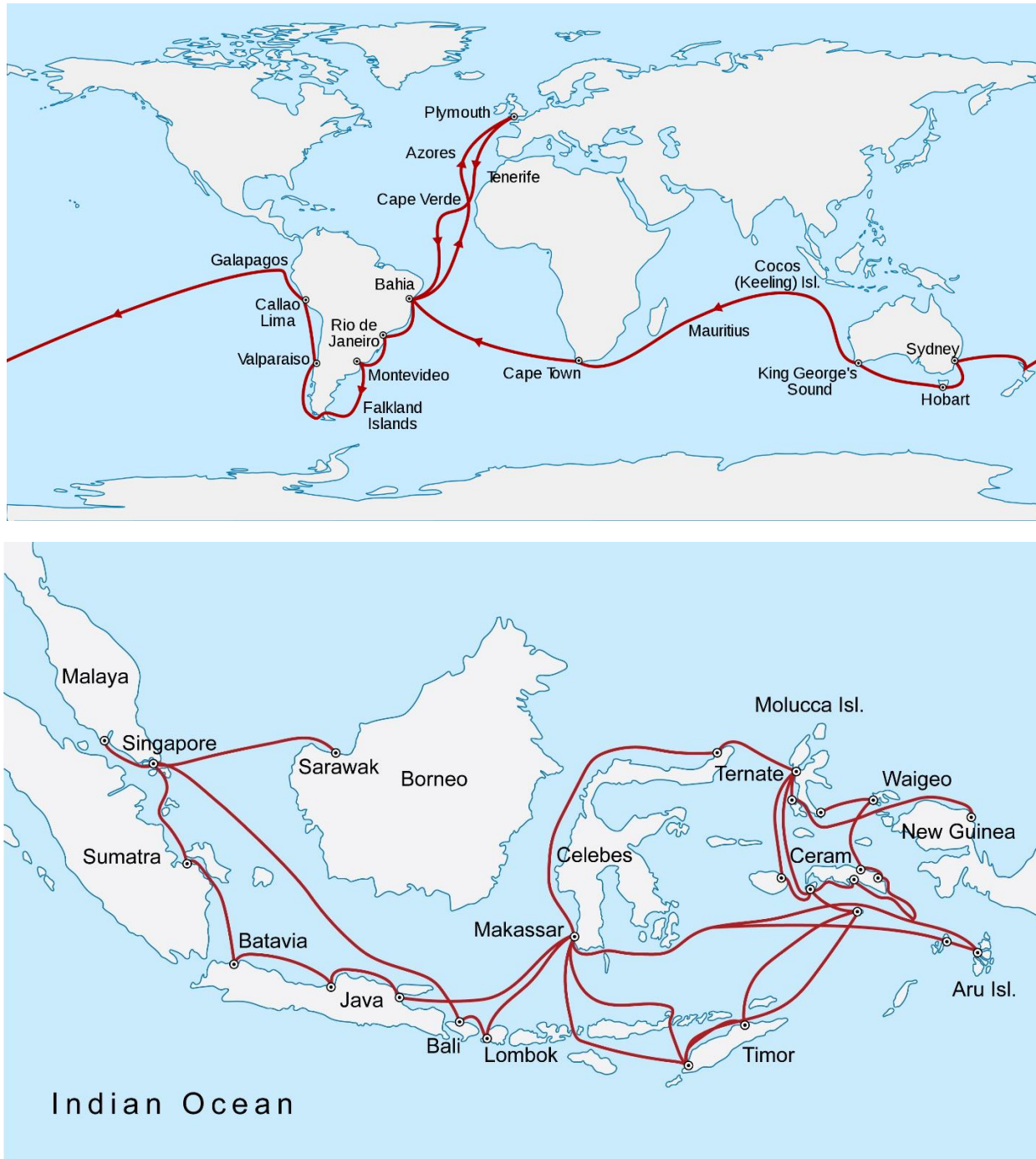


Figure 2. Darwin's Beagle voyage (top) courtesy of Wikimedia, and Wallace's Malayan travels (bottom) map by Jessica Rogge. Both routes have been simplified for clarity.

