

THE FANARIOT REGIME IN THE DANUBIAN PRINCIPALITIES

Lying within a well-defined triangle with its base in the Carpathian Mountains and bounded by the river Dniester to the northeast and the Danube to the south (with a tiny attribute the Sireth forming the boundary between the two provinces), the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia have been provided by nature with certain apparent immutable frontiers. Yet, notwithstanding such formidable natural obstacles, eighteenth century European diplomacy impaired these frontiers in several directions. Wallachia suffered no more than a twenty-year Austrian occupation of the province of Oltenia at the beginning of the century from 1718 to 1738. Moldavia however fared much worse. It was compelled to surrender its northern districts together with its ancient capital Suceava, to Austria in 1775, a region hence known as Bukovina. In 1812 at the Treaty of Bucharest that Principality was further reduced by half of its extent, through the loss of the region located between the rivers Dniester and Pruth to Russia, a region baptized by the Russians as Bessarabia. These incidents help illustrate the fact that at least from the eighteenth century onwards the traditional autonomy of the Danubian provinces and their relationship with Constantinople rested increasingly upon the rival imperialism of Russia and Austria.

It was once fashionable among Roumanian historians to attribute these territorial losses to the negligence and intrigue of certain Greek Princes from the district of Constantinople known as the Fanar (hence the term Fanariot), who ruled over these provinces throughout the eighteenth century and indeed the whole era has been covered with insults and obloquy.¹ The process of rehabilitation begun by Roumania's greatest historian Nicholas Iorga was a timely reaction against the traditionalist view even though some of Iorga's

1. The Fanariot period is usually taken to extend from the end of the seventeenth century to the Greek revolution of 1821. Until Iorga's work of rehabilitation, "Fanariot" was synonymous with exploitation — a tradition rooted in popular songs and legends. One proverb ran : "a fura ca pe vremea lui Caradja" (to steal as in the days of Caradja). Caradja, one of the worst of the Fanariots, was compelled to flee to save his neck (1815).

pupils went somewhat in 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 years.² Without going to this length, we must nevertheless agree that the popular tradition which in the past had characterized the period as one of the most contemptible in Roumanian history has little justification, and even the most determined detractors of the Fanariots would probably agree with Professor Iorga that, in spite of their shortcomings, these Princes were the most enlightened men of their day in the Balkan Peninsula. They should also in fairness readily admit that the system of bribery and corruption associated with Greek rule preceded the eighteenth century and continued to prevail long after the last of these Princes had lost the day at the Battle of Drăgașani in 1821. The fact of the matter is that the Fanariots did not "invent" an atmosphere, they simply found it, in Moldavia and Wallachia, and breathed in it as naturally as in their native quarter at Constantinople, which they forsook in increasing numbers even before the eighteenth century because their personal fortunes were insecure in the Turkish capital.³ Once they were established upon their thrones at Bucharest and Jassy, the conditions of their tenure discouraged them from mending their ways. The Princes reigned in order to recover the heavy outlay invested in their thrones and in addition felt entitled to some profit commensurate with the high risks of their new office. The stakes were admittedly high, as the Hospodarial thrones in both Principalities came to represent one of the most coveted rewards, ranking with the post of Imperial Dragoman — perhaps surpassing it — at the summit of that complex hierarchy of Greek officialdom virtually in charge of the diplomatic destinies of the Ottoman Empire.⁴ We

2. Some of the apologists of the Fanariots occasionally let enthusiasm get the better of them, as when they refer to the "democratic tendencies" of Prince N. Mavrogheni, or see Prince Alexander Ypsilanti as another St. Louis of France. However, it was Alexander Ypsilanti who codified the laws and organized the Greek Academies; while Alexander Mavrocardato has been called by Professor Seton-Watson "a pioneer of peasant liberty." R.-W. Seton-Watson, *A History of the Roumanians* (Cambridge, 1934), p. 143.

3. One could at least afford to be more ostentatious in displaying one's wealth in Bucharest and Jassy than in Constantinople, where it aroused suspicion and often resulted in extortion, banishment, or even death. W. Wilkinson, *An Account of the Principalities* (London, 1820), p. 122.

