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The Phanariots before 1821*

We know about the dramatic events which followed the Fall of Constantinople in May 1453, how the city was sacked and the inhabitants slain or captured. Although we have no idea how many *Romioi* were eventually left in the city, we do know that immediately afterwards Sultan Mehmet II's first concern was to repopulate Constantinople, because he intended to make it the seat of his empire. By introducing a variety of inducements to attract settlers, and also by forcibly relocating population groups (both Moslem and Christian) from various other cities and provinces, within a few decades Mehmet and his successors had made Constantinople the most populous city in Europe. In around 1530 it had a population of 400,000, which swelled to 600,000 by the end of the 17th century. Approximately a third or a quarter were Greeks¹.

But a city, an *urbs*, is not defined solely by a large population, but rather by its urban functions, especially what in modern parlance is termed the secondary or tertiary production sector —namely manufacturing, trade in raw materials, and services (administrative, cultural, health, legal). There was very little opportunity in Constantinople in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries to develop such functions, to create, that is, a bourgeoisie.

The Ottoman Empire was a military state with an agrarian economy and an import and export trade that was almost exclusively in the hands of foreigners: Venetians, French, English, and Dutch. State revenue was allocated primarily to the army, and also served the insatiable consumer

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1. See R. Mantran, *Istanbul dans la seconde moitié du XVII^e siècle*, Paris 1962, pp. 44-57, for an analysis of the ethnic make-up of the population based on Turkish tax registers and travellers' accounts.

needs of the Sultan's court and the military and political leadership².

The small urban enclaves of Greeks, Armenians, and Jews which appeared in the 16th century were created and developed partly thanks to intermediary activities between the foreign merchants and the local market (carried out by commercial agents, interpreters, brokers, transporters, and compradors), but mainly thanks to non-productive, if not parasitic, activities. This will become clear from the social and economic rise of the so-called "Archons of the Romaic Nation", especially the Phanariots, a class of people who occupied the very pinnacle of the Greek social pyramid in Constantinople for a century and a half.

Although the term "Phanariot" was used earlier, it acquired the specific sense in which it has been used in recent centuries after 1599, when after weathering a number of storms, the Oecumenical Patriarchate finally settled in the Phanar district, where it has remained ever since. Already in the early 17th century, that lowly seat of the Patriarchate found itself gradually being surrounded by the homes of the Greek archons, or "lords", who had had a relationship of close political, economic, and spiritual interdependence with the Patriarchate since just after the Fall of Constantinople. They constituted the first bourgeois nucleus of Greek society in Constantinople and wielded considerable influence in the Patriarchate (sometimes to the point of tyranny) and indirectly over the entire Greek community. The archons were *grammatikoi tou authentos*, something like political advisors to the Sublime Porte; suppliers of foodstuffs, fabrics, furs, jewellery, and so on to the Sultan's court or the viziers' and pashas' harems; suppliers of meat to the people of the city, the army, and the Sultan's court; businessmen and bankers handling capital entrusted to them by prominent Turkish officials or even by the Sultan himself; and more commonly they practised tax-farming. They would pay a sum of money to the Sublime Porte in return for the (limited or lifelong) right to collect, on their own account, the taxes of an area or a port, or the customs duty from a border-post, or to exercise a monopoly, or to exploit a mine or a salt-pan. Their aim, of course, was to make a manifold return on their capital invest-

2. In Constantinople, 75 per cent of the state tax revenue was spent on consumer goods: see R. Mantran, *La Vie quotidienne à Constantinople au temps de Soliman le Magnifique*, Paris 1956, pp. 178-181.

ment, the sum they had paid as “rent” to the Turkish authorities. In this way, many of the archons made huge fortunes, usually thanks to their own business acumen, allied, of course, with the favourable treatment they received from viziers and pashas (secured with generous bribes), but also thanks to their pitiless exploitation of the rayahs under their thumb³.

From as early as the 17th century, members of this circle of archons served as delegates (*kapukehayas*) of the princes of Wallachia and Moldavia. Officially, they were the princes’ representatives at the Sublime Porte; but in fact their task was to sustain their masters’ always precarious position by bribing Ottoman officials in key positions and, above all, to pre-empt and disrupt, by hook or by crook, the machinations of the rivals who coveted the princes’ enviable posts. The experience which the *kapukehayas* thus acquired (in terms of manoeuvring, establishing connections, scheming, and favouritism) was valuable for their future careers in the labyrinthine Turkish administration⁴.

Another high position in the social hierarchy of the Greeks of Constantinople was occupied by the *dragomans*, the interpreters attached to the foreign embassies⁵. Significantly enough, the first Greek Grand

3. For these “archons”, see the chapter titled “Οι ισχυροί υπόδουλοι” in Elissavet Zachariadou, *Δέκα τουρκικά έγγραφα για τη Μεγάλη Εκκλησία (1483-1567)*, Institute for Byzantine Research, 2, Athens 1996, pp. 63-77. In the late 16th century, they included such individuals as, for instance, Korfinos, the “commercial manager of Sultan Murad’s money”; Siryannos, “a great archon and merchant in the reign of Sultan Murad”; Mouzalos, “the Sultan’s wealthiest merchant in Muscovy, a dealer in furs”; Fotinos, “the Sultan’s chief official in the fish-market”: see P. Zerlenti, *Σημειώματα εκ των Μαρτίνου Κρουσίου Σουηκικών Χρονικών*, Athens 1922, pp. 17-18. Cf. Martin Crusius, *Turcograecia*, pp. 91-92, a letter written by Theodosios Zygomalas (1581), which is very enlightening about the role of the archons. It contains the terse definition: “here [in Constantinople] ‘archons’ are now the ones who serve the ruler”. The Greek merchants had limited connections with the circles in which the archons moved. Being natives of Crete, Chios, Cyprus, the Heptanese, and other islands, they were mainly Venetian citizens, which protected them from high-handed treatment by the Ottoman authorities. For a wealth of names and information, see Fani Mavroidis, *Ο ελληνισμός στο Γαλατά (1453-1600). Κοινωνικές και οικονομικές πραγματικότητες*, Ioannina 1992.

4. Examples of *kapukehayas* who became Grand Dragomans of the Sublime Porte and voivodes are given in Constantin Serban, “Les préliminaires de l’époque phanariote”, *Συμπόσιον. Η Εποχή των Φαναριωτών*, IMXA, Thessaloniki 1974, pp. 35-36.

5. B. Tuncel, “L’âge des drogman”, *Istanbul à la jonction des cultures balcaniques, méditerranéennes, slaves et orientales aux XVIe-XIXe siècles* (Proceedings of the AIESEE

Dragoman of the Porte, Panayotis Nikousios (1661-1673), had formerly served as dragoman at the German embassy, as had the first Greek Dragoman of the Fleet, Ioannakis Porfyritis (1701-1710)⁶. Clearly, in the Porte's view, the Phanariots' main accomplishment was their knowledge of languages⁷.

This was the economic and social circle from which the Phanariot families came, though their field of activity was now the administrative posts of Grand Dragoman of the Porte, Dragoman of the Ottoman Fleet, and, a little later, Prince (hospodar or voivode) of the semi-autonomous provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia, and the officials who served the princes. So the Phanariots were not members of the merchant class, as is frequently asserted⁸.

conference, Istanbul 1973), Bucharest 1977, pp. 361-370; L. Vranoussis, "Les grecs de Constantinople et la vie intellectuelle à l'âge des drogman", *ibid.*, pp. 133-142; P. M. Kontoyannis, *Οι προστατευόμενοι*, Athens 1917, pp. 103-109.

