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EN EL IV CENTENARIO DE SU MUERTE
(1614-2014)

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SEPARATA

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Surviving the Fall: Greek Elites under Ottoman Rule in the Prephanariot Period (1453-1711)

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ABSTRACT: In this paper, we examine the Greek elites after the fall of Byzantium, focusing on their adaptation and integration into the new political, socio-economic and cultural system of the Ottoman Empire. Although it does not attempt to be exhaustive, this study explores some key points and individuals to help us understand the situation of the Greek elites in Ottoman Istanbul, especially their participation in commercial and political activities in the capital and in the Romanian principalities under Ottoman rule.

KEY WORDS: Elites, Post-Byzantine Culture, Ottoman Empire, Phanariots, Grand Dragoman, Romanian Principalities.

RESUMEN: En este trabajo abordamos el tema de las elites griegas tras la caída de Bizancio, centrándonos en su adaptación e integración en el nuevo orden que supuso el Imperio Otomano como sistema político, socio-económico y cultural. Exploramos algunos aspectos clave, así como el papel de ciertas individualidades, para intentar comprender la situación real de las elites griegas de Estambul, especialmente la participación de dichas elites en actividades políticas y comerciales, tanto en la capital otomana como en los principados rumanos bajo soberanía turca.

PALABRAS CLAVE: elites, cultura posbizantina, Imperio Otomano, fanariotas, gran dragomán, principados rumanos.

I. INTRODUCTION

After the fall of the Byzantine Empire, the Greek people remained under Ottoman rule for several centuries, comprising part of one of the more prosperous *millet* or religious communities in the Sublime Porte¹. We have a good deal of information about the Greek elites in the Ottoman Empire during the so called “Phanariot” period, between 1711 and 1821, when Greek elites settled in the Istanbulite quarter of Phanar became princes in the Danubian principalities of Wallachia and Moldova, two Romanian territories under Ottoman rule². Not much is known, however, about the lives of the Greek elites in Ottoman lands between the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the early eighteenth century, especially the ways in which these elite families descended from the ancient Byzantine aristocracy to form a “new nobility” of major traders and others who held influential roles in Ottoman administrative circles³.

In my opinion, and as some other scholars have pointed out, we can define this crucial historical period as the “Prephanariot” period, emphasizing its continuity with the following period⁴ –one characterized by the survival, in a certain sense, of Byzantium through the important role played by elite Byzantine families–. Such continuity can especially be seen in certain spheres of cultural life: institutions like the Patriarchate and Orthodox religious ceremonies, literary production, and the Greek language itself. Furthermore, this was a phenomenon that, far from being limited to the city of Istanbul, would expand through southeastern Europe, effectively “Hellenizing” the Balkan territories and, remarkably, the Romanian principalities under Ottoman rule, as well. The Romanian historian Iorga called this process *Byzance après Byzance* in a very fundamental work⁵.

¹ CLOGG (1982, 1987); SUGAR (1996); RUNCIMAN (1968); PAPADOPOULOS (1952).

² Concerning the Phanariots, consult the following works: *Symposium L'époque phanariote* (1974); PIPPIDI (1975); PHILLIOU (2011a): 5-37, (2011b); BERINDEI (1991); ZALLONÝ (1824); SÖZEN (2000); PALLIS (1951); FLORESCU (1968); OPRIŞAN (1990); MANGO (1973).

³ A copious amount of information is available on the families of the Greek elites during this period, especially in STURDZA (1999) and RIZO RANGABÉ (1892).

⁴ The concept “prephanariot” was suggested by Stănescu (1974). Scholars locate the Prephanariot period at the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century, with the increasing presence of “Levantine” families (Italian, Albanian or Greek) in the Romanian principalities, cf. PIPPIDI (1975): 232.

⁵ IORGA (1935).

My purpose in this study is to analyze that extended Prephanariot period, for which I suggest and sketch various phases that correspond roughly to the sections of this paper. Following the unstoppable Ottoman advance during the fifteenth century and the fall of Constantinople, some Byzantine elite families chose exile, but others stayed and adapted to the new situation, collaborating and cooperating with the Sublime Porte. Among these families, some converted to Islam, while others remained as Orthodox Christians. No matter their religious sensibilities, however, both groups engaged in commercial activities and tax collection for the Ottomans. This phase of activity would continue until the last quarter of the sixteenth century. The second phase –the period between the last decades of sixteenth century and the 1660s– was characterized by the Greek elites' increased interest in settling in the Romanian principalities (e.g. the Cantacuzenus family). In the Romanian lands, they became involved in trade and political affairs. Finally, the phase that covers the time period from 1669 until 1711 saw the Greek elites monopolize their positions in the newly-created Ottoman offices of “grand dragoman” and “dragoman of the fleet”. As pointed out above, from 1711 onward these families would become princes in Wallachia and Moldova until the Greek national revolution in 1821.

2. THE FIRST PERIOD (XVTH-XVITH CENTURIES)

The traces that remained of Byzantium essentially were unable to survive the fall of Constantinople⁶. Many of the Byzantine elites who fought and defended the city were taken as prisoners by the Ottomans; as an example, the family of the diplomat and historian Sphrantzes was sold in 1453 to Mehmed II's chief stableman, an official that in the opinion of Sphrantzes himself “amassed a fortune selling many others beautiful women from the Byzantine aristocracy”. In addition, the historian Ducas relates that when Mehmed II left Istanbul after the conquest, he took with him all the aristocratic women and their daughters⁷.

As the fall of Constantinople became imminent, many of these noble families escaped to Europe, especially to the Italian territories, as the Argy-

⁶ RUNCIMAN (1990): 181-191.

⁷ SPHRANTZES (1980): 70-71; DOUKAS (1975): 241.

ropoulos family did⁸. The parents of Theodore Spandugino Cantacuzenus also fled; this Cantacuzenus was a famous historian in the French court of Louis II, counselor of several popes in the first half of the sixteenth century and an expert on Ottoman language and culture⁹. We even find families in which some members left and others chose to stay: this is the case of the Emperor Constantine's brothers: Thomas Palaeologus, who fled to Rome, and Demetrios, whose daughter joined the harem of Mehmed II. The same Demetrios received the islands of Lemnos and Imbros and some parts of Thasos, Samothrace and the city of Enos; his brother-in-law, Mathew Asen, controlled the local monopoly of salt in Enos¹⁰. A similar situation happened with the Rhallis family, some of them deciding to leave and others remaining in Istanbul¹¹.

The advance of the Ottomans through the European territories during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries required necessarily the gradual integration into Ottoman culture and politics of the elites who chose not to go into exile. This was achieved in two ways: either through conversion to the conqueror's religion, that is, Islamization and a complete assimilation, or adaptation into the new state of affairs –collaborating and participating in various degrees of commitment with the Sublime Porte. In any case, as remarked by the prestigious Ottomanist scholar Halil İnalcık¹², it should be noted that the

⁸ Concerning the Byzantine aristocrats who fled to Europe, cf. HARRIS (1995). Also of interest is the famous Hellenist John Argyropoulos, who was a professor of Greek literature at the Florentine Academy founded by the Medicis and later at the Academy of Rome, the city where he died in 1486. One of his sons, John, settled in Thessaloniki and thus the Argyropoulos family descended from this John for an extended period, as pointed out by RIZO RANGABÉ (1892): 2. Later, a certain Joasaph Argyropoulos became "metropolita" and assumed an important role (see *infra*), cf. IORGA (1935): 100. It seems that this family owned the castle of St. Nicholas on the island of Santorini until 1577, a place from which some members of the family were exiled to Crete after being conquered by the Ottomans. According to Rizo Rangabé (1892: 1-4), they became one of the most prominent families in Crete.