Wallace's trip was largely commercial, to obtain beetles, butterflies ("the very finest Ornithopterae"), and birds, for the British Museum, the Zoological Society of London, and individual collectors (Camerini, 1996). By contrast, Darwin, the *Beagle's* substitute naturalist, collected a wider range of specimens, including plants, rocks, and minerals, but not in commercial quantities. When Darwin did collect zoological specimens, it was often just a male/female pair (Sulloway, 1982). Darwin also collected 1,400 plant specimens during his trip, which were later studied by the Kew botanist Joseph Dalton Hooker. These plants, considering the high endemism

(nativeness) of the two Australian floras (southeast and southwest Australia, respectively) and the Cape flora of Africa, contributed to the development of the idea for the ancient continent we now call Gondwanaland (Hopper and Lambers, 2009). Wallace did not collect plants, because as he explained, “I cannot afford to collect plants. I have to work for a living, and plants would not pay unless I collect nothing else, which I cannot do, being too much interested in zoology” (Fagan, 2008: 73).

Collecting specimens entails killing them. Both Darwin and Wallace employed young men to shoot birds. Indeed, Darwin’s servant, Syms Covington, was the focus of a 1998 biography by Roger McDonald titled, *Mr. Darwin’s Shooter*. Darwin frequently landed at isolated oceanic islands where the fauna appeared tame because it was not accustomed to human presence. This contrasts with the wariness of the wildlife experienced by Wallace in long-inhabited lands. To modern sensibilities, the most unpalatable passages are in the chapter where Wallace shoots orangutans in the trees of Borneo, subsequently preserving their skins in arrack (Java rum) for the British Museum.

Health impacted their activities. Wallace was plagued with tropical fevers, like malaria, which sometimes incapacitated him, most notably at the island of Ternate, when he underwent his intellectual “epiphany” about the mechanism of evolution in 1858. Darwin did not spend nearly so much time in the tropics, as compared with temperate climes, and thus he escaped the tropical fevers. But he did become a lifelong sufferer from what was often said to be Chagas’s disease, a result of being bitten by “the big black bug of the Pampas” in South America, a conclusion first published by parasitologist Saul Adler (1959). Both men were laid up with sea-sickness while afloat.

3. Comparing results

Wallace’s Chapter I is a general description of the physical geography of the entire region through which he traveled for eight years. Whereas Darwin used his first chapter to state the goals of the five-year trip and the incidents of the first leg, reaching the shores of South America. Wallace took this opportunity to emphasize his “most important” find, in 1856, which was “Wallace’s Line” (a name later coined by English biologist Thomas Henry Huxley), separating the Asian fauna from that of Australia. The line ran between the neighboring islands of “Bali and Lombok [which] became for Wallace as provocative as the Galapagos Islands were for Darwin” (Egerton, 2012). In a striking comparison, Wallace himself later wrote that “these islands differ far more from each other in their birds and quadrupeds than do England and Japan” (Wallace, 1880: 4). Yet they are only 24 km apart! Wallace chose a sort of representative “mascot” for each region: an orangutan for the Asian, and a bird of paradise, for the Australian. Darwin, upon reaching Australia, had his own epiphany and mascots, writing that the marsupials and placental mammals, respectively, suggested “two distinct Creators” (Barlow, 1934: 383). But Darwin was far from identifying the exact line between them, as Wallace had done. In the twentieth century, of course, Wallace’s Line was found to reflect a plate tectonic boundary, and some biologists chose to emphasize a transition zone named Wallacea, after the great naturalist, rather than a sharp line of demarcation (Ali & Heaney, 2021) (Figure 3). Ultimately, it was absorbed into a network of lines delimiting the biogeographical regions of the world (Wallace, 1876).