6. Gunnar Hering, "Panagiotis Nikousios als Dragoman der Kaiserlichen Gesandtschaft in Konstantinopel", *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 44 (1994) 143-178; V. Sfyroeras, *Οι δραγομάνοι του στόλου. Ο θεσμός και οι φορείς*, Athens 1965, pp. 13-16, for the dragomans in general; pp. 86-93, for Porfyritis. It should also be noted that Grigorios Ghikas too was an interpreter at the German embassy before he became Grand Dragoman of the Porte in 1717 (Kontoyannis, *Προστατευόμενοι*, p. 108). Also, the Grand Dragoman of the Porte Skarlatos Karadzas (1765-1768) had served as an interpreter at the Dutch embassy (B. J. Slot, *Σχέσεις μεταξύ Ολλανδίας και Ελλάδος από τον 12' αι. μέχρι τον Καποδίστρια*, Κείμενα και μελέται νεοελληνικής φιλολογίας, 114, Athens 1977, pp. 12, 16).

7. In his outline of the life of Ioannis Kallimahis, Grand Dragoman of the Porte from 1740 to 1758, Athanasios Komninos Ypsilantis (*Τα μετά την Άλωση*, Constantinople 1870, repr., p. 350) notes that in his youth Kallimahis had lived in Poland, where he had learnt Latin, "and this was the reason for his rise".

8. In fact, the Phanariots despised the merchants, as did all the titled "nobility" in the East and the West. In the chrysobull issued by Alexandros Ypsilantis in 1775, regulating the operation of the Bucharest School, it is specified that the school accepts as students only children of noble families, "that is, children of noblemen, being in poverty now, ... but not sons of farmers and peasants, who are destined for agriculture and cattle-raising. As to the children of merchants and artisans ... these, as soon as they are taught grammar only, are dispensed from further schooling, and any one of them may proceed to some craft". (See A. Ypsilantis, *op.cit.*, p. 586; cf. D. Apostolopoulos, *Η Γαλλική Επανάσταση στην τουρκοκρατούμενη ελληνική κοινωνία*, Athens 1989, pp. 60-61; cf. also the following lines criticizing the Phanariots by Alexandros Kalfoglou, *Ήθική σιχουργία* (1794), ed. F. Bouboulidis, Athens 1967, ll. 163-164: "None plies trade or craft once he has donned rich garments and thinks himself noble"; cf. also the comment by K. Koumas, *Ίστορίαι τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων πράξεων*, vol. 12, Vienna 1832, pp. 535-536: "[The Phanariots] did not wish

The first real Phanariot is considered to have been Panayotis Nikousios, who was appointed Dragoman of the Porte (approximately equivalent to Undersecretary of State, and also military advisor) in 1661. He was succeeded in 1673 by Alexandros Mavrokordatos, the first of a long line of princes and officials⁹. After him, almost all the Dragomans of the Porte were Greeks, as were the Dragomans of the Fleet from 1701 onwards, and the princes of Wallachia and Moldavia from the beginning of the 18th century onwards.

These coveted posts were occupied, turn and turn about, by members of a circle of ten or twelve families: initially the Mavrokordati and their relations the Ghikases, as also scions of the semi-Hellenized Roumanian Rakovitsa and Kallimahi families. From the mid-18th century, they were joined by the Karadzas (probably of Karamanlid origin), Soutsos (Constantinopolitans), Rosetos (of distant Italian origin), Ypsilantis and Mourouzis (of Pontic origin), Mavroyenis (Cycladic), Handzeris, Aryiropoulos, and Aristarhis families (the last being of Armenian origin). A second group, who supplied officials of various grades to the princely courts of Bucharest and Iasi, included the Ventouras, Vlastos, Goulianos, Doukas, Kantakouzinos, Mamonas, Manos, Negris, Rangavis, Ralis or Raletos, Rizos, Skhinas, and Hrysoskoulos families.

Almost all these families passed through two stages before entering the closed circle of Phanariot society: they became more wealthy, and they married into the established Phanariot families. The arena in which they proved themselves financially was no longer just Constantinople, but mainly the Danubian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia.

It was there, too, that large numbers of Greeks began to flock from

to have any intercourse with the merchants or craftsmen, who were unworthy of any relationship with them").

9. The choice of Mavrokordatos was influenced not only by his mastery of languages and his other intellectual gifts, but also by the fact that he was a grandson of "the famous and illustrious great archon Skarlatos [Vodinos], who had so many royal responsibilities upon him" (Dapontes (= D. Ramadanis), *Χρονογράφος*, ed. K. Sathas, *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη*, III, Venice 1872, p. 16). Tellingly, the members of the Mavrokordatos family are referred to as "Iskerletoglou" in 18th-century Turkish sources (see Stefanos Yerassimou, "Οι Φαναριώτες μέσα στα οθωμανικά χρονικά", in *Πρακτικά της Επιστημονικής Ημερίδας (13-1-2001) "Ρωμιοί στην υπηρεσία της Υψηλής Πύλης"*; cf. Ypsilantis, *Τα μετά την Άλωση*, p. 405, and the documents published by J. Bouchard in *Ερανιστής*, 11, 1980, pp. 81, 86, where there is the signature: "Jo. Nicolaus Maurocordatus de Scarlatti").

the mid-16th century onwards, engaging in trade and tax-farming, exploiting public enterprises, or holding offices in the two princely courts. In the period between the mid-16th century and 1800, the names of over 300 of these Greek officials are known, occupying such posts as Grand Logothete, ban, bornik, spathares, postelnik, hetman, kamarases, kaminaries etc.¹⁰

Furthermore, the local princes' and boyars' aspiration to link themselves with the Byzantine tradition, and their eagerness to become (at least outwardly) Hellenized meant that they were proud to welcome those restless descendants of the Greek Byzantine world as sons-in-law and associates¹¹. It was not uncommon too for a wealthy son-in-law of insignificant lineage to be welcomed into some Phanariot family that had fallen upon hard times, which would thus acquire the necessary wealth to rise to prominence again. However, endogamy within the restricted circle of the Phanariot families was the norm¹². Apart from these two prerequisites (wealth and family ties), another inviolable condition for entering Phanariot society was membership (even as a mere formality) of the Orthodox Church and acceptance of the Greek way of life (the Phanariot version thereof, naturally, which might more correctly be termed the Graeco-Wallacho-Turkish way of life). Greek language and education, moreover—as they had developed in the Greek urban centres of the 18th century—tended easily to cover the entire Balkan peninsula.

However, the Phanariots harboured no national prejudices—much less nationalist aspirations—for various reasons, but also because the concept of the “nation” did not emerge in the Greek Orthodox East until around 1800 (and when it did emerge it met with staunch opposition

10. See lists of officials in: N. Stoicescu, *Diționar al marilor dregători din țara Românească și Moldova, sec. XIV-XVII*, Bucharest 1971; Theodora Rădulescu, “Sfatul domnesc și alți mari dregători ai țării Românești din secolul al XVIII-lea”, *Revista Arhivelor*, 1972, pp. 107-131, 293-324, 441-470, 659-690. Naturally, the proportion of Greek officials was greater during the Phanariot period: 19 per cent in Moldavia and 22 per cent in Wallachia, according to Ion Ionescu's calculations: “Le degré de l'influence des Grecs des principautés roumaines dans la vie politique de ces pays”, *Η εποχή των Φαναριωτών*, pp. 217-228.

11. Stoicescu's lists include large numbers of Greek officials who had married the daughters of Wallachian and Moldavian boyars and even princes.

12. Cf. Koumas, *Ιστορία*, p. 535: “With all their dissension with others, the Phanariots did not intermarry with any other class of people save their peers, the Phanariot class”.

from both the Phanariots and the Church).

What, then, was the political ideology of the Phanariots? We have no text that might be considered to expound their political theory or ideology. However, from many and various contemporary writings, from reports and other documents by foreign diplomats serving in the Ottoman Empire, and above all from the Phanariots' own conduct and their attitude towards specific events, institutions, and individuals, it is possible to draw certain conclusions¹³.