⁹ His mother, Eudocia Cantacuzena Palaeologina, had fled to Venice before the fall of Constantinople, marrying another Byzantine refugee, Matthew Spandounes, one of the Greek knights serving the Republic of Venice (the "stradioti"); he was honored in 1454 by Emperor Frederick III Habsburg with the titles of Earl and Knight of the Holy Roman Empire, and given land in the north of the Gulf of Corinth, as well. Cf. SPANDOUNES (1997): VIII-XII.

¹⁰ KAFADAR (1994): 595. Controversy with the Sultan over rent payment, however, forced Demetrios out, so he and his wife entered a monastery in Edirne in 1470. For more on this, cf. RUNCIMAN (1968): 181-182.

¹¹ NECİPOĞLU (2009): 229-230. About this family, see FASSOULAKIS (1973).

¹² İNALCIK (1954); on the process of Islamization in Byzantine Anatolia, cf. VRYONIS (1971).

Ottomans were very successful in integrating the remaining elites into the conquered territories.

Concerning the process of Islamization¹³, we can present many cases before and after the fall of Constantinople. For example, some members of the Palaeologus imperial family converted to Islam: Mehmed II's favorite, Hass Murad, and Mesih Pasha, who became one of the best Ottoman generals, Mehmed II's vizier and a grand vizier of Bayezid II (this Mesih Pasha participated in the attack on Rhodes in 1480; before rising to the post of vizier, he was the *beylerbey* of Rumelia). Both Hass Murad and Mesih Pasha belonged to the Palaeologus dynasty¹⁴, as well as Mahmud Pasha, a *beylerbey*, as well, and one of Mehmed II's top lieutenants. Mahmud Pasha's father was Greek and his mother the Serbian cousin of George Palaeologus¹⁵. Also of note is the brother of the duke of St. Sava Ladislav, who, after being a "guest" to Mehmed II in his youth, converted to Islam and became known as Sinan Pasha or Ahmed Pasha Herzeoğlu, *beylerbey* of Anatolia¹⁶. Another member of the Cantacuzenus family, Andronicus Cantacuzenus, who was a tax-farmer for the Sublime Porte around 1481, had also become a Muslim and changed his name to Mustafa¹⁷, and the same can be said for George Amiroutzes's sons, Basil and Alexander (from whom Mehmed II ordered an updated edition in Arabic of Ptolemy's *Geography*)¹⁸. We even know of some notable Italian people who embraced the culture of the conquerors, such as the nephew of the Genoese *podestà* of Pera, in Istanbul, who became a Muslim and married into the family of the Sultan himself¹⁹.

We could even add more notable cases of religious conversion, such as the son and the nephew of the last Byzantine emperor of Trebizond, David Megas Komnenos. After the surrender to the Ottomans in August of 1461, the entire

¹³ We could draw a parallel with Spain's Muslim "nazaries" elite in Castile, who converted to Christianity when Granada was conquered by the Christians. After doing so, they were granted certain privileges, they intermarried with the elite families from Castile and they were fully assimilated into the new ruling social class; cf. SORIA MESA (1992).

¹⁴ BALIVET (1992): 16; SPANDOUNES: XVI.

¹⁵ BRAYER-LEMERLE-LAURENT (1951): 80.

¹⁶ SPANDOUNES: XVI.

¹⁷ NECİPOĞLU (2009): 229.

¹⁸ RUNCIMAN (1990): 187. Some claimed that George Amiroutzes became Muslim, but most scholars would agree with Bryer: "George Amiroutzes himself does not seem to have bothered to convert", see BRYER (1998): 791.

¹⁹ BALIVET (1992): 16.

family moved to Edirne. Moreover, Komnenos' daughter Anna married Zaganos Pasha, *beylerbey* of Thessaly and Macedonia and formerly the grand vizier to Mehmed II. In fact, after the fall of Trebizond, a great number of Byzantine people settled in Istanbul, and some of the later families of Phanariots claimed to descend from them, including the Ypsilanti and the Mourousi families²⁰.

Certainly, cases like Anna Komnene were not uncommon at all. Some members of the Byzantine elite married into notable Ottoman families, even the royal family. Thus, the powerful Cantacuzenus family (they will appear in the course of this study very often) became related through marriage with high-ranking Ottomans, and many important Byzantine families (the Komnenos, Rhallis and Palaeologus) achieved the same with the House of Osman from very early on. Orhan himself (son and successor of the Ottoman royal dynasty's founder, Osman), married a Cantacuzene²¹. Later, Mara, the daughter of George Brancovich of Serbia and Irene Cantacuzene, married sultan Murad II in 1433; after widowing and retiring to Serbia, her stepson Mehmed II endowed Mara generously. The maternal grandfather of the historian Theodore Cantacuzenus, George Cantacuzenus, married a sister of the aforementioned Mesih Pasha, and a daughter of this George would marry another of Mehmed II's major pashas²².

Concerning the Byzantine families that adapted to the new situation but continued practicing Christianity, it must be mentioned first that Mehmed II ensured the existence of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, a fundamental institution whose continuity functioned as a point of reference and unifying element for the Greek community in the Ottoman capital and beyond²³. Furthermore, after the fall of Constantinople Mehmed II attempted to locate all the aristocratic Byzantine families hidden in the provinces and encouraged them to return and settle in Istanbul with the guarantee of certain privileges and immunities. Eighteen families took that offering and settled in the city²⁴. We should not forget to mention the "archontes" from the Despotate of

²⁰ VRYONIS (1969-1970): 272; for more on these families, see RIZO RANGABÉ (1892), and ZALLONY (1824): 239-240.

²¹ VRYONIS (1969-1970): 271.

²² BRAYER-LEMERLE-LAURENT (1951): 88-97. For the Byzantine family of Cantacuzenus, see NICOL (1968).

²³ On this issue, it is essential to read RUNCIMAN (1968); also, ARNAKIS (1952).

²⁴ Cf. RIZO RANGABÉ (1892): 129.

Morea, a province which fell to the Ottomans in 1460²⁵. This congruence of events made it easier for many elite Greek families during the second half of the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries to engage in commercial and speculative activities for the Ottoman Empire, as well as tax-farming, as Leopold von Ranke noted long ago. Once again, the protagonists were the Cantacuzenus, Palaeologus and Rhallis families, among others²⁶.