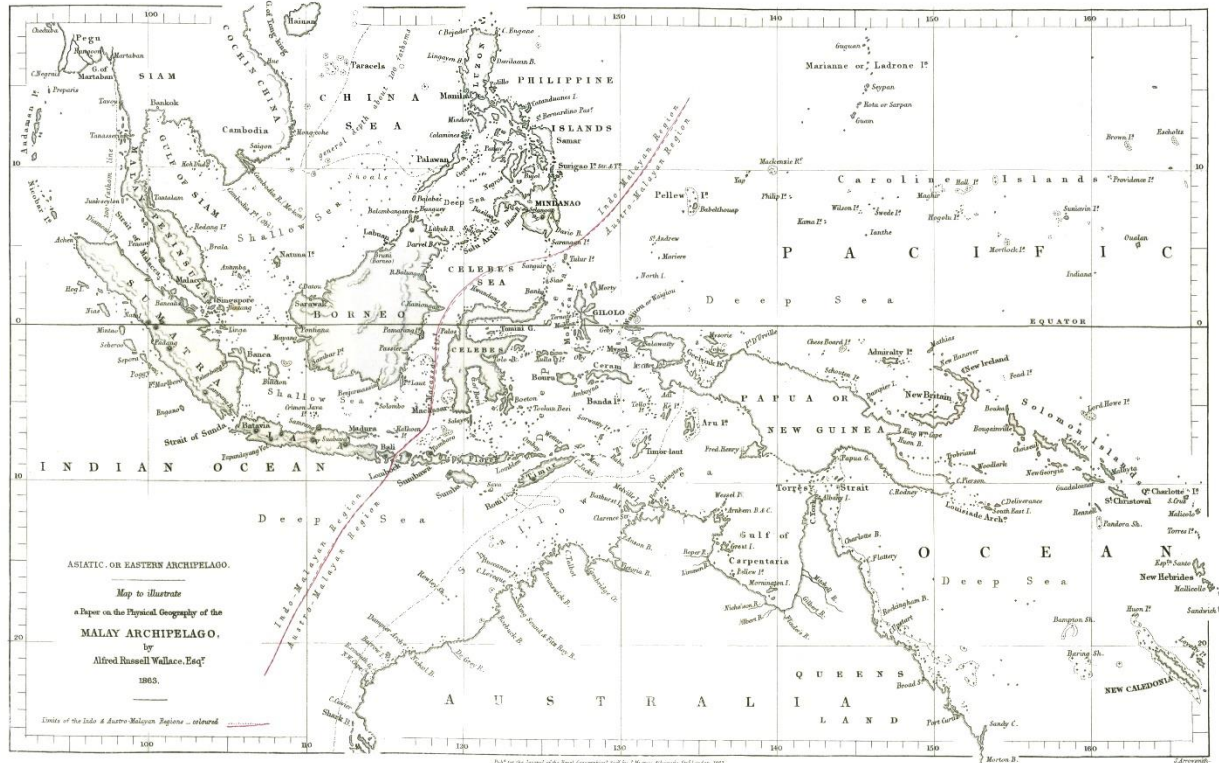


Figure 3. Wallace's Line (in red). Courtesy of Wikimedia.

The respective decades in which Darwin and Wallace wrote, relative to the wide acceptance of Louis Agassiz's glacial theory, was significant to their insights. As for broad biogeographic patterns, Darwin published the first edition of his *Journal of Researches* (it only became *Voyage of the Beagle* after 1903) before the glacial theory expounded by Agassiz became widely accepted, beginning in 1840. Most of Darwin's so-called glacial explanations at this time involved using the drifting iceberg theory to account for the distribution of glacial erratics (stones that are transported by ice) (Mills, 1983) and possible dispersal of plant seeds. Wallace, while not a skilled practical field geologist like Darwin, nonetheless wrote at a time thirty years later when advanced glacial explanations had become common. He skillfully used the concept of sea-level lowering (namely, that as the great ice sheets formed, sea level dropped) to explain faunal distribution of Indonesian islands relative to mainland Asia. During ice ages, the shallow waters of the surrounding seas dropped enough to expose the Sunda Shelf, i.e., to convert the shallow sea to dry land, which allowed the Asian fauna to populate the islands. Conversely, beyond the 100-fathom depth line (his usual standard, equal to 183 meters), islands had many endemics, because even during the lowest sea-level stand, they remained islands. This was somewhat different from the popular land bridge theory, which postulated that natural bridges could form even in deep oceans, which Wallace rejected. Wallace's conjecture also stood in contrast to the "flotsam and jetsam theory" whereby the animal populations of oceanic islands are a matter of random chance.