1. The Phanariots sincerely believed in the necessity of co-operating with the prevailing Ottoman authority, in total submission, of course ("with heads bent low", to quote Alexandros Mavrokordatos). After all, their very existence depended on it, for they were an integral part of the Ottoman administrative machinery, and it was from this that they derived their political power and their wealth¹⁴.

13. Socrate Zervos's doctoral thesis, *Recherches sur les Phanariotes et leur idéologie politique (1666-1821)*, Paris 1990, is still unpublished.

14. Evaluating the Phanariots' relations with the Greek nation and the Sublime Porte, Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos (*Ιστορία*, V, ii, 1925, p. 96) concludes: "Let us not deceive ourselves. The Greeks who served the Ottomans were often useful to their fellow Greeks, but in matters that were either compatible with the Sublime Porte's interests or in which the Porte had no interest at all". All the same, traditions or "information" are circulated every so often regarding patriotic initiatives or secret insurrectionary moves on the part of unsuspected Phanariots [see, e.g., J. Filitti, "Grecs et Roumains en 1821", *Ελληνικά* 7 (1934) 209 ff.] It is mainly two people, however, who are presented as organizers of liberation movements, Alexandros Mavrokordatos "the Fugitive" and Konstantinos Ypsilantis. As regards Mavrokordatos, former Prince of Moldavia (1785-1786) and a refugee thereafter in Russia, Dimitrios Spathis has recently cleared matters up in *Γεωργίου Σούτσου Αλεξανδροβόδας ο ασυνείδητος*, Athens 1995, pp. 334-337. One might add only that a succession of reports by various French agents in the East (mainly in 1795-1796), who believed that there was already "un projet de conjuration et de révolte des Grecs, dirigés par le prince Alex. Mavrocordato", helped to consolidate the rumour that the Russians were to use Alexandros Mavrokordatos to lead a rebellion in the Balkans (see Hurmuzaki, Suppl. I, vol. 3, p. 426; *ibid.*, Suppl. I, vol. 2, pp. 117, 134-135). The efforts of Konstantinos Ypsilantis (Grand Dragoman and Prince of Moldavia and Wallachia, 1799, 1807) to unite the two principalities (and possibly Serbia) and to be recognized as a hereditary ruler were also connected with Russian policy in the Balkans (see the French report in Hurmuzaki, Suppl. I, vol. III, p. 108: "il forma le projet de se faire roi de Dacie, ou au moins souverain héréditaire"). A report by General Sebastiani (1806) states that both princes, Konstantinos Ypsilantis and Alexandros Mourouzis, "méditaient une révolution dans cet Empire. Toute la population grecque est prête à s'insurger" (Hurmuzaki, Suppl. I, vol. II, p. 348; cf. pp. 349, 352, 359, 368, 422). Evidently Sebastiani regarded hypothetical possibilities as an impending threat. The legend which was built up around Ypsilantis developed later on into the conviction that this

2. We do not know how far the political theory formulated *circa* 1785 by Dimitrios Katardzis reflected the views and feelings of the Phanariots. An official in the court of Bucharest, one of the most original of Greek thinkers, and among the best informed about the dominant political trends in the Europe of his time, Katardzis opined that the “Romaic nation” had ceased to be enslaved and had become merely a tributary ever since the Phanariots (together with the Church and the *kojabashis*) had begun to take part in the administration of the Empire in high posts (indeed many of them were “deemed worthy of gazing upon the royal countenance”)¹⁵. Clearly Katardzis unreservedly accepted the *status quo*.

3. The Phanariots—and long before them the local Wallachian and Moldavian princes—were presented (less by themselves than by the sycophants who surrounded them) as the continuators of the Byzantine emperors’ role of defender of Orthodoxy or of the entire “nation of the Romaioi”¹⁶. They even established a special coronation ceremony at the

Phanariot prince was planning the “resurrection of the Byzantine state ... through some internal reform”, which would eventually lead to the Hellenization of the Ottoman Empire (see P. Karolidis, *Ιστορία της Ελλάδος*, Athens 1925, pp. 636-637; Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge 1968, p. 396).

15. Dimitrios Katardzis, *Τα ευρισκόμενα*, ed. K. T. Dimaras, Athens 1970, p. 44. Katardzis’s theory was echoed by at least two scholars who moved in Phanariot circles, Mihail Perdikaris and Panayotis Kodrikas: Perdikaris, *Πήγας ἢ κατὰ ψευδοφιλελλήνων*, ed. L. Vranoussis, Athens 1961, pp. 56-57: “Praise God, there are still great leaders among our Nation today ... the most philanthropic princes, the Mourouzai, the Mavrohordatoi, the Soutsoi. ... For, since they are the first leaders and patrons of the Greek nation, a single favourable glance from them is sufficient to inspire both genuine Christianity and learning in the Nation;” p. 63: “And behold, without pains, without danger, without weapons, without bloodshed ... this Nation may go so far as to live almost blissfully under the most clement Monarchy of the Ottomans;” p. 93: “The Greeks alone have always not so much yielded to the Ottomans as ruled jointly with them”. Kodrikas, *Μελέτη τῆς κοινῆς ἑλληνικῆς διαλέκτου*, 1818, p. xvi: “So, through this participation in the political offices of the administration, the Greek Nation ceased to be absolutely regarded as captive, and was politically established as a subject nation. It acquired national rights and re-established an aristocracy to represent its rights”. Cf. pp. 155, 171.

16. One Prince of Moldavia in 1648 is praised by the Patriarch of Alexandria “as representing the most Orthodox and holy kings” (Hurmuzaki, 14/3, pp. 16, 20). A chrysobull issued by another Prince of Moldavia in 1704 states that “in these recent times, when there are no Orthodox emperors, the defenders and indeed helpers of this holy city [of Jerusalem] have been the most pious lords here from time to time” (*ibid.* 14/1, p. 356). In 1789, Nikolaos Mavroyenis, Prince of Wallachia, is praised as “the most valiant hero of the

Patriarchate and appropriated royal titles¹⁷, and some discovered that they had ancestral blood-ties with Byzantine imperial families¹⁸. Later on, all this was dubbed the *idée impériale*, about which dozens of studies have been written, mainly by Roumanian historians.

4. Alongside the *idée impériale*, the Phanariots have naturally been credited with the intention of “resurrecting” Byzantium. We know that throughout the period of Ottoman rule there was a messianic expectation widespread among the Greek people that the “reign of the Romaioi” would eventually be restored. Prophecies and legends from as early as the 15th century, together with the liberationist proclamations of the Russians later on, kept the hope alive. Naturally, some (if not all) of the Phanariots shared this popular expectation; but this does not mean that the messianic vision had been created by the Phanariots, nor that it featured on their political agenda. There is no evidence of this in any genuine Phanariot source¹⁹.

5. It remains unclear when and by whom the (absolutely groundless) theory was developed that the Phanariots (and the leaders of the Church)

century, the pride of his Romaic contemporaries and the father and staff of the Nation” (see T. Blancard, *Les Mavroyeni...*, Paris 1893, p. 748).

17. K. A. Psahos, “Οι Φαναριώται ηγεμόνες της Μολδοβλαχίας προχειριζόμενοι υπό του Οικουμενικού πατριάρχου”, *Ξενοφάνης* 7 (1910) 193-199, 446-447, 479; see also P. Kontoyannis in *Νέα Εστία*, 15 Feb. 1928, p. 154; cf. Hurmuzaki, Suppl. I, vol. I, p. 474. For *polychronia*, see *Νέος Ελληνομνήμων* 20 (1926) 273, and Iviron Monastery Cod. 977 (17th c.). The epithets and titles used in the princes’ addresses vary. None explicitly referred to himself as “king”, though one did use the title “Voivode of Moldavia and Wallachia and Emperor of the Romaioi” (see D. Nastase, in *Byzantinisch-neugriechische Jahrbücher*, 22, 1985, pp. 1-16). However, when signing official documents, both the princes and sometimes their wives (even when they did not know how to write their names) included the phrase “by the grace of God”: see Hurmuzaki, 14/1, p. 78 (document of 1585): “Catherine, by the grace of God lady and mistress of all Wallachia”.