Owing to the endeavours of these Greek elites, the Gelibolu and Edirne mints were rented in 1481 at a cost of eighteen million *akçes* (360,000 gold ducats) to a company that included the above-mentioned Andronicus Cantacuzenus. The Cantacuzenus family also participated in the exploitation of the very lucrative precious metal mines in Serbia: two Cantacuzenus brothers rented with other people the gold and silver mines in Serbia for fourteen million *akçes* from 1474 until 1480²⁷. A family with a similar fate, the Soutzos of Epirus, also settled in Istanbul. According to Rizo Rangabé, during the Byzantine period they belonged to the aristocracy and their surname was Draco; the etymology of their new surname, Soutzos, might well have come from “soudci” (*sucu*), which means “water carrier”; some of their ancestors had perhaps discharged the duties of supplying water for Istanbul²⁸.

In this same commercial context, other powerful Greek elites appear, such as Constantine Caradja, who became food commissioner for the Ottoman Navy in 1560²⁹, and others such as the rich and influential Michael Cantacuzenus “Şeytanoğlu” (Devil’s son). The Cantacuzenus family was a powerful model of adaptation and success for many others in an environment that, though hostile *a priori*, also offered many opportunities for economic gain. Michael Cantacuzenus Şeytanoğlu is the most perfect and complete example of the Greek elites’ penchant for engaging in trade and other economic activities under the protection of the Sublime Porte. He also orchestrated new opportunities for other elites (as we shall describe below) to become involved in society and politics in the Romanian principalities³⁰.

²⁵ NECİPOĞLU (2009): 283.

²⁶ VON RANKE (1839): 88-89; see also MATSCHKE (2002): 102-106.

²⁷ İNALCIK (2000): 209-210.

²⁸ RIZO RANGABÉ (1892): 129-134.

²⁹ RIZO RANGABÉ (1892): 37-41; the Istanbulite origins, however, of this Byzantine family are uncertain.

³⁰ About “Şeytanoğlu”, cf. LEGRAND (1877): 1-13, and FALANGAS (2007). Additional information about his family is available in RIZO RANGABÉ (1892): 15-30. There are two different versions concerning

Michael Cantacuzenus was appointed by Süleyman the Magnificent to oversee the exploitation of the salt mines in the Black Sea coastal region; he also worked as a tax-farmer collecting revenues and was an imperial agent responsible for purchasing furs in Russia³¹. He built a very significant patrimony, which included his palace in Anchialos (currently known as Pomorie), in those days at a two-day boat ride from Istanbul, and control over hundred villages³². Thus, he lived as an authentic pasha in his palace, surrounded by many servants, slaves, horses and luxurious clothes. Someone commented that his patrimony surpassed that of the Sultan himself³³. After the defeat of Lepanto in 1571, he was even able to donate to the Sultan a total of fifteen galleys to restore the Ottoman naval fleet.

His wealth, his close relationship with the grand vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, and certain efforts in extortion allowed him to enjoy the power to appoint or depose princes of Wallachia and Moldova and some patriarchs, as well. He facilitated the exile of princess Mirzona of Wallachia and her children, and subsequently his close friend Alexander was appointed prince of Wallachia, reigning from 1568 until 1577. Cantacuzenus killed all the boyars who were against that decision. He wielded such great power in those lands that Gerlach called him “the true lord of Wallachia and Moldova”³⁴. Also, as a member of the group of Greek archontes who elected the new patriarchs, he facilitated the deposition of the patriarch Joasaph II (1544-1565)³⁵ and had him replaced with the Bulgarian Metrophane (who, thanks to the support of Michael and

his garish nickname. Crusius says that it came about simply because he had become hated by everyone, Muslims and Christians alike. By contrast, Dapontès argues that the moniker was given to him by an *imam*, who had at first been reluctant to call him Michael Çelebi (a very honorable name) after it had been coined by a vizier. Some time later, the *imam* indeed called him Michael Çelebi after having received a ship full of barley and butter as a gift from him. Upon hearing this news, the surprised vizier asked Michael what he has done for the *imam*, and when Şeytanoğlu told him about the offering, the vizier reportedly said, “Or you are the Devil, or you are the Devil’s son!” (LEGRAND [1877]: 10).

³¹ Cf. LEMERCIER-QUELQUEJAY-BENNIGSEN (1970).

³² After Cantacuzenus’ death, two boats were required to transport only a part of his huge patrimony to Istanbul; the rest was sold at a low price, hence the proverb that when one bought something cheap, “one bought it in the auction of Şeytanoğlu” (LEGRAND [1877]: 12).

³³ This comment was made by Ali bey, who was responsible for his execution; it was taken from IORGA (1935): 118, n. 5.

³⁴ IORGA (1935): 116.

³⁵ LEGRAND (1877): 4-5; FALANGAS (2007): 8.

his brother Antonius Cantacuzenus, had been appointed metropolitan of Larissa and Chios). Cantacuzenus was also influential in the election of Jeremiah II as a patriarch in 1572; Jeremiah II was a native of Anchialos, the place of residence of Cantacuzenus himself³⁶. “Şeytanoğlu” was described as a real bloodsucker of the ecclesiastical estate.

Cantacuzenus continued to be a powerful player during the time of Selim II, using certain matrimonial strategies with his offspring in the manner of the European aristocracy: some of his children married into the powerful and wealthy Rhallis family, rich Greek merchants with a Byzantine origin who were able to assume some important charges in the Orthodox Church, including the head of the Bulgarian Church in Trnovo. Upon her marriage, Şeytanoğlu’s daughter was endowed the huge sum of 20,000 ducats; even the metropolitan of Thessaloniki himself, a member of the Argyropoulos family and a good friend of the patriarch and Cantacuzenus, attended her wedding. His eldest son, Andronicus Cantacuzenus, also married a Rhallis in 1576³⁷, and Andronicus’ daughters married the future prince of Wallachia (Stephen the Deaf, 1591-1592) and the prince of Moldova, Emmanuel Aaron (who reigned from 1582 to 1595). It seems that Cantacuzenus himself tried to marry the daughter of the prince of Wallachia (Mircea the Shepherd) and princess Chiajna, although the wedding was never consummated.

Hated by the Turks, the Jews and the Christians, Michael Cantacuzenus’ demise was coming. The new Sultan, Murad III, wanted to get rid of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, and he thought the best way to achieve that would be to attack Sokollu’s friend, Şeytanoğlu. In addition, complaints were coming in to Murad III from the khan of Crimea. At the instigation of Şeytanoğlu’s own nephew, Constantinus Palaeologus (who was exiled there in Crimea), the khan of the Tatars reported that Michael Cantacuzenus was to blame for the prolonged agitation and great disorders in the Romanian principalities, and that because of him many janissaries and Ottoman officers had been killed in Moldova. By 1576, Cantacuzenus found himself in prison in the fortress of the Seven Towers on the outskirts of Istanbul. Although granted a brief release, he was executed

³⁶ IORGA (1935): 90-91, 113-114. Immediately after the appointment of Jeremiah II in 1572, Nikephoros Paraschis, a maternal nephew of Michael Şeytanoğlu, began a brilliant forty-year career in the charges of the exarch and archdeacon of the Patriarchate in the Romanian principalities. See PANOU (2007): 88-90 and note 63.