Darwin's distinction between oceanic and continental islands was adopted by Wallace. Oceanic islands, typically the result of basaltic volcanism, are more isolated, in deep water, and usually show an absence of terrestrial mammals and reptiles. Darwin noticed that coral reefs frequently develop around subsiding volcanic islands. He developed the 3-fold scheme of coral reefs, divisible into atolls, fringing, and barrier reefs. Wallace, upon visiting the Matabello Islands in Indonesia, found Darwin's scheme useful in understanding what he observed.

Both men experienced violent volcanic phenomena. Darwin's travels took him along the Chilean coast, where the volcano Osorno was in eruption, shortly before the devastating

Chilean earthquake of 1835, leading him to speculate on the connection between volcanoes and earthquakes. Further melding the two, Wallace’s description of a volcanic eruption paralleled Darwin’s experience of earthquakes. Darwin had observed that “A bad earthquake at once destroys our oldest associations; the earth, the very emblem of solidity, has moved beneath our feet like a thin crust over a fluid; --one second of time has created in the mind a strange idea of insecurity, which hours of reflection would not have produced.” Wallace wrote in a similar vein that “The inhabitant of most parts of northern Europe sees in the earth the emblem of stability and repose. His whole life-experience, and that of all his age and generation, teaches him that the earth is solid and firm, that its massive rocks may contain water in abundance, but never fire; and these essential characteristics of the earth are manifest in every mountain his country contains. A volcano is a fact opposed to all this mass of experience.” Darwin described the terrified inhabitants of the town of Valdivia, Chile, running from their houses during aftershocks, to avoid impending collapse. Wallace described similar behavior in a stricken area, but repeated so many times by the inhabitants that it became absurd, as if they were “playing at earthquakes.” Where Darwin described the tsunami washing ashore at Concepcion harbor, Wallace wrote of “the tremendous surf at Ampanam,” caused by earthquakes. Darwin described the elevated beaches of the Chilean coastline resulting from earthquakes, some of which had risen “1,300 feet [396 m] since the epoch of existing shells.” Wallace described several minor shocks in seismically active Indonesia, as at Ternate. He traveled along the islands of Java and Sumatra, whose backbones are formed by a line of volcanoes, describing extensive cliffs of raised coral limestone.

Darwin’s hero, Alexander von Humboldt, had mapped the altitudinal vegetation zones on the Andean volcano Chimborazo, in Ecuador, which he climbed in 1802 (Moret et al., 2019). The *Beagle*, however, in its hydrographic surveys, did not sail that far north along the South American coast, so Darwin was not able to revisit the spot. But Darwin carried out a similar exercise on the peaks of Tahiti, just as Wallace later did on the slopes of Mt. Ophir (1220 m) on the Malayan peninsula. On Java, Wallace ascended the extinct volcano Pangerango (3050 m), noting how Java’s peaks had served as a glacial refugium for cold-adapted plants. Temperate flora, whose range was compressed toward the equator during the ice ages, could only survive in the tropics by retreating upslope to this cooler regime.

Both narratives included arduous river ascents, too. Darwin, with his crew, ascended the River Santa Cruz in Argentina. After weeks of hauling their whaleboats upstream through a bleak landscape, passing the Condor Cliffs, they turned back when in sight of the Andes. Wallace ascended the sources of the Sadong River in Borneo, meeting the savage Dyaks along the way.