18. Archimandrite Parthenios Metaxopoulos, of Soumela, who was in the Danubian principalities c. 1775, linked the Ypsilantis and Mourouzis families with the Xiphilinoi and the Komnenoi of the Empire of Trebizond: see F. Marinescu, *Étude généalogique sur la famille Mourouzi*, *Τετράδια Εργασίας*, Centre for Modern Greek Research 12 (1987) 26-27. It was by no means irrelevant that an Ypsilantis was Prince of Wallachia and a Mourouzis Grand Dragoman of the Porte at precisely this time (1774-1775): see more generally Cyril Mango, “The Phanariots and the Byzantine Tradition”, in R. Clogg (ed.), *The Struggle for Greek Independence*, London 1973, pp. 41-66.

19. All the same, numerous studies have been written on this subject (“la résurrection de Byzance”), mainly by Roumanians and Greeks, but also by other distinguished historians (from Iorga to Toynbee and Runciman).

served the Ottoman Empire only ostensibly, and in reality aspired to overthrow it or at least gradually and peacefully replace the Turks with Christians, and eventually re-establish Byzantium or found a Greek national state²⁰. Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, at any rate, apparently did not hear about this theory (he did not espouse it) until 1878²¹. However, Korais had alluded to some such possibility (though without, of course, connecting it with the Phanariots)²².

Equally cryptic (at first sight) is what Alexandros Mavrokordatos has to say in this respect in a letter written in October 1821, in which he criticizes the *Filiki Etaireia* and Alexandros Ypsilantis for the damage they have done to the Principalities "in which the nation was clearly gaining ground and hoping perhaps without bloodshed to win its freedom within a few years"²³. No correlation is drawn, however, between this

20. The most recent exposition of the theory comes from Nikolaos Pantazopoulos, *Georg Ludwig von Maurer*, Thessaloniki 1968, pp. 215, 247. Among non-Greek modern Greek scholars, it has been propagated mainly by Arnold Toynbee, whose views are commented on (and partially accepted) by D. Zakythinos, *The Making of Modern Greece*, Oxford 1976, pp. 147-148, 190-191. Runciman is more emphatic in *The Great Church*, pp. 363-364, 372, 375, 378, 382, 396. Even more categorical is C. M. Woodhouse, *The Greek War of Independence*, London 1952, p. 54, censuring Alexandros Ypsilantis because he "had destroyed whatever hope existed that the Greeks would succeed in inheriting intact the administration of the Empire from the Ottoman Turks". The theory struck an unexpected chord with the intelligentsia in Greece both in the past and more recently: see D. Vikelas, "Η Ελλάς προ του 1821", *Παρνασσός* 8 (1884) 21-22, who absolutely rejects the theory; whereas it appeals to G. Theotokas, "Η εκκλησία και το έθνος", *Σύνορο* No. 38 (summer 1966) 92-97. In an interview in *To Vima*, 21 March 1993, p. Γ3, Nikos Koundouros reveals and comments: "Tsarouhis once said that Greece would have overcome the Ottoman Empire if that stupid war of independence hadn't taken place. These are extreme words, which contain wisdom, and one fears to delve into them".

21. K. T. Dimaras, "Φαναριωτισμός", *Το Βήμα*, 27 May 1977; idem, "Κριτική κριτικών", *ibid.*, 5 May 1978; and, more briefly, idem, *Κωνσταντίνος Παπαρηγόπουλος*, MIET, 1986, pp. 330-331.

22. Initially in his *Διάλογος δύο Γραικών*, 1805, pp. 16-17, and later, in 1817, in a letter to Theophilos Kairis (Korais, *Αλληλογραφία*, OMED, vol. IV, 1982, p. 57).

23. I. Filimon, *Δοκίμιον ιστορικών περί της Ελλην. Επαναστάσεως*, vol. IV, Athens 1861, pp. 510-515. At that time, after the Napoleonic Wars and with Russia's prestige and power enhanced, the other Great Powers were giving considerable thought to how they could check Russian expansion towards the Balkans. Alexandros Mavrokordatos himself submitted a memorandum in 1818 (when he was Grand Postelnik of Wallachia) to the Viennese government seeking to persuade the Austrians that the creation of some sort of Greek state could act as a kind of bulwark against Russian expansion southward. In 1820 the memorandum was communicated to other European courts. It seems, then, that until that point

favourable prospect and the Phanariots' policy.

Like almost all the offices in the Ottoman Empire, that of Prince of one of the Danubian countries was auctioned and awarded to the highest bidder. This corrupt system led to ruthless rivalry among the pretenders, to sinister intrigues (even against close relations)²⁴, and to endless back-scratching and bribery of Turkish officials²⁵, either by the prince himself in order to stay in power, or by his rivals in order to bring him down.

The prince's precarious and ephemeral position was also the main reason why he was in such a hurry to recover as rapidly as possible the capital (often borrowed) he had paid out in order to acquire the throne, and indeed to multiply his gains. For, as Manouil Gedeon jocularly observes, "the Phanariots rarely saw fortune's dice turn up a six twice in their lives"²⁶. So the newly appointed prince in his turn would sell the

Mavrokordatos had entertained hopes that his plan might be accepted and carried out; but the outbreak of the War of Independence in Moldavia and Wallachia in 1821 dashed these hopes: hence his displeasure with the *Filiki Etaireia* and Alexandros Ypsilantis. See Prokesch von Osten, *Geschichte des Abfalls der Griechen vom türkischen Reich im J. 1821*, vol. I, Vienna 1867, pp. 15-17, and vol. 4, p. 132; also A. Vacalopoulos, *Ιστορία του νέου ελληνισμού*, vol. 5, Thessaloniki 1980, p. 60; L. Vranoussis in *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους*, Ekdotiki Athinon, vol. XI, 1975, p. 451.

24. Yeoryios Lasanis, who had lived among the Phanariots, notes: "It was not unusual for brother to bring down brother, for a son to don the princely hat steeped in the blood of his father" (see K. Vakalopoulos, *Τρία ανέκδοτα ιστορικά δοκίμια του Φιλικού Γεωργίου Λασσάνη*, Thessaloniki 1973, p. 70). For instance, Grigorios Ghikas became Prince of Wallachia in 1660 after scheming to overthrow his father Yeoryios, who was taken in chains to Constantinople (see Dapontes (= Ramadanis), *Χρονογράφος*, p. 7; cf. Ypsilantis, *Τα μετά την Άλωσιν*, pp. 179-180, omitted from the first edition). In 1720, "Ioannis Mavrokordatos, Prince of Wallachia, died of poisoning by the design of his brother Nikolaos, who now rules in his place" (Ypsilantis, *op.cit.*, p. 309). In 1742 the Grand Vizier Hekimoglou "had ... a *seh* named Ali, who had influence with him. Ioannis Nikolaou Mavrokordatos attached himself to Ali and received the throne of Moldavia, supplanting his brother Konstantinos" (*ibid.*, p. 351).

25. The Prince of Wallachia, Stefanos Katakouzinou, wrote in 1714 that anyone who wished to occupy a princely throne needed "to have friends such as the vizier's *kehaya*, such as a *defterdar*, such as a *reiz-effendi*, such as a *chaushbashi*, such as a *silihtar*, or a chief enuch or grand *ibrohor* of the Sovereign, and to write to them countless times in order to achieve his purpose" (Hurmuzaki, 14/1, p. 587).