³⁷ On the marriages of Şeytanoğlu’s sons, see LEGRAND (1877): 2; IORGA (1935): 116.

shortly afterwards. His tragic end might have come about by the fact of his being an imperial furrier; his ventures in fur trade with Ivan the Terrible's Russia (a new enemy of the Sublime Porte) made Murad III fearful of an alliance between Şeytanoglu and Ivan the Terrible that could possibly compromise Ottoman safety on the northern flank. Michael Cantacuzenus was captured and executed on March 3, 1578, hanged on his palace door in Anchialos³⁸.

Even after his death, Şeytanoglu's presence continued to be felt in all aspects of politics in the Romanian principalities. His son, Andronicus Cantacuzenus³⁹, enjoyed great influence there, and changes were being felt in the region with the participation of a greater number of families; thus, a new phase of power for the Greek elites in the Ottoman Empire had begun to rise.

3. A NEW HORIZON: THE ROMANIAN PRINCIPALITIES

From the very beginning of Ottoman rule, the Romanian principalities enjoyed a certain autonomy that made them different from the rest of the Ottoman provinces. Generally, Ottoman provinces were administered directly by the Sublime Porte through the *sancakbeys*, but such direct intervention never occurred in Moldova and Wallachia because those regions could elect their own princes⁴⁰. Moldova and Wallachia also offered many opportunities for people to get rich because, unlike the other Ottoman provinces, acquisitions and investments were never confiscated by the Sublime Porte, and as such these lands became very attractive for a lot of families from the "Levant" –Hellenized Italians and Albanians, as well as Greeks from Epirus and Phanariots from Istanbul–. All of them married their children into the boyar families of the great Romanian lords; moreover, in the principalities they could display their

³⁸ It seems that he was hanged, but Dapontes claims that he was beheaded. See LEGRAND (1877): 11.

³⁹ Aside from this son of Michael Cantacuzenus, we should also mention the sons of Antonius Cantacuzenus, Michael's brother: Constantin, Manuel and George, each of whom became influential by the second half of the sixteenth century. After the death of the prominent Joseph Nassi, the Duchy of Naxos (which Selim II had created expressly for Nassi in 1566) went to "the noble lord Constantin Cantacuzenus, who rules there", cf. IORGA (1935): 117.

⁴⁰ For a general view of the status of the Romanian principalities under Ottoman rule, see: SUGAR (1996): 113-141; JELAVICH (1983): 53-57 and 99-112; OȚETEȚA (1970); PANAITTE (1999-2000); and MAXIM (1985).

wealth and patrimony in ways that were restricted in Istanbul for the *millet* people⁴¹.

Although a significant number of exiled Byzantine families settled in the Romanian territories following the last days of Constantinople, the truth is that their presence in Moldova and Wallachia became much more significant in the last decades of the sixteenth century and during the seventeenth century. As Andrei Pippidi points out, the heaviest period of “Levantine” influence in the principalities began around 1575, with their presence increasing so rapidly and their influence growing so progressively in the courts of the Romanian princes that the native boyars started to get worried⁴². The newcomers became “Romanized Hellens” who formed a civil servant aristocracy counter to the traditional Romanian aristocracy, a group whose hereditary influence and landowning nobility began to be threatened. According to the Romanian historian Xenopol, there emerged a clear difference between the Greeks who came to the principalities in the seventeenth century and those who had come before: while this group were well integrated into Romanian society (the Cantacuzenus, Ducas, Rosetti and Ghika families), the Greeks who arrived later largely Hellenized and denationalized the Romanian elites⁴³.

These Greek immigrants who arrived *en masse* enjoyed the fact that some Romanian princes had already been very Hellenized by the seventeenth century, having lived among the Phanariots in Istanbul for some time. Therefore, as they gained political power, they were surrounded by many Greeks who already held government posts. As such, we can understand the numerous protests against the Greek people by the Romanian boyars, as well as the anti-Greek discourse that would later result in some very radical measures and actions⁴⁴.

We encounter an early example of this anti-Greek discourse during the first decades of the seventeenth century in Wallachia (anti-Greek criticism came later in Moldova, in the mid-seventeenth century) from the metropolitan Matthew of Myra, curiously a Greek himself. He spoke in bad terms of the

⁴¹ JELAVICH (1983): 102.

⁴² PIPPIDI (1975): 232-233.

⁴³ According to Xenopol (1896: 181-182), the Phanariots represented the Greek element that, once established in Romanian society, would function as the dissolving principle of Romanian nationality in favor of the Greeks themselves.

⁴⁴ OȚETEĂ (1970): 236-237. Most of the information that follows is taken from NICOARĂ (2003).

Greeks and Phanariots coming from Istanbul, describing them as cunning conspirators and masters of extortion and robbery in their capacity as political dignitaries and merchant-traders. Matthew's rhetoric formed the basis of the Greek stereotypes that would remain prevalent in the Romanian principalities over the next two centuries.

The complaints stated that the Greeks had literally "invaded the country" and monopolized public offices, eliminating traditional morality and introducing a wild tax system and new methods of extortion. This kind of complaints: i) induced a boyar revolt against the Greek people in October 1630 in Oltenia; ii) provoked the murder of several Greek lords in Moldova and the exile of prince Alexandru Iliăș in 1633; and iii) fomented riots in Wallachia against prince Leon Tomșa⁴⁵. Even the famous high *postelnic* ('chamberlain') of Wallachia, Constantin Cantacuzenus (who belonged to the Byzantine family of Cantacuzenus in Istanbul, yet he had been settled in Wallachia since 1633)⁴⁶, found himself in the middle of controversy, but only insofar as distinguishing between Greeks who were helpful to the Romanian principalities and those who were exploiters. It is worthwhile to note that, among the new boyars, the Greek Cantacuzenus would emerge as the leaders of the native boyars' party, while the Băleni family would lead the Greek party in Wallachia.

In similar anti-Greek measures in the religious sphere, certain Romanian princes (Matei Bassarab in 1639 and Constantin Șerban, later), successors of the "Philhellenes", attempted to eradicate the rising influence of the Greek

⁴⁵ OȚETEĂ (1970): 237.

⁴⁶ Although some members of the Cantacuzenus family continued living in Istanbul (as pointed out by Iorga [1935]: 122-123), the vast majority of them settled in the Romanian principalities. Following a stampede that occurred in the capital in 1633, many of them fled Istanbul perhaps to avoid the reprisals and purges conducted by Murad IV after the rebellion of 1632. We don't know the ultimate reasons for their flight, but we have some information about what happened to the grandchildren of Michael Cantacuzenus Șeytanoglu. Another Michael Cantacuzenus was killed in Istanbul in 1633; he left a son, Demetrius, who became prince of Moldova, and a daughter, Cassandra, who married Nicholas Mavrocordato, who would become a future prince. Demetrius Cantacuzenus took refuge in Crimea in 1633, with the Tatars, where he converted to Islam. Thomas Cantacuzenus arrived in Moldova in 1633, where he became a *vornic* ('chief governor'). George Cantacuzenus, progenitor of the Moldavian branch of the family, also settled in Moldova in 1633 and became a high *vistier* ('chief treasurer'). Constantin Cantacuzenus, who settled in Wallachia in 1633, became the progenitor of the Wallachian branch of the family. Later he became a high *postelnic* and married Helena, the daughter of prince Radou Șerban Bassaraba. Bella Cantacuzene married a Rosetti; her son, Antonio Rosetti Cantacuzenus, became the prince of Moldova and reigned from 1675 to 1678. See RIZO RANGABÉ (1892): 15-30.