4. Turkish ministers were rarely in direct communication with foreign diplomats. Interviews usually took place through an intermediary or Dragoman. The usual excuse was that the Koran forbade the Moslem to learn a foreign language, but traditional indifference probably had more to do with it.

do know the names of some Hospodars who betrayed the confidence of their masters and were compelled to flee, or were decapitated at the Seven Towers. It would be a fascinating task to attempt to discover the extent to which this Greek *Imperium in Imperio* used its considerable powers particularly in negotiating treaties, to the detriment of the Sultan.⁵

The Fanariot system rested upon a subtle bargain which stated implicitly that the Hospodar might enrich himself at the expense of each province, so long as the Sultan and his favorites enriched themselves at the expense of the Hospodar. The initial fees were usually sufficiently high to surpass the personal means of many Greek families but payments had to be kept up, for at Constantinople, where men excelled at the game of extortion, every potential enemy had to be appeased with gold. Since the Hospodar's modest official income would in no way satisfy his numerous creditors at Constantinople, he was compelled to collect the exorbitant sums required by auctioning off to the highest bidder every court function or office in his power. Unlike Versailles, his court, far from proving a burden, was his greatest single source of revenue, and from the highest dignitary down to the meanest public servant in the administrative hierarchy, the bargain which had originally ensured his own succession to the throne was repeated a hundred times over.⁶ Every three years this farce went on, the problem being invariably the same, namely that of finding the sums of money required to renew the brief stewardship for a further lease of time. One thing was certain in this quest for power; in the long run the Hospodars could not survive, a fact sufficiently attested by the frequency of changes both at Bucharest and Jassy.⁷ What may we ask then was the satisfaction of being styled "Prince"? Some were undoubtedly

5. Prince Alexander Moruzi, is said to have betrayed the interests of the Ottoman Empire at the time of the signature of the Treaty of Bucharest, and eventually paid with his life for so doing. Wilkinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-121. This view was not shared by Stratford Canning, according to whom the Prince's diplomatic ability won him a good bargain (the cession of Bessarabia) in difficult circumstances. S. Lane Poole, *The Life of Stratford Canning*, Vol. II (London, 1888), p. 171.

6. For example, the *Spathar* or Commander-in-Chief purchased his appointment from the Hospodar. To recoup his outlay, the latter farmed-out the office of *Polkovnik* or Colonel to the highest bidder. The Colonel in turn made a similar "deal" with the officers in his charge. From Captain down to the humblest Lieutenant who issued a "certificate of brigandage" to the *Haidoucs* or robbers, the principal remained the same.

7. "These farmer Princes... were deposed whenever the offers and promises of other of their country-men appeared more advantageous." From the beginning of the eighteenth century to 1821, there were no less than 40 reigning Hospodars in Wallachia alone. Wilkinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-99.

flattered by emulating the outward brilliance of the Byzantine Court, others deluded themselves into believing that the thrones could actually be exploited for material gains; a few thought Bucharest and Jassy an easy avenue of escape to Russia or the West. In actuality, the Princes had to be all the more content with the external manifestations and insignia of power, since they did not enjoy the solid satisfaction of its reality. For the Fanariot hospodars were not the all-powerful autocrats so often depicted. Unacquainted with local conditions and reigning for so few years, they often had to reckon with the Assemblies of Boyars, who were far more entitled to be considered the real masters of the land — a fact which many historians seem to have overlooked.

The origins of the Boyars are deeply involved in controversy, and various authors have tended to take sides according to their basic political and social outlook.⁸ Whether the Boyars were in origin simply free land-owners, wealthy village leaders, or the legitimate descendants of a proud old military caste, or whether they represent a genuine native autocracy, is a problem which was somewhat oversimplified by the reforming Prince Constantine Mavrocordato when he established a "noblesse de fonction" in 1739. There is no doubt, however, that the Boyars' claim to represent a native aristocracy takes on a certain substance when it is remembered that, irrespective of origins, the terms "Boyar" was generally associated with land tenure from the very birth of the Principality in the fourteenth century. Subsequently specific Boyar titles were conferred in recognition for certain military exploits in the service of native Princes, though these were rarely hereditary. Although many of these traditional Boyar families survived, historians agree that in the eighteenth century the term Boyar had acquired an entirely new meaning.⁹ Even before Prince Mavrocordato's reform (1739) many of the old military titles