The two men had diverging impressions of tropical rain forest. To Darwin, alighting in Brazil, it was magical. Whereas Wallace described “a sombre green...monotony... The idea that nature exhibits gay colours in the tropics...is totally false” and “Many persons in Europe...will no doubt be surprised to learn that the truly wild fruits of this grand and luxuriant archipelago...are in almost every island inferior in abundance and quality to those of Britain.” While Wallace did not collect botanical specimens, he had much to say about the various palms of Indonesia. Indeed, he had published a guidebook to palms after his earlier trip to the Amazon (Knapp et al., 2002). Of special interest to Wallace was “the great sago district” near the island of Waigiou, Indonesia. The sago palm was a source of starch and he reported that ten days of work with a sago palm would provide enough subsistence for a man to live the rest of the year, contributing to “the abject state of poverty...where the sago-tree is abundant.” Paradoxically, the sago made life so easy that the natives could slack off the rest of the year, leaving them in poverty!

The high point of Wallace’s eight years in Indonesia was collecting birds of paradise in the Aru Islands – “this ‘Ultima Thule’ of the East,” as he dubbed it. Their striking colors, metallic plumage, long tail wires, and the mystery surrounding their exact domicile, intrigued Wallace. Whereas for Darwin the nearest to an avian epiphany are the mockingbirds and finches of the Galapagos Islands, which contributed so much to development of his evolutionary idea. As for

mammals, Darwin's tales of jaguars are somewhat tamer than Wallace's claim that tigers "kill on an average a Chinaman every day" in Singapore.

Darwin devoted more attention to observations of aquatic life, such as an octopus changing color, or the zoophytes of the Keeling coral reefs, than did Wallace (Keynes, 2003). Darwin's observations of the kelp forests off the Falkland Islands, and the associated vertebrate and invertebrate fauna, foreshadowed important ecological concepts such as keystone species and the food web (Armstrong, 1992: 101-103). Wallace did not list fishes among his specimen totals and presented no extended accounts of aquatic life like Darwin's. This contrasts with Wallace's strong interest in and collection of freshwater fishes during his previous, Amazonian journey (Fagan, 2008: 72).

While Darwin was shocked by the lowly moral and physical condition of the inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego, at the southern tip of South America, Wallace was more sympathetic toward "savage" peoples, as when he visited the Dyaks of Borneo. While they were headhunters, he surprisingly overlooked such gruesome details and ranked them, in other ways, as morally superior to the more technically savvy Malays – and even Europeans. Where Darwin pointed the contrast between savages and Europeans, or between the warlike Maoris of New Zealand and the civilized Tahitians, Wallace dwelt upon the "two radically distinct races" (Malays and Papuans), who predominated in his part of the world. Surprisingly, he praised Dutch colonialism and monopolies, observing that British working-class people at home paid higher prices for the cotton goods they manufactured themselves than did the remotest Aru Islands savages. Wallace devotes much space to describing such native commerce, while Darwin only occasionally mentioned economics, as with the coconut-based commerce of the Keeling Islands.

Finally, Wallace adds a craniological appendix and a "List of Vocabularies Collected" to his narrative. Being an advocate of phrenology and a scientific "headhunter" of sorts, it was common at the time to think that measuring skull parameters could help to classify races. Wallace hoped to confirm the distinctness of the Malays and Papuans statistically. Darwin did not pay any special attention to craniometry during his travels.

4. Evolving similar theories

The first sentence in Darwin's *Origin of Species*, published in 1859, stated that, "When on board *H.M.S Beagle*, as naturalist, I was much struck with certain facts in the distribution of the inhabitants of South America, and in the geological relations of the present to the past inhabitants of that continent. These facts seemed to me to throw some light on the origin of species – that mystery of mysteries, as it has been called by one of our greatest philosophers." So, let's consider in more detail how their respective travels led to this theory.

First, the obvious one. The classic story of Darwin's conversion to evolutionary thinking upon the *Beagle's* visit to the Galapagos Archipelago in 1835 has always held center stage in this regard. Upon arriving among the islands, the story goes, the differing beak adaptations among the finches, and the different tortoises, led to an epiphany. As Sulloway (1982) has shown, however, this story has been oversimplified, and indeed it was not until after the voyage that the pieces came together in the Red Notebook of 1837 and thereafter.