Orthodox Church in the principalities. Many Greek religious figures had infiltrated the local ecclesiastic hierarchy, Mount Athos dominated the Romanian monasteries and the Slavonic language was replaced by Greek in the religious liturgy⁴⁷. As a result, Constantin Șerban decreed the dismissal of Greeks from high offices in the Romanian monasteries. In this growing anti-Greek atmosphere, prince Radu Leon's December 1669 decree stands out for its radicality: that Greek people should be directly expelled from Wallachia⁴⁸.

Let us now analyze the presence of the Greek elites in the Romanian principalities, grouping them into two categories: those who were involved in commercial affairs and those who exercised political office, although we must say that, quite often, many practiced both activities at the same time.

In an early and well known study, Stoianovich remarked upon the existence of Greek traders in the Balkans and Romanian territories during this period⁴⁹. Chiefly livestock traders, many of them came from Epirus, a mountainous region in which the abundance of cattle and cattle products made livestock trade a lucrative endeavor⁵⁰. Thus, we know about John Giormas, a rich Greek merchant from Epirus and princess Chiajna's lover (she was the mother of Peter the Younger, prince of Wallachia) who built an important commercial complex in Bucharest. We also know about Zotos Tzizaras, another Greek livestock merchant who came from Epirus; his mother belonged to the aristocratic Byzantine Apsaras family; Tzizaras married the only daughter of prince Peter the Lame⁵¹. The trade of these Greek people in the Romanian principalities was clearly oriented to the Ottoman market, especially to the needs of the army

⁴⁷ VEINSTEIN (1989): 310.

⁴⁸ «When they come to the country and rise to high positions, they do not follow the laws of the land, but spoil all good things and bring bad and oppressing laws and turn our boyars one against the other with plots and schemes, breaking God's laws, and seek other offices and ranks in order to enrich their houses and look down upon the men of the land, alienating them from us with envy and abuses and ruthlessly oppress the poor and show great enmity to all the people of the land», quoted by NICOARĂ (2003): 130.

⁴⁹ STOIANOVICH (1960). In opinion of this author, the Greek traders penetrated inland, forcing farmers to sell their goods at prices even lower than those set by the State. They also purchased products both for private profit and with which to supply the Ottoman capital, effectively monopolizing the market (STOIANOVICH [1960]: 241).

⁵⁰ FALANGAS (2007): 13. For more on this subject, see CAMARIANO-CIORAN (1984).

⁵¹ FALANGAS (2007): 8-10. In the city of Lwów, in the state of Poland-Lithuania, the richest citizen was the Cretan Constantin Korniaktos. Falangas writes about Yannakis Simotas from Epirus, a trader in Istanbul, Moldova and Poland-Lithuania (FALANGAS [2007]: 9).

and to people living in Istanbul⁵². In fact, the Romanian principalities offered excellent production of grain and pasture lands, an ideal combination for the cattle trade. According to Dimitri Cantemir, traders used to buy cheap livestock in Moldova only to resell it for two or three times the purchasing cost in Istanbul and other cities of the Ottoman Empire⁵³.

Cattle trade was so important throughout the Romanian principalities that several princes had engaged in this lucrative activity before ascending to the throne, and some even continued trading during their tenure: George Ducas (prince of Wallachia and Moldova between 1666 and 1684) was, in the words of some contemporary chroniclers, simultaneously “a prince, a grand treasurer, and a merchant and customs officer because he himself had taken the supply of the country”⁵⁴. We can also explore the earlier case of Mircea the Shepherd (prince of Wallachia between 1546 and 1554), who had for a long time served as imperial furrier for the Ottoman Seraglio (like Michael Cantacuzenus Şeytanoğlu) and who owed his nickname to the huge quantity of sheep that he held around the Danube River⁵⁵.

As pointed out above, those Greek-Levantine traders in Wallachia and Moldova intermarried with local elites as a way to settle and prosper in Romanian society. When they married, they became connected with the native boyars and were able to obtain places among the various networks of local influence⁵⁶. If they themselves failed to marry into elite society, they would try to do so through their children. For example, the rich Greek merchant Scarlatos (grandfather of Alexander Mavrocordato the Exaporite, see below), who supplied meat for the Ottoman Seraglio, tried unsuccessfully to have his daughter marry the prince of Wallachia, Matthew Bassaraba Brancovan, who reigned between 1633 and 1654⁵⁷.

Complete integration into elite Romanian society could also be attained through political responsibilities and the holding of office. Thus, we find

⁵² CVETKOVA (1966).

⁵³ PĂUN (2007): 171-172.

⁵⁴ Quoted by PĂUN (2007): 174.

⁵⁵ IORGA (1935): 134-135.

⁵⁶ PĂUN (2007): 181; for additional information regarding the Cantacuzenus family in the Romanian principalities during the sixteenth century, see CAZACU (1995-1996); an actualized bibliography in FLORISTÁN (2012).

⁵⁷ CARRA (1777): 112-117.

Levantines (with large numbers of Greeks among them) who dealt in various fields related to finance, supply, and foreign service and affairs⁵⁸. Andronicus Cantacuzenus, Şeytanoglu's son, stands as an example. He was an influential cattle merchant who, despite his residence in Istanbul, held important political responsibilities in the Romanian lands, serving as the Great Ban of Craiova, high treasurer in Moldova and political representative for the principalities in Istanbul (*kapu-kehaya*). Through his funding, the young Mihai Viteazul (Michael the Brave, the Romanian national hero) was able to become in 1593 prince of Wallachia. When Michael the Brave led an anti-Ottoman rebellion that ultimately failed in 1601, Andronicus Cantacuzenus, sharing the same fate as the rebel prince, was beheaded by certain boyars who were loyal to the Sublime Porte⁵⁹.

Other members of the Cantacuzenus family also gained prominent positions. Andronicus' son, Thomas Cantacuzenus, was a high *stolnic* ('chief seneschal')⁶⁰ and George and another Thomas were in the service of prince Basile the Wolf (1634-1653), who was known as the so-called "enemy of the Greeks" for his Romanian patriotism⁶¹. In short, according to Păun, there were several members of the Cantacuzenus family that exercised the office of high treasurer⁶². Similarly, the Rosetti family, of Italian origin but strongly Hellenized after their settlement in Istanbul, and traditionally devoted to the trade of precious stones⁶³. We might also highlight the case of the *postelnic* Dumitrache Paleologul, the son of the Greek merchant Manuel Palaeologus. Born in Istanbul but having settled in Moldova by the end of the sixteenth century, Dumitrache was a prosperous merchant in Lwów (in southeastern Poland at that time –in the State of Poland-Lithuania–, now a city in western Ukraine) in

⁵⁸ For more on this issue, cf. PĂUN (2007).

