

THE GATE OF CHRISTIANITY

“The sources from this period show that Stephen was well aware of Moldavia’s unique geo-political position—the region was Europe’s eastern-most Christian frontier. Stephen acknowledged the crucial location of his principality in a letter dated 25 January 1475, and written after his battle against the Ottomans at Vaslui two weeks before, on 10 January 1475—an event that reverberated throughout all of Europe.¹¹⁵ Stephen sent his message to Europe’s leaders¹¹⁶ in an effort to secure additional military and financial support for his anti-Ottoman struggles. In the letter, the Moldavian prince referred to his domain as the “gate of Christianity”¹¹⁷ and explained that if this eastern Carpathian region were to be conquered by the Turkish forces “the rest of the Christian world would be in great danger.”¹¹⁸ Three years later (after his defeats at Vaslui in 1475 and Războieni in 1476), in a letter delivered by his messenger and uncle John Țamblac to the Venetians and Pope Sixtus IV (1414-1484; in office 1471-1484), on 8 May 1478, Stephen explained:

I do not want to repeat how important my country is for all the Christians; I think it is superfluous [to repeat], because it is in fact too clear that my country is the main stronghold for Hungary and Poland, and the garrison of these two kingdoms. Aside from this, because the Turks tripped on me, many Christians remained in peace for the past four years.

Excerpt from *The Painted Fortified Monastic Churches of Moldavia: Bastions of Orthodoxy in a Post-Byzantine World*
by Alice Isabella Sullivan

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