26. M. Gedeon, "Περί της φαναριωτικής κοινωνίας ...", *Περιοδικό Ελλην. Φιλολ. Συλλόγου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως* 21 (1891) 65. The spectre of impermanence and uncertainty about the morrow, and the feeling experienced by the Greeks appointed by the Turks that they were in an alien place is naively and vivaciously reflected in a letter written in 1578 by a certain *domna* Mariora from Wallachia to her sister: "Here they are boors, it is not

numerous —and lucrative— offices of the princely court, levy savage taxes, and devise all manner of other means of easy and rapid enrichment²⁷. The Sublime Porte paid no heed to these methods, having set the example itself. Besides, it was in the Porte's interests that the princes and the dragomans should change frequently, on the one hand so that it could collect the appropriate moneys, and on the other so that the various officials involved could pocket a fresh wave of gratuities and gifts. For this reason, as soon as a new bidder had been secured, the previous one would be recalled, usually on the grounds of not fulfilling his obligations towards the Porte, of abusing his authority, or even of treason. In the last case, the penalty was death; and indeed, of the forty-six Phanariot princes appointed between 1709 and 1821, thirteen were beheaded, while many were imprisoned and had their property confiscated.

So what made the Phanariots seek these exceptionally dangerous posts so eagerly? Above all, it was greed for power and for money, followed by a love of luxury and pomp, and lastly family tradition²⁸. A contemporary verse-writer places on the lips of a Phanariot mother the incredible wish: "Let me see my son a Vlach-bey / even though the Turk cut him"²⁹.

like the City [Constantinople] and Galata ... And what is more, we are not the heirs to this country; we are here today and gone tomorrow. We are at God's disposal and in the hands of the Turks" (Hurmuzaki, 14/1, p. 54). Nor had the sense of impending danger and possible dramatic reversals of fortune left the Phanariots a long while later. J. Carra (*Histoire de la Moldavie et de la Valachie*, Iasi 1777, p. 206) notes: "Ce qu'il y a de singulier chez ces despotes de Moldavie et de Valachie, c'est que toutes leurs richesses, argent, bijoux, hardes et ameublements sont toujours dans des malles ou coffres de voyage, comme s'ils devoient partir à chaque instant; et dans le fait, ils ont pas tort, car ils ont sans cesse à craindre d'être déposés par force ou enlevés ou assassinés".

27. It should be noted that, upon his appointment by the Porte, a prince would move to Bucharest or Iasi, accompanied by hundreds of friends and associates, who would, of course, all have to be provided with posts and offices. Alexandros Soutsos, for instance, arrived in Iasi in 1801 with a retinue of 820 persons (see A. Oțetea, "La désagrégation du régime phanariote", *Η εποχή των Φαναριωτών*, p. 443). Michael Soutsos arrived as Prince of Moldavia in 1818 accompanied by 1,500 associates (see K. Simopoulos, *Ξένοι ταξιδιώτες στην Ελλάδα*, vol. 3b, Athens 1985, p. 514).

28. In the funeral oration for Prince Grigorios Ghikas (1752), the orator reviews the deceased's life and writes: "No sooner was he born than there awaited him on his mother's side—the legacy of his grandfather—the prestigious office of royal dragoman, and on his father's side the crown of the princely office" (Hurmuzaki, 13, p. 557).

29. Quoted by Minoides Mynas, *La Grèce constituée*, Paris 1836, p. 35, n. 1. The

The family tradition obliged a Phanariot to prepare himself for this no less coveted than perilous career from childhood. His parents would engage private tutors to teach him not only the scholarly Greek language but also Italian and French³⁰. He would necessarily learn Turkish too, of course, and not infrequently, as was the norm for Turkish scholars, Arabic and Persian as well. It was equally necessary for him to be initiated into the labyrinthine etiquette of the Sublime Porte and to understand the mindset of the Turkish officials, so that he could eventually develop the distinctive Phanariot character of satrap, *rayah*, and gentleman³¹. After all, apart from these high positions, a self-respecting Phanariot had, or would deign to accept, very few other career choices. When he was removed from one or another of these posts —and managed to keep his

Hungarian diplomat F. De Tott (*Memoirs*, vol. 1, London 1785, pp. 218-219) recounts (1755) that when someone visited the widow of a certain Phanariot who had recently been hanged to offer his condolences and express his horror at the way her husband had been put to death, she replied angrily: “What kind of death would you wish him to have died? Learn, Sir, that no person of my family ever died like a *bacal* [grocer]”. Nikolaos Mavroyenis, Dragoman of the Fleet in 1786, expressed a similar desire to play the deadly game of power to Choiseul Gouffier: “Ce grec, aussi intrépide qu’ambitieux, est décidé à perdre la vie ou à devenir Prince de Valachie” (Hurmuzaki, Suppl. I, vol. 2, p. 38). His wish was granted: he became prince in 1786 and was beheaded in 1790.

30. Though it is frequently asserted that the Phanariots completed their education at European universities, this is not in fact true. No Phanariot proper (apart from Alexandros Mavrokordatos “the *Exaporriton*” (Confidential Adviser) and Skarlatos Karadzas) had a university education, nor did any of their sons. Only in the wider Phanariot milieu do we find a few students, in Padua (according to Plourmidis’s lists): Athanasios Komninos Ypsilantis (the chronicler), one Nikolaos Ventouras, one Ioannis Hrysoskoulos, one Ioannis Rizos Manes, and the brothers Nikolaos and Emmanouil Manos. The brothers Skarlatos, Iakovos, and Zacharias Karadzas studied medicine in Holland (see Slot, *Σχέσεις*, p. 16, n. 2). Konstantinos Ypsilantis (later Grand Dragoman and Prince of Wallachia, 1796-1807) went to Austria in 1781 with his brother Dimitrios (unbeknown to their father, Alexandros, then Prince of Wallachia), but not to study, as is often asserted (see e.g. A. Goudas, *Βίοι παράλληλοι*, vol. 6, Athens 1875, pp. 9 ff; A. Daskalakis, *Rhigas Velestinlis*, Paris 1937, p. 28; cf. A. Camariano-Cioran, *Les Académies princières de Bucarest et de Jassy*, IMXA, Thessaloniki 1974, p. 51). The reasons for their flight were apparently much more practical and picturesque, as we learn from Ypsilantis, *Ta μετά την Άλωσιν*, pp. 627 ff.; cf. D. Photeinos, *Ιστορία της πάλαι Δακίας*, vol. 2, Vienna 1818, pp. 355-356.

31. A French consul in Iasi in 1798 commented: “C’est que le prince est à la fois esclave et despote. ... A Constantinople, il baise respectueusement la robe du dernier musulman; à Iassy, il fait respectueusement baiser la sienne au premier des Boyards” (Hurmuzaki, Suppl. I, vol. III, p. 518).

head—he would live by lending the capital he had gained at interest³². If his property was confiscated, the Patriarchate would undertake to provide for him and his family until the opportunity arose for him to move up in the world again³³. For removal from a post, even on serious charges, did not necessarily mean lifelong exclusion from public life. Konstantinos Mavrokordatos, for instance, was awarded a princely throne ten times, and removed from it nine times on various charges.

Historians and other scholars have disagreed strongly about the Phanariots' political ethics and public life, especially with regard to their conduct as princes of the Roumanian countries. Foreign ambassadors and consuls in the Ottoman Empire in the 18th and 19th centuries, as also Roumanian historians in the twentieth (during the early, militant stage of Roumanian nationalism), accused the Phanariots of administrative turpitude, of bleeding their subjects dry with taxes, and of systematically trying to Hellenize the Roumanian people³⁴. The first two accusations

32. M. Gedeon, "Προαιωνίων λογαριασμών εκκαθάρισις", *Εκκλησιαστική Αλήθεια* 38 (1918) 28-29: various metropolitans (c. 1800) borrowed sums of money from members of the Ghikas, Karadzas, Mourouzis, Soutsos, Mavrokordatos, Ypsilantis, and other families. Mount Athos also borrowed money from Phanariots in 1784 (see Alexandros Lavriotis, "Το Ἅγιον Ὄρος μετὰ την οθωμανικὴν κατάρκτησιν", *Επετηρίς Εταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν* 32 (1963) 233-234). The widow of the executed Prince Nikolaos Mavroyenis († 1790) lent large sums of money to the "communities" of the Cyclades (see V. Sfyroeras, "Les Mavroyéni et la vie économique de la mer Égée", *Η εποχή των Φαναριωτών*, pp. 331-332). Domna Roxani Mavrokordatou lent out large sums of money between 1656 and 1682 (see Nomikos Vaporis, *Some Aspects of the History of the Ecumenical Patriarchate*, Cambridge, Mass., 1969, pp. 16 ff).