⁵⁹ FALANGAS (2007): 10-11. According to Iorga, Andronicus was given the honor in some cases to be kingmaker, deciding the Wallachian throne. He supported Michael the Brave, prince of Wallachia from 1593 to 1601. According to Apetrei (2010: 216), Michael the Brave himself belonged to the Cantacuzenus family through the maternal branch.

⁶⁰ APETREI (2010): 243; according to Rizo Rangabé, he was high *vornic* in Moldova.

⁶¹ George and Thomas's brother, Constantin Cantacuzenus, a very well educated man, married Helena, the wealthy heiress and daughter of the prince of Wallachia, Radu Şerban; among their sons, we can find Şerban (the future prince of Wallachia, 1678/79-1688) and Constantin (who was prince from 1654 to 1658). See IORGA (1935): 182.

⁶² PĂUN (2007): 164.

⁶³ STOURDZA (1913): 88, n. 3; for more on the Rosetti family, see RIZO RANGABÉ (1892): III-117.

the 1580s and 1590s. He amassed a good fortune and married a woman from the Moldovan elite who had Greek origins, as well. After marrying, Paleologul became the brother-in-law of Jeremiah Movilă, the prince of Moldova⁶⁴.

Many other families carved out significant social spaces for themselves: the Rhallis family, exemplified by the high *stolnic* Nicholas Rhallis⁶⁵, and the Callimachis, whom Rizo Rangabé suggests were of Byzantine origin; their origins, however, are unclear because they settled in Moldova early in the fifteenth century⁶⁶. The case of Theodore Callimachis is worth noting: he was a *vornic* ('chief governor') who lived in Bucovina with a huge patrimony and was married to prince George Ghika's daughter. We must also consider the Caradja family, with Constantin Caradja as high *postelnic* in Moldova in 1591⁶⁷, and a certain Michael Caradja, a merchant who later became one of prince Michael the Brave's chief advisors⁶⁸.

Concluding this section, we should make clear that the most successful of these families were the Cantacuzenus and the Rosettis, both strongly influenced by the Romanian culture in the early years⁶⁹. These families not only held political offices in the Romanian principalities, but also, generations later, became princes themselves: Demetrius Cantacuzenus (prince of Moldova in 1674-1675 and 1684-1685), Șerban Cantacuzenus (prince of Wallachia from 1679 to 1688), and Antonio Rosetti (prince of Moldova from 1675 to 1678). However, by the last third of the seventeenth century, some important Greek families from Istanbul had entered a social-political phase characterized by direct participation in the Ottoman government. This would bring them elevated status and new possibilities for social advancement and public recognition.

⁶⁴ APETREI (2010): 216-217; and IORGA (1935): 120-121. According to Apetrei (2010: 231-232), Manuel Paleologus was Constantin Palaeologus's brother (and the nephew of Michael Cantacuzenus) and he was forced into exile in Crimea, having sought intrigue against his uncle and causing his dramatic end.

⁶⁵ PĂUN (2007): 176.

⁶⁶ RIZO RANGABÉ (1892): 11-13. In fact, in Moldova they used to call themselves Calmăsul, and later changed their surnames to the maybe more "Greek-sounding" Callimachis, during the Hellenization of the Romanian principalities.

⁶⁷ RIZO RANGABÉ (1892): 37-41.

⁶⁸ PĂUN (2007): 172.

⁶⁹ See n. 46 *supra*.

4. PARTICIPATION IN THE OTTOMAN ADMINISTRATION: DRAGOMANS SERVING THE SUBLIME PORTE

Because it was forbidden for Muslims in the Ottoman Empire to learn foreign languages, many of them beginning in the sixteenth century used interpreters, or “dragomans of the Porte”, to read and understand important documents. Such dragomans were usually appointed members from the different *millet* (for instance, the Italian, Jewish and Greek communities) and some were unofficial renegades; a lot of them worked for the Sublime Porte and at the same time offered their services to the various European embassies in Istanbul⁷⁰.

Beginning in the second half of the seventeenth century, a new period emerged for the Greek elites under Ottoman rule owing to changing dynamics in international politics. These changes required the Sublime Porte to adapt to new conceptions of diplomatic relations. Certainly, the Ottomans began to pay more attention to diplomacy as the permanent foreign embassies in Istanbul became more influential⁷¹. The Ottoman Empire required an emerging diplomatic corps comprised of people skilled not only in foreign languages, but in international politics, as well. For this reason, the posts of “grand dragoman” and “dragoman of the fleet” were created in the second half of the seventeenth century and became fundamental parts of the Ottoman administrative system, very important posts that would be held, almost exclusively until 1821, by the Phanariot families, the Greek elites living in the Phanar quarter of Istanbul. Thus, these Greeks began participating in an active and very direct way in the Sublime Porte’s administration⁷². The post of grand dragoman of the Porte was crucial for foreign policy along with that of *reisülküttab* (chief of clerks in the grand vizier’s chancery), and whoever held the post enjoyed some privileges: exemption from taxes and customs duties for himself, his family and servants, the luxury of being judged only by the grand vizier himself, the right to wear a

⁷⁰ ÁGOSTON (2009): 85-87; and HITZEL (1995).

⁷¹ On the role of the embassies and their staff in Istanbul, cf. ROTHMAN (2009); also, PIPPIDI (1972).

⁷² This was especially true following their becoming princes in Wallachia and Moldova in 1711. In the opinion of Philliou, one of the experts on the subject, the Phanariots became increasingly essential to the Ottomans in some important areas, such as European relations, grand dragoman duties, the supply of food to Istanbul, and governance of the Romanian principalities, strategically vital regions for the Sublime Porte. See PHILLIOU (2009): 153.

beard, the right to legally wear ermine furs and a headdress as an Ottoman *bey*, the right to carry a curved sword, and permission to ride through the streets on horseback with at least four escorts⁷³.

The first to be honored with the title of “grand dragoman” was Panaiotis Nikousios (c. 1613-1673)⁷⁴. Born in Istanbul, he received an excellent education in the Italian University of Padua, where he studied medicine and learned several languages, like many other young Greeks trained in European universities⁷⁵. His professional knowledge of medicine along with his good relationship with the grand vizier Köprülü allowed him to attain the post of personal physician for this powerful family. In addition, his knowledge in languages and politics secured for him a post as interpreter for the Austrian embassy in Istanbul from 1648 to 1660. During these years, he established friendships with certain Venetian interpreters, and in doing so he was able to acquire a great deal of information regarding the Sublime Porte’s political situation in relation to foreign powers⁷⁶. His marriage to a Cantacuzenus woman granted him great influence among the Phanariots and also knowledge about what was happening in the Romanian principalities, territory of which the Cantacuzenus family was intimately familiar⁷⁷. Panaiotis also worked as an interpreter or dragoman for the Porte beginning in 1661, undertaking an important role in the negotiations that followed the surrender of Candia in September 1669, which effectively ended the long war in Crete against Venice. Panaiotis’ personal success in those negotiations (and his success in collecting taxes in Mykonos) earned him the new post of grand

⁷³ The other post, dragoman of the fleet, was charged with accompanying the *kaptanpasha* on his maritime rounds, collecting taxes from the Aegean islands and the coastal cities of Anatolia, and providing valuable information about what was happening in those Ottoman territories.