8. Those wishing to satisfy the peasant's claim to original possession of the land, (in favor of expropriating the Boyars) contend that the latter are merely descendants of village chieftains (*Judec* or *Cneaz*). Radu Rosett, *La Terre et les Maîtres Fonciers en Roumanie* (Bucharest, 1907). Opponents of this theory argue that the Boyars constitute a hereditary nobility similar to that of the Poles and Hungarians. Gh. Panu, *Un Essai de Mystification Historique* (Bucharest, 1910), and *Recherches sur l'Etat des Paysans dans les Siècles Passés* (Bucharest, 1910). Iorga, with his stress on peasant institutions, leans to the former view; Xenopol to the most latter; most historians are somewhere in between the two.

9. When Wilkinson reckons a total of 30,000 Boyars in Wallachia alone, he is referring to the Fanariot functionaries, not to the traditional landed families, some of which, he admits, "can trace their ancestors 500 years back." Wilkinson, *op. cit.*, p. 57. The best known of the traditional families of Wallachia are the Vacarescus, Cretulescus, Florescus, Balcescus, Cornescus, Callimachis, Cantacuzinos, Filipescus, Golescus, Ghicas, etc.

had degenerated to little more than designations for Court functions based upon the Byzantine model and divided into classes according to the importance of the function performed.¹⁰ With the endless multiplication of these titles during the Fanariot period the status of the Boyar class quite obviously depreciated as the title was no longer attached to the performance of any specific duty. Since there were not enough functions to go round, the titles conferring Boyar status became empty distinctions granted during the lifetime of an individual as a mere sinecure.¹¹ Popular jargon has coined a good word of contempt — *ciocoi* (which defies translation into English) to describe these functionless Greek parvenus.¹²

It would, however, be unfair to accuse the Fanariots of completely domesticating or deliberately destroying the old Boyar class. Some of the old

10. In Wallachia, these offices, in approximate order of importance, were those of *Ban*, or Governor of Lower Wallachia (an old military title which became purely honorary); *Vornic*, originally a subordinate of the *Ban*, eventually in charge of the Department of the Interior; *Vestiar*, at one time entrusted with the Prince's Treasury, eventually Minister of Finance; *Postelnic*, or *Chamberlain* in charge of household guests, eventually Minister of Foreign Affairs; the *Spathar*, in charge of the horses, eventually C.-in-C.; *Logothete*, in charge of the Chancellery of the Prince, eventually Minister of Justice. All these entitled the holder to First class Boyar rank. Boyars of the Second class were associated with the humbler functions of *Aga*, or Chief of the Capital's Police; *Paharnic*, or cupbearer; *Stolnic*, or Chief Steward; *Clucer*, in charge of Army provisions; *Caminar*, Collector of Customs; *Comis*, Master of the Horse (the French *Ecuyer* or German *Stahlmeister*). The military rank of General also gave a Boyar right to Second class status, though that of *Polcownik* (Colonel), *Shatrar* (in charge of the Prince's tent), *Pittar* (superintendent of the carriages), and *Medelnicer* (one who receives petitions) belonged to the third class. It would be idle to seek Western counterparts to these titles, as has sometimes been done (e. g., *Vornic* equal to Count, *Ban* to Duke) since they were not hereditary. Descendants of Boyars of the First class could claim the courtesy title of *Mazil*, those of the Second rank that of *Neamuri*. The functionaries themselves correspond much more closely to Western feudal household dependents such as Seneschal, Constable, Chamberlain, etc.

11. The Fanariots in their need for money doubled or even trebled Boyar titles, without creating additional functions. For instance, there was a second and third *Vorvic*, a second and third *Paharnic*, down to the lowest echelon. Many of the older titles, such as that of *Ban*, survived without a corresponding function. There were, however, a few offices, such as that of *Ispravnik* of prefect, without a corresponding Boyar title.