33. Koumas, *Ιστορίαι*, p. 535: "So they were fed by the coffers of the Great Church, which kept a separate register of the alms it gave annually to the most noble archons". Other fallen Phanariots were reduced to utter destitution. When Konstantinos Mavrokordatos was toppled from the throne in 1763, "he had nothing to eat; the notables fed him" (Ypsilantis, p. 395). He was then forced to sell the splendid Mavrokordatos family library "to pay his debt, since his house in the Phanar was also sold" (see Dapontes, *Κατάλογος ιστορικός*, p. 177). In 1777, Matthaios Ghikas, who had been Prince of Moldavia until 1756, wrote to Abraham, Patriarch of Jerusalem, begging for financial assistance (see Gedeon, "Περί της φαναριωτικής κοινωνίας", p. 65α). In 1809, the French ambassador to Constantinople wrote that "Mme la princesse Soutzo [widow of the executed Grand Dragoman Alexandros M. Soutsos] se trouve réduite, ainsi que sa famille, à la plus profonde détresse" (Hurmuzaki, Suppl. I, vol. 2, p. 556).

34. For the initially unfavourable treatment of the Phanariots by Roumanian historians, see Traian Ionescu-Niscov, "L'époque phanariote dans l'historiographie roumain et étrangère", *Η εποχή των Φαναριωτών*, pp. 145-157. For the profit the princes made from their

are not without foundation, though they do not apply to all the Phanariot princes. However, the fact is overlooked that the corrupt administration and the economic exploitation of the Roumanian people did not appear in the principalities in 1709 or 1715, when the Phanariots began to govern these countries, nor disappear in 1821, when the Phanariots were succeeded by local princes. Also overlooked is the fact that it was the local boyars who were pressing for taxes to be increased and who opposed the abolition of slavery in the mid-18th century³⁵. After all, it was they—not the Prince—who were in direct and daily contact with the farmers (*tsarani*). The difference, of course, was that whatever capital they accumulated by hook or by crook, the local Wallachian or Moldavian boyars invested or spent on the spot,

term of office in Wallachia or Moldavia and their fiscal methods, see, e.g., the report by the French ambassador of 1748: the Phanariots “achètent ces places fort cher, ne s’y soutiennent que par des vexations continuelles dans ces pays qu’ils ruinent et qu’ils dévastent”. In 1751, he observed that the princes were essentially “fermiers de ces provinces, sont obligés d’emprunter pour y parvenir, celles qu’ils tirent pour s’acquitter et soutenir produisent des exactions incroyables qui ruinent ces deux riches et magnifiques provinces” (Hurmuzaki, Suppl. I, vol. I, pp. 594, 604). According to the Prussian consul in Bucharest, the last Prince of Wallachia, Alexandros Soutsos, had arrived in Wallachia with a debt of between four and five million piastres, but within two years (1818-1821) managed to accumulate more than twenty-eight million piastres, apart from tax revenues. Just how lucrative the post of prince was is also apparent from the fact that, in order to ensure that her son would succeed his father, Soutsos’s widow gave the Porte a sum of money amounting to twice the budget of Wallachia (see Oțetea, “La désagrégation”, pp. 442-443). The former Prince of Wallachia, Alexandros Ypsilantis, “had a house in Kurucheshme, which is said to have cost 500 purses [250,000 piastres] and more, and he got considerable wealth from Wallachia, more than anyone else in these times” (Dapontes, *Κατάλογος ιστορικός*, p. 172). A monk named Parthenios notes in a Jerusalem codex that in 1781 he was “in Wallachia under Prince Alexandros, who had already been Prince for seven years and become a second Croesus” (see Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ιεροσολυμιτική Βιβλιοθήκη*, vol. I, p. 385). But the one who surpassed all his confrères in avarice was Ioannis Karadzas, Prince of Wallachia (1812-1818), “le plus avide et le plus impudent de tous ces scélérats [Phanariots]” (Hurmuzaki, Suppl. I, vol. III, p. 387, report by the—malicious—Comte de Langeron). Cf. R. Florescu, “The Phanariot Regime in the Danubian Principalities”, *Balkan Studies* 9 (1968) 301, who notes that there is a saying in Roumania: “Theft as in Karadzas’s time”. Cf. also A. Pippidi, “Jean Caradja et ses amis de Genève”, *Η εποχή των Φαναριωτών*, pp. 187-208.

35. Florin Constantiniu, “Constantin Mavrocordato et l’abolition du servage en Valachie et en Moldavie”, *Η εποχή των Φαναριωτών*, pp. 377-384. At the end of the 18th century, Alexandros Kalfoglou (see n. 8) censures the boyars’ cruelty towards their serfs (II. 333-40): “Wallachians are unjust towards Wallachians, oppressing them like enemies / tormenting their compatriots, having no feeling for them at all”.

whereas the Phanariots generally transferred theirs to Constantinople and to banks abroad³⁶.

But apart from the personal conduct and individual responsibility of the princes and the boyars, it is clear that the deeper reason for the suffering was the depraved institutional structures, which inevitably corrupted those who implemented them. The cynical, but seasoned Alexandros Mavrokordatos had already noted, with reference to the "political authority", "Money is what it reveres; all haste is made to collect it"³⁷.

As for the third accusation, regarding efforts to Hellenize the Roumanians, it is quite groundless; not only because the Phanariots, as we have seen, had no nationalistic aspirations, but also because the Greek language and education had begun to penetrate the Roumanian "bourgeoisie" and boyar circles long before the Phanariot period³⁸. And it is also worth noting that, ultimately, far fewer Roumanians were Hellenized than Greeks were Roumanianized³⁹.

Today, if the Phanariots' conduct in the Danubian principalities is not justified, it is at least historically explicable. Especially praiseworthy is their part in promoting culture (not only Greek but Roumanian too) in all its forms: schools, printing-houses, translation and publication of books, supporting scholars, founding theatres, introducing the teaching of "modern" subjects in schools, adopting certain European lifestyles, and

36. Cf. the comments of the French consul in Iasi in 1798: "Ici les biens ne retournent point à leur source; jamais peut-être une piastre n'est sortie des coffres de la cour pour rentrer dans la circulation ... Tout est conservé avec soin pour passer à Constantinople, y payer les amis, les protecteurs du Prince et former sa propre fortune" (Hurmuzaki, Suppl. I, vol. II, p. 121). Naturally, local princes also secured their money in banks abroad. The famous Prince of Wallachia Konstantinos Basaraba (1688-1714) "deposited such a large quantity of aspers in the bank of St Mark in Venice that until recently (I know not if it continues today) his grandsons were receiving a yearly interest of only 3 per cent which amounted to 60 purses [30,000 piastres], I think" (Dapontes, *Κατάλογος ιστορικός*, p. 160).

37. Dimosthenis Daniilidis, *Η νεοελληνική κοινωνία και οικονομία*, Athens 1985 (1st ed. 1934), p. 243. This neglected book contains numerous interesting comments and opinions about the Ottoman period in general and the Phanariots in particular (see e.g. pp. 165-167, 207-210, 240-244).