⁷⁴ Some biographical information appears in HERING (1994) and JANOS (2005).

⁷⁵ For additional academic context, including the education of Greeks in Europe, cf. HENDERSON (1970) and DIALETIS-GAVROGLU-PATINIOTIS (1999).

⁷⁶ ROTHMAN (2009): 781-782. Close relationships (sometimes even family relationships) among the different dynasties of dragomans settled in Istanbul should be of interest. A dragoman of Venice, Bartolomeo Bruti, married the daughter of Mathias del Faro, a dragoman of Austria; in 1673, Marco Antonio Mamuca, another dragoman of Austria, married the daughter of Cristoforo Tarsia, a dragoman of Venice; their son, Cristoforo Mamuca, later held a post in the Austrian embassy in Istanbul, cf. PIPPIDI (1972): 246 and 251. A study of the figure of the dragoman using prosopography would be valuable.

⁷⁷ STOURDZA (1913): 29; for more on the close connections among some Greek and Italian dragomans with the Romanian elites, cf. PIPPIDI (1972): 239.

dragoman, created especially by the grand vizier and his friend Köprülüzâde Fazıl Ahmed Pasha.

As pointed out above, Panaiotis exerted great influence among the Phanariots, which meant, of course, that he also influenced the Orthodox Patriarchate on issues related to the Greek community in the Ottoman Empire. Through this influence and his funding of some Orthodox churches, he and his wife secured the dismissal of the patriarch of Constantinople, Dionysius Comnenus IV. Panaiotis also obtained from the sultan an imperial *ferman* which guaranteed to the Greeks possession of certain places in the Holy Land, including the Holy Sepulchre, a feat that caused major upset among the Catholic European countries. A man of vast culture, a bibliophile and a passionate seeker of ancient texts and manuscripts, Panaiotis Nikousios collected a magnificent library which, after his death, interested Colbert himself, the minister of finance under Louis XIV⁷⁸.

Panaiotis was succeeded as grand dragoman by Alexander Mavrocordato the Exaporite (1641-1709), a man whose training and professional background were very similar to that of his predecessor. Mavrocordato would become the progenitor of the most important family among the Phanariots; on several occasions members of his family became princes in the Romanian principalities during the eighteenth century⁷⁹. Alexander was the son of Nicholas Mavrocordato (a silk merchant from Chios who settled in Istanbul) and Roxandra Scarlatos (who was the daughter of a major trader and meat supplier for the Seraglio, Scarlatos Beglitzis or Sorgui Scarlatos)⁸⁰. After receiving a solid education in the school of the Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul, his mother sent him in 1657 to the Greek college of St. Athanasius in Rome, to complete his studies⁸¹. Having completed three years in Rome, he entered universities in Padua and Bologna, where he finally received a

⁷⁸ Panaiotis Nikousios died on October 2, 1673 during the Ottoman military campaign in Poland. For more on his personal library and Colbert's interest in it, see PIPPIDI (1972): 248; GALLAND (1881): 19, 179 and 273-75; STOURDZA (1913): 28.

⁷⁹ A great deal of information about the Mavrocordato family can be found in STOURDZA (1913); see also RIZO RANGABÉ (1892): 71-76; CARRA (1777): III-135; and LEGRAND (1886). On Alexander, *cf.* JANOS (2005); see also BARTSOCAS (1973).

⁸⁰ CARRA (1777): III; ZALLONY (1824): 22, n. I.

⁸¹ TSIRPANLIS (1980).

doctorate in medicine and philosophy in 1664. His thesis was on Harvey's blood circulation theory⁸².

Back in Istanbul, Alexander taught at the school of the Orthodox Patriarchate, devoting time to literature and medicine, as well. According to Stourdza, his success with certain patients caught the attention of some of the Sublime Porte's high dignitaries and also of the Sultan himself⁸³. This attention earned him the post of personal doctor for grand vizier Köprülüzâde Fazıl Ahmed Pasha. Alexander was one of the founders of the new Patriarchal Academy in Istanbul in 1664/1665, along with Manolaki of Kastoria, the wealthy imperial furrier⁸⁴. The French orientalist Antoine Galland stated that both Alexander and Manolaki participated in trade companies⁸⁵. Owing to Alexander's interest in Greek, he published practically all of his studies in that language, and even wrote a grammar used widely in Greek schools and academies. Stourdza noted that he wanted the classic Greek language to be taught in schools and for Byzantium to be reborn as ancient Greece –hence the symbolism of his heraldry: the phoenix rising from the ashes and coming out of the flames–⁸⁶. In 1670, Alexander Mavrocordato married the daughter of John Chrysoscoleos (and granddaughter of Ilias Voda, prince of Moldova), so once again we uncover a link between the Phanariots and boyard families in the Romanian principalities. John Chrysoscoleos, who was a very rich and influential Greek elite in Istanbul, introduced Alexander to the grand dragoman Panaiotis Nikousios, and Alexander started working for the latter as personal secretary in 1671⁸⁷. When Panaiotis died in 1673, Alexander assumed the post of grand dragoman of the Porte⁸⁸.

⁸² His thesis was titled *De instrumento respirationis et circulatione sanguinis*; for more on this, see STOURDZA (1913): 35. According to Pippidi, Alexander had the opportunity to study in Padua and Rome thanks to help from the French ambassador in Istanbul (PIPPIDI [1972]: 253). Although he had deep medical knowledge, he never spread it among the Ottomans, so the innovative ideas in Harvey's theories became known in the Ottoman Empire only later, during the late eighteenth century. Cf. RUSSELL (1990): 259.

⁸³ STOURDZA (1913): 35.

⁸⁴ BALAN-ROMAN (1990).

⁸⁵ Alexander Mavrocordato formed a trade company with Manolaki of Kastoria in 1672, but their ventures were unsuccessful. See GALLAND (1881): 170-171.

⁸⁶ STOURDZA (1913): 35-36.

⁸⁷ STOURDZA (1913): 37-38.

⁸⁸ Alexander Mavrocordato, also a great bibliophile, took many books from Panaiotis' library. See PÄUN (2008): 75, n. 55.

Alexander Mavrocordato was a complete authority on all events related to the Ottoman Empire's foreign policy between the years 1673 and 1699, the year the Treaty of Karlowitz was signed⁸⁹. He contributed to Ottoman diplomacy, applying certain manners and more polite methods in the style of the Europeans in bilateral relations with foreign powers; these manners and methods were totally new for the Ottomans, whose former ways had been unreciprocal and unilateralist, based on their perception of moral and cultural superiority to Christian Europe. Their change of mind was obviously influenced by the unfavorable political situation following the failed second siege of Vienna in 1683. Between that and their defeat at Zenta in 1697, the Sublime Porte suffered fourteen years of military failures and began to understand that the Ottoman army as a political deterrent was clearly no longer sufficient⁹⁰.