Wallace wrote to Darwin (from Ternate), explaining his own version of natural selection, which he preferred to call "survival of the fittest." Subsequently, in 1858, a joint paper by Darwin and Wallace was read by others at the Linnean Society of London, outlining their theory of evolution. As noted above, Wallace had made a trip to the Amazon before going to the Malay Archipelago, and even at that time he was pondering the notion of organic evolution (Smith, 2015). However, while returning to England, the ship, carrying rubber goods, caught fire and sank, taking with it his specimens and detailed notes. So, it was material from the subsequent Malayan trip

that formed the basis for his theory of natural selection. In subsequent years, after their 1858 joint paper, Wallace gave four separate accounts of how he came upon the principle of natural selection, and they corroborate each other (McKinney, 1966). Wallace’s interest in the ethnology of the Malay Archipelago led him to recall Malthus’ account of the struggle for existence, which Wallace first applied to human beings, subsequently extending it to animals.

Both Darwin and Wallace recognized that the living species in an area are similar to the fossil forms of that same area, suggesting a succession of forms through time. Darwin was fascinated with South American fossils, which lived at a time when “[the Americas] must have swarmed with great monsters,” such as the “nine great quadrupeds” (large, four-footed mammals), which he found at Punta Alta, Brazil. Indeed, the British paleontologist who described them, Richard Owen, won the Wollaston Medal, highest honor that the Geological Society could bestow, for his efforts (Lister, 2018: 184). Wallace, on the other hand, did not collect fossils (considering how heavy they are and how light he had to travel) but he did make an important generalization, the so-called “Sarawak Law” of 1855 (named from when he was staying in Sarawak), his first big step toward evolution. As stated by Wallace, “The rule is, that just as the productions of adjacent areas usually resemble each other closely, so do the productions of the same area at remote epochs.” Darwin emphasized that although we do not find gigantic quadrupeds in South America today, they are related to the diminutive descendants we see there nowadays.

Wallace’s recognition of what became known as Wallace’s Line was another validation of the succession of forms: “Or [else] we should not see countries the most opposite in character with similar productions, while others almost exactly alike as respects climate and general aspect, yet differ totally in their forms of organic life” (Wallace, 1857).

According to Kutschera (2003), Wallace “was the spiritual father of the most obvious experimental proof of the Darwin-Wallace concept: industrial melanism in the peppered moth.” Before the industrial revolution, white moths peppered with black spots were common in England. However, with widespread air pollution, darker forms were favored because predatory birds could not distinguish them, camouflaged as they were when resting on darkened tree bark (Kettlewell, 1965).

5. Conclusion

The “Darwin Industry” has spawned a vast literature but much of it involves relitigating minor points. On the present topic, however, the conclusions appear widely established. While very similar, there were slight differences in Darwin’s and Wallace’s theories of natural selection (Kottler, 1980, 1985). Darwin put greater emphasis on sexual selection, especially as manifested in color differences between males and females, than did Wallace. The debates that would divide them on this issue over the years related especially to sexual dimorphism in birds and butterflies, with both men citing examples from their respective travels. While Wallace agreed in principle that sexual selection took place, he maintained that it was secondary to factors such as mimicry in insects, and the need for birds to conceal their nests. Sexual selection has recently come under scrutiny again (Shuker & Kvarnemo, 2021). Wallace’s later assertion that the human mind could not be a product of natural selection was a development associated with his growing belief in spiritualism (Gross, 2010).

Wallace underwent his “conversion” experience in the midst of his Malayan travels, whereas Darwin seems to have done so only after his return but relying upon information collected during those travels. In both cases however they arrived at very similar concepts and their status as the two creators of current evolutionary theory is unassailable.

Notes

The comparison and quotations in this paper are based on the second edition of Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle* (edited by Leonard Engel) and the *Annotated Malay Archipelago* (edited by John Van Wyhe).

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AIMS AND SCOPE

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