38. A. Karathanassiss, *Οι Έλληνες λόγιοι στη Βλαχία (1670-1714)*, IMXA, Thessaloniki 1982.

39. Dionysios Therianos (*Αδαμάντιος Κοραΐς*, vol. I, Trieste 1889, pp. 61-62) puts their number at (the outrageous figure of) one million and criticizes the Phanariots for neglecting, or failing, to Hellenize the Moldavians and Wallachians. (Cf. Paparrigopoulos, *Ιστορία*, vol. 5β, pp. 112 ff.)

disseminating foreign languages, especially French, which allowed not only the Phanariots, but some of the boyars too, to enjoy intellectual intercourse with European culture⁴⁰. These were all truly important achievements; but they must not be overestimated. As Florescu has noted, while it was Iorga († 1940) who historically rehabilitated the Phanariots and extolled their cultural achievements, his disciples later went to extremes,

crediting the Greek Princes with the unparalleled accomplishment of having introduced into the country in quick succession the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and the French Revolutionary ideals within less than 100 years⁴¹.

A similar degree of exaggeration is frequently found among Greek students of the Phanariot period. But the Phanariots were not the only, nor the main, nor the most authentic⁴² vehicles of the Enlightenment in

40. The sagacious Katardzis (*Τα ευχισκόμενα*, p. 56) noted the importance of propagating foreign languages: "I have noticed that since the time of Panayotakis [Nikou-sios], our first dragoman, our nation seems to have acquired some small measure of glory and advancement studying foreign languages". For the Roumanians' part, the propagation of French especially, as also the Phanariots' various contacts with the European world, together with the fact that Roumanian gained ground over Slavonic, which had hitherto prevailed in the Church and in public services, did a great deal to strengthen their sense of identity in relation to their Slav neighbours —i.e. the *romanité* or *latinité* that lay at the heart of Roumanian nationalism. So the Phanariots have been rehabilitated in Roumanian historiography for these services. Nevertheless, it seems that, again from the point of view of *romanité*, all this can quite easily be turned about. For instance, Vlad Georgescu, in *Political Ideas and the Enlightenment in the Roumanian Principalities (1750-1831)*, New York 1971, believes that the Phanariots "raised a barrier between the Principalities and Europe" (p. 40, cf. p. 54), with the result that Roumanian life and *mœurs* were "orientalized" (pp. 21, 29). The Phanariots "emphasized Greek culture to the detriment of the Latin culture, and prevented the development of the Romanian language" (p. 54), so that "under the Phanariots the Greek culture became an instrument of oppression" (p. 55). Furthermore, the Phanariots did not permit contact with Europe (p. 58). However, two bold Greeks named Stamati and Kodrikas managed to propagate revolutionary ideas in the principalities. Kodrikas, indeed, "was executed by the Turks in 1802 for his subversive ideas" (pp. 71-72; [i.e. twenty-five years before he, in fact, died peacefully in Paris]. Others too, like the "Pulio brothers, Vlachs from Vienna" and publishers [of Greek books] (p. 57) worked to the same revolutionary end.

41. Florescu, "The Phanariot Regime", pp. 301-302.

42. If the ultimate aims of the Enlightenment were the spiritual, the social, and the political liberation of the individual and of society, then it was very difficult for the Phanariots to accept and meaningfully serve such aims, since they were loyal and willing servants of a theocratic and authoritarian regime. The most important steps towards the Enlightenment were mainly due to those on the periphery of the Phanariot milieu: the court officials, the

the Hellenic lands. We must not forget that many other major scholars and teachers engaged in effective action quite independently of the Phanariots: Damodos, for instance, Anthrakitis, Voulgaris, Psalidas, Vamvas, Koumas, Ikonomos, Kaïris, Veniamin Lesvios, and others too. Furthermore, some of the very important teachers who taught for varying periods of time in the schools in the principalities, such as Niki-foros Theotokis, Iosipos Misiódax, Stefanos Doungas, and others, can hardly be included within the Phanariot milieu, because their efforts met with such resistance that they were eventually forced to give up and leave.

It is also frequently said that in the Greek Orthodox East the Phanariots represented the ideal of “enlightened despotism”, as illustrated by the legislation they introduced into the Roumanian countries and Konstantinos Mavrokordatos’s truly historic act of abolishing slavery. But as far as the legislation is concerned, it must be noted that all the Phanariots’ compilations of laws were largely culled from Byzantine law (ranging from Justinian’s legislation to Armenopoulos). Their originality lies in the fact that they incorporate, to a greater or lesser extent, legal customs from local common law⁴³. But it would be difficult to detect progressive or even innovative features in these texts.

As for the abolition of slavery (though not of serfdom) by Kon-

scholarly merchants, and above all the enlightened teachers in the two Greek schools. It must be conceded that the Phanariot princes were tolerant of, and sometimes even encouraged (both morally and materially), “innovations” that did not threaten the *status quo*. Besides, of the thirty-one Phanariot princes, only three or four could have been regarded as scholars. But it is difficult to accept what is said, and, apparently, has been said in the past, about the contribution of the Phanariots as a group. In his introduction to Beccaria’s second edition, 1823, Korais notes: “It has recently been announced in the press ... that whatever means the nation has employed to prepare itself by means of the enlightenment of education for the present, most just war against the tyrant were planned and carried out by those known as the Phanariots. I do not accuse the Phanariots of promoting such arrogance ... nor do I doubt that they were the first to be indignant at the effrontery of him who dared to ascribe to them the shame of such an encroachment”.

43. P. Zepos, “Byzantine Law in the Danubian Countries”, *Balkan Studies* 7 (1966) 343-356; idem, “La politique sociale des princes phanariotes”, *ibid.* 11 (1970) 81-90. While Zepos notes certain improvements, mainly relating to the position of the peasants, he comments that, given the feudal and autocratic regime, one can hardly talk about a meaningful social policy (p. 81). Only the Kallimachos Code (1817) was influenced to any great extent by Austrian civil law. [See K. D. Triantafyllopoulos, “Sur les sources du Code Callimaque”, *Revista istorica româna* 1 (1931) 32-49].

stantinos Mavrokordatos (in Wallachia in 1746 and in Moldavia in 1749), it should be noted that he made the decision (with the agreement of the Sublime Porte) not for humane motives but under the pressure of the fact that the population of Wallachia had dropped by more than 50 per cent within the space of a few years, and that of Moldavia had also fallen considerably, because peasants had fled to neighbouring countries to escape the economic bloodletting for which Konstantinos Mavrokordatos himself was partially responsible⁴⁴. The abolition of slavery was a bait with which to lure the fugitives back home.

But, as we have seen, nor does the Phanariots' theoretical political outlook appear to come very close to the ideal of enlightened despotism. From the *Phrontismata* (Thoughts) of the Phanariots' first father, Alexandros Mavrokordatos, and the *Enchiridion* (Handbook) and *Nouthesiai* (Counsels) of Nikolaos Mavrokordatos to the *Politika Sophismata* (Political Meditations) of Athanasios Hristopoulos (towards the end of the Phanariot period), the Phanariots' political thought (and practice) was dominated by a mixture of opportunism, realism (verging on cynicism), and hypocrisy, which not infrequently gave way to perfidy or obsequiousness⁴⁵. Only Katardzis echoes (in his *Encomium of a Philosopher*) a few principles of enlightened despotism.

44. F. Constantiniu, "Const. Mavrocordato et l'abolition du servage", pp. 379-382. It is interesting to note the local boyars' resistance to Mavrokordatos's measures, though these were warmly supported by the (Cretan) Metropolitan of Moldavia and Wallachia, Neophytos, who reminded the boyars (some fifteen centuries late) that the institution of slavery was contrary to Christian principles. Kaisarios Dapontes (*Κατάλογος ιστορικός*, pp. 159-160) also comments on the thinning population of Wallachia (which reflected the failure of the Phanariots' fiscal policy): under Prince Konstantinos Basarabas (1688-1714), "Wallachia was like a pomegranate, full of people; there were seven hundred thousand married couples, and now [in 1784] no more than seventy". As for the personal responsibility of Konstantinos Mavrokordatos, General F. Bauer, an authority on the history of Wallachia, noted in 1778 that he "was a bad statesman and a very bad tax-collector. He it was who leased out all the principality's lands and raised the poll-tax, thus forcing a large segment of the poor inhabitants to leave their homeland and scatter with their wives and children to various provinces" (quoted by G. Zaviras, *Νέα Ελλάς*, p. 407).