Mavrocordato continued gaining honors and awards: in 1688 he was appointed "plenipotentiary ambassador" and travelled on a diplomatic mission to Vienna, where he was greeted by emperor Leopold I (Alexander's father in law, John Chrysoscoleos, was in the Ottoman retinue in Vienna). After the defeat at Zenta in September 1697, which led to a Christian uprising in the Balkans against the Ottomans, Alexander remained loyal to the Sublime Porte; for his loyalty and for his services and long career, he was awarded in May 1698 the title of "exaporite" ('intimate secretary') of the Porte⁹¹ and the rank of "illustrious prince". Immediately, the sultan entrusted him to peace negotiations, and in January 1699 he signed the Treaty of Karlowitz. Scholars point out that Alexander's negotiating ability saved and restored the Ottoman Empire's foreign policy during those years⁹². In achieving the treaty, the Ottoman delegation, headed by the *reisülküttab* Rami Mehmed Efendi and Alexander Mavrocordato himself, far from showing weakness, displayed the pomp of a still powerful empire.

Upon his death, Alexander left his heirs a large patrimony, but before dying he had conceived of a brilliant plan to seal his legacy: he married his daughter

⁸⁹ Concerning his diplomatic activities, cf. CAMARIANO (1970).

⁹⁰ Cf. NAFF (1963); also, SICKER (2000).

⁹¹ STOURDZA (1913): 46; in the opinion of Carra (1777: 121), Mavrocordato was honored with the appellation "exaporite" after Karlowitz.

⁹² Concerning the Treaty of Karlowitz, see ABOU-EL-HAJ (1967).

to Matthew, the son of the prince of Wallachia, Gregory Ghika II⁹³; and he married his famous son Nicholas Mavrocordato to Cassandra Cantacuzene, the daughter of prince Stephen Cantacuzenus⁹⁴. It is that Nicholas Mavrocordato who in 1711 begins the period known as the “Phanariot” when he is appointed prince of Moldova (although he had been prince of Moldova before, from November 1709 until 1710). From 1711 until the Greek Revolution of 1821, the Romanian princes were members of Phanariot families settled in Istanbul, but this history exceeds the purpose and the chronological limits of this paper.

We should remark, however, that prior to the eighteenth century, when the post of grand dragoman was created, the Sublime Porte had already considered the possibility of appointing Greeks from Phanariot families to become princes in Wallachia and Moldova; this decision was owing to the numerous cases of treason that were occurring among the princes who were native Romanian boyars. The idea to appoint Greeks as princes, while present during much of the sixteenth century⁹⁵, gained a great deal more attraction during the second half of the seventeenth century. There exist sufficient references on this matter. Thus, according to Matthew Cantacuzenus, the grand vizier Köprülü (who were of Albanian origin and who enjoyed a close relationship with the grand dragoman Panaiotis Nikousios, as pointed out above) tried to directly impose Greeks to rule in the Romanian provinces; in fact, George Ghika (who was prince of Moldova in 1658 and 1659 and prince of Wallachia in 1659 and 1660) was himself an Albanian born in the same town in which Köprülü was born⁹⁶.

We know that in April 1658, the Sultan sent a young Greek educated in Istanbul to the Moldovan capital of Iași to become prince, but we have no information beyond that⁹⁷. In the following year, a joint rebellion of Wallachia and Moldova quelled by the Ottomans underlined to a greater degree the intentions of the Sublime Porte, which during the 1660s and the 1670s at times

⁹³ According to Iorga (1935: 224), a son from this marriage became a prince in both Wallachia and Moldova several times.

⁹⁴ STOURDZA (1913): 95.

⁹⁵ MATEI (1973): 89. For a short period, even the vizier Satırcı Mehmed reigned as *beylerbey* of Moldova and Wallachia following the Ottoman army's entrance into Bucharest on August 26, 1595. See MEHMED (1975): 399-400.

⁹⁶ On the origins of the Ghika family, cf. RIZO RANGABÉ (1892): 45-49; CARRA (1777): 87-92.

⁹⁷ PANAITTE (1999-2000): 63, n. 71.

had imposed their own princes⁹⁸, some of whom were of Greek origin or strongly Hellenized, like George Ducas and Antonio Rosetti. Shortly thereafter, in 1666, the Venetian *bailo* Giorgio Cornaro sent a letter to the doge of Venice informing of the Ottoman decision to appoint Greeks from Istanbul as princes of Moldova, Wallachia and Transylvania. Their reasoning was that the Greeks were more loyal and such a system was preferable to replacing the native Romanian princes with Turkish pashas acting as the *sancakbeys* in the rest of the Ottoman provinces⁹⁹. The situation in the principalities became especially critical in 1673, when, during the siege of the fortress of Hotin, the betrayal of the Romanian princes caused the Ottomans to be defeated by the Polish troops of Jan Sobieski¹⁰⁰; such acts of treason would continue in the following decades¹⁰¹. As a result of these events, and owing to the delicate situation through the increasingly important principalities, the Ottomans gave their confidence to the Greek elites from Istanbul, the Phanariots, who raised their positions from dragomans to Romanian princes. Here the Prephanariot period ends and the Phanariot period begins.

5. CONCLUSION

Throughout the present study, the global valuation that we can ultimately posit about the Greek elites in the Ottoman Empire is far from negative. By contrast, the historical data reflect a general situation quite positive. Therefore, we need not agree with Iorga when he suggests that, to avoid converting to Islam, the Byzantine aristocracy under Ottoman rule was wisely hidden for some time¹⁰². As noted above, many of the elites did not hesitate to become Muslims, and those who did not convert to Islam remained perfectly visible

⁹⁸ PIPPIDI (1975): 237.

⁹⁹ MATEI (1973): 89.

¹⁰⁰ PANAITI (1999-2000): 63.

¹⁰¹ In 1687-88 Șerban Cantacuzenus and in 1690 Constantin Cantemir each engaged in secret negotiations with Austria; Constantin Brancoveanu secretly established a treaty of alliance with Peter the Great of Russia in 1709; soon after, in 1711, Dimitri Cantemir allied with the Russians in a formal manner.

¹⁰² "(...) la noblesse byzantine, qui, por éviter le passage à l'islam, s'était prudemment terrée pendant quelque temps", N. IORGA (1935): 9.

through their participation in business and civil activities; in fact, some of the persons in charge of collecting taxes and customs duties for the Sublime Porte belonged to the Palaeologus, Cantacuzenus and Rhallis families. These notables or *archontes*, at the forefront of the Greek community, had good relationships with the Ottoman authorities, whether in Istanbul or in territories like Wallachia and Moldova, and some of them found new opportunities to get rich. In this sense, the case of Michael Şeytanoğlu is emblematic: he was a close friend of the grand vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha and a part of a very select group of powerful figures inside the Ottoman government, despite belonging to the Greek *millet*. We suppose he was not the only one, and subsequent studies would do well to focus on others like him, still buried in the folds of history.

That good relationship with the Ottoman higher-ups turned into a real commitment, a deep-reaching involvement with the Sublime Porte in the second half of the seventeenth century in the figure of the grand dragoman. Panaiotis Nikousios and Alexander Mavrocordato formed, in a certain way, the base of the following period, the period in which the Greek elites settled in Istanbul became princes in Wallachia and Moldova. Such positions allowed them, in a sense, to reclaim and redeem their glorious past.

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