

**GRANDS ET PETITS BOYARDS.
NOTES SUR LA NOBLESSE MOLDAVE DU XV^e SIÈCLE**

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Abstract: The modern historiography generally investigates the medieval nobility of Moldavia from a legal, genealogical or economic perspective, but there may be constantly observed a deficiency in the current body of work with respect to the basic methodological issues raised by the preserved fifteenth-century sources, issues that eventually turn out to be critical for an adequate understanding of the topic. Since our knowledge is mostly dependent on the reading of chancellery's diplomas that deal with several Moldavian boyars, we need to look more closely at the ways in which the princely chancellery functioned in connection to the necessities and customs of the noble society. The present survey aims to emphasize the main methodological issues that need further consideration (calculating the overtime losses in the documentary corpus, the scope of securing confirmatory diplomas by the laity, the significant rôle of the oral culture, and the absence of a written legal culture), and then it puts forward a case study concerning the chancellery formula "great and petty boyars." The main point of the paper is the necessity to construct a methodology suitable for the preserved sources before elaborating further upon various social theories applied to the Moldavian nobility.

Keywords: medieval Moldavia; nobility; boyars; diplomas; methodology; laity

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