45. J. Bouchard, "Les lettres fictives de Nicolas Mavrocordatos à la manière de Phalaris: une apologie de l'absolutisme", *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 13 (1975) 197-207; L. Vranoussis, "Ένα εγχειρίδιο φαναριωτικού μακιαβελισμού [τα «Πολιτικά Σοφίσματα» του Αθανασίου Χριστόπουλου]", *Επετηρίς Μεσαιωνικού Αρχείου* 10 (1960/97) 1-162; and idem, "Φαναριωτικά εγχειρίδια πολιτικής και πολιτειολογίας", *ibid.*, pp. 241-255.

One crucial, and contradictory, point has always been the Phanariots' attitude towards, and role in, the various liberation movements and, more generally, towards the demand for "national rehabilitation", which, from the time of the Orlov Uprising (1770-1774) onwards, grew increasingly relevant, not only among the Greeks, but also in European diplomatic circles. And while it is true that the Great Powers competing in the Levant were either flattering the Phanariot princes and dragomans or pressing them in order to seize advantages or to avert untoward developments, almost all the ambassadors and consuls in the Ottoman Empire paint a rather grim picture of them in their secret reports. They especially underline the gap which separated the ordinary Greeks from the Phanariots in terms of their mores, their feelings towards the Turks, and their liberal views⁴⁶. By contrast, it is noteworthy, if not surprising, that almost until the end of the 18th century we find no criticism by the Greeks of the Phanariots as a group (as collaborators, for instance, with the conqueror). Presumably, political and national criteria had not yet taken shape. For the first time, in 1798, during the interrogation of Rigas's comrades in Vienna, the young Dimitrios Nikolidis confessed, according to the Austrian who recorded the proceedings, that he had

on various occasions called the Turk a tyrant ... and that he had also asserted the same of the princes of Wallachia and Moldavia, who, like the Turks, irresponsibly oppressed the people.

46. As early as 1735, the Russian chargé d'affaires in Constantinople wrote to his government that: "Les Grecs de Constantinople [the Phanariots] sont des coquins, sans honneur, qui n'ont de préoccupation que l'argent ... tandis que les Grecs des îles et des provinces sont d'accord ... pour se délivrer de la tyrannie turque" (see A. Stourza, *L'Europe orientale et le rôle historique des Mavrocordato, 1660-1830*, Paris 1913, p. 148). The English ambassador, W. Eton, gave a lengthy description of the Phanariots in 1798, asserting that they were constantly plotting and scheming and partook of all the shortcomings found in the Sultan's seraglio, including treachery, ingratitude, and cruelty. The Phanariots, he opined, were the only ones who had not retained anything of the national character. They had no urge for freedom, as on the islands, and took pride in dressing *à la turque* (Simopoulos, *Ξένοι ταξιιώτες*, II, p. 785). An agent of France in the Levant, Konstantinos Stamatīs, unequivocally affirms: "Les Grecs de Constantinople (je parle des prétendus nobles) doivent être plutôt considérés comme les ennemis de la liberté de la nation grecque" (Hurmuzaki, *Suppl. I*, vol. II, p. 197). In a letter to Kapodistrias in 1820, the Russian ambassador to Constantinople, Stroganov, also mentions the Phanariots: "Ils sont presque étrangers au reste de leur compatriotes" (see Oğtetea, "La désagrégation", p. 445).

A few years later, the author of the *Rossanglogallos* (Russo-Anglo-Frenchman) put the following lines into the mouth of a Phanariot prince:

A glorified slave am I
beloved of the Turks;
I must on the contrary,
as a loyal [subject] of all Turkey,
obliterate Greece.

...

Greece's freedom
is poverty for me.

In 1806, the anonymous author of *Elliniki Nomarchia* (Greek Rule of Law) alluded to the "dirty princes of the Phanar"⁴⁷.

The members of the *Filiki Etaireia* were also wary of the Phanariots⁴⁸. Only four or five individuals from the Phanariot milieu were eventually initiated into the *Etaireia*, including (of course) the leader of the War of Independence, Alexandros Ypsilantis (who, however, having grown up in Russia, was scarcely representative of the Phanariots) and Alexandros Mavrokordatos, the most competent diplomat and statesman during the Struggle and after. However, there seem to have been more Phanariots who, when the War of Independence broke out and "the light shone and they knew" their better selves, genuinely shared the general Greek enthusiasm⁴⁹.

47. See respectively E. Legrand and S. Lambros, *Ανέκδοτα έγγραφα περί Πήγα Βελεστινλή*, Athens 1891, pp. 86-87; K. T. Dimaras, *Ο Ρωσσαγγλογάλλος*, Athens 1990, p. 17; *Ελληνική Νομαρχία*, edited by G. Valetas, Athens 1957, p. 206, n. 344.

48. I. Filimon, *Δοκίμιον ιστορικόν περί της Φιλικής Εταιρείας*, Nafplio 1834 (repr. N. Karavias), p. 199 and n. iii. Their wariness was justified by circumstances: for instance, Skarlatos Kallimahis (Prince of Wallachia 1812-1819; of Moldavia 1821) had the brilliant idea of presenting the Sultan with the *Filiki Etaireia*'s "Catechism" (in Arabic translation); see *ibid.* p. 200.

49. On 19 March 1821, the Prince of Moldavia, Mihaïl Soutsos (known later in Athens as Mihaïl Vodas), wrote to his father-in-law: "The great event has come like a thunderbolt. ... The entire nation is agog; I cannot describe the enthusiasm. ... Oh, God, will you ever liberate us from this slavery?" And his wife wrote to her father: "With God's help we may hope for the liberation of our homeland". Andreas Moustoxydis (then in Milan) was informed on 10 June 1821 from St Petersburg: "There is very great enthusiasm there for the Greeks' affair. ... At the head of the Greek ladies is the sister of the beheaded Grand Dragoman of the Porte [Konstantinos Mourouzis], Princess Ralou Mourouzi, who has set out like a latterday Amazon to avenge her brother's blood" (see G. Laïou, *Ανέκδοτες επιστολές και έγγραφα του 1821* (in translation), Athens 1958, pp. 60-62, 127 respectively). Let it be added that

Later on, after the birth of the Greek state, when the Great Idea was beginning to loom large in the country's political and intellectual life, while the Phanariots aroused strong feeling at the political level, they were "rehabilitated" at the historical level by romantic historians and revered as early apostles of Hellenism and forerunners of that same Great Idea⁵⁰.

the eldest son of Iakovakis Rizos Neroulos fell as a member of the Sacred Company at Dragatsani; as did Dimitrios Soutsos, brother of the later well-known poets Panayotis and Alexandros Soutsos.

50. Already in 1823, Korais wrote to Neofytos Vamvas: "Our brave soldiers did not shed so much blood to get princes. I, my friend, was disturbed from the start to learn that Phanariots had involved themselves in Greek affairs. The name Phanariot has always appeared to me to be an inauspicious one" (Korais, *Αλληλογραφία*, OMED, vol. 5, p. 47). The anti-Phanariot literature of the time, in books and newspapers, is vast. But the Phanariots also enjoyed strong support, both among the foreign embassies and in the Greek press. But those who created an enduring (even today) Phanariot mythology were Iakovos Rizos Neroulos with his two books (*Cours de littérature grecque moderne*, Geneva 1827; *Histoire moderne de la Grèce*, Geneva 1828), E. I. Stamatiadis (*Βιογραφίαι των Ελλήνων μεγάλων Διεργημένων*, Athens 1865), E. Rangabès (*Livre d'Or de la noblesse phanariote et des familles princières de Valachie et de Modavie*, Athens 1904²), and others.