12. The word *Ciocoi*, of Turkish origin, originally meant a small fiscal district official (e. g. *Cocoi de Judet*), and was later loosely applied to all minor officials, or more generally to Greek "opportunists." It was only from 1821 onwards that the term took on a new meaning, being used by the Greater Boyars as contemptuous expression for their second — and third — class colleagues who were suspected of toying with constitutional ideas. J.C. Filitti, *Les Principautés Roumaines sous l'Occupation Russe : Le Règlement Organique* (Paris, 1904), p. 82.

families intermarried with Greeks, others deliberately shunned Court life at Bucharest and Jassy, and retired to their estates. This is why it is misleading to identify the old Roumanian and the newly established Fanariot families too completely. In fairness only the latter corresponded more accurately to the stereotypes which have so often been the object of reproof, irony, or moral reflection on the part of somewhat superficial western observers. These travellers, in fact, were often critical of almost everything from the Boyar's incongruous architectural tastes to their pretentious semi-oriental apparel characterized by a pear-shaped headgear or *Calpac* varying in height, as the Boyar's beard varied in length, according to rank. Actually the casual western visitor knew little of the Boyar's life, especially of what went on behind the impenetrable walls of his estates. These walls encompassed more than just a residence but marked the frontiers of a veritable state within a state where the head of the family ruled supreme. The household of the more powerful included an army of retainers, priests, foreign and native tutors, gypsies, and dependents of all kinds, numbered perhaps in the hundreds. This private court conformed in every detail to the protocol of the princely court, and occasionally outstripped it in splendour. This is the world in which the prince himself rarely dared to interfere. The women were secluded in true oriental fashion before marriage, only to display their lack of restraint and their amorality from the day they first emerged to meet their future husbands, a day that was, more often than not, also their wedding day. The general effect of idleness, pettiness of mind, frivolity, oriental cynicism, and intrigue — whose only redeeming feature seems to have been a certain spontaneity in showing hospitality to foreigners — is one which alternately amazed, perplexed, or shocked the Westerners,¹³ while it brought contemptuous smiles of satisfaction to the lips of the Westernized Russian officer of Catherine the Great who sought ways and means of exploiting the situation, by introducing card-playing and masked balls to his own personal advantage.

At any rate, and allowing for due exaggerations, such an account of Boyar life makes a good and very readable story, with a lavish sprinkling of

13. The French educator, J. A. Vaillant, is astounded at a Boyar (A. Filipescu), impassively receiving him in state at a time when a good part of the city of Bucharest had been destroyed by an earthquake and ravaged by fire. J. A. Vaillant, *La Roumanie*, Vol. II, pp. 349-350. The Boyar, however, was displaying the one great virtue no one ever denied Roumanians — hospitality, and even the partial destruction of the capital was of little moment compared to the frequent arrests, deportations, and executions which had stricken his family in the past.

spicy anecdotes.¹⁴ It would undoubtedly have spoiled the effect to suggest that among these Greco-Roumanian Boyars there were some who did not quite correspond to the prototype : the philanthropic Boyars who founded schools and hospitals, or endowed monasteries, and the scholars who collected manuscripts from the West and sent their sons, if not other deserving scholars, to study abroad. The humanitarian Fanariot Princes, dedicated to enlightenment and reform, had to be unearthed by the historians, since contemporaries simply left them out of the account.¹⁵ Even when we lower our sights on the Fanariot vices they are found to have some historical explanation : frivolity and indolence have often been associated with times of stress and insecurity to property and life. Besides, quoting a familiar adage, Professor Iorga lightly suggests that even vices can occasionally be virtues turned inside out, and certainly intrigue stood the Boyars in good stead on more than one crucial occasion in the country's history.¹⁶

With all its imperfections, the picture of the Greco-Roumanian Boyars in the role of a court nobility *à la* Louis XIV, though overstressed, may be partly accepted, but only with one important reservation which makes the parallel finally untrue. The nobility of Louis XIV was a privileged but powerless estate, whereas the Boyars were both privileged and possessed considerable power. One of the most effective ways the Boyars could impose a check upon the Prince was to voice allegedly "public" discontent in petitions to Constantinople. Neither the Turks nor the Boyars were seriously concerned

14. "Small toward the great, and great toward the small" runs a contemporary proverb. Wilkinson's account corroborates that view : a Boyar greeting another of superior rank is supposed to kiss his coat-tail; it is considered beneath a great Boyar to use his legs; even in his home, he is trundled about from chamber to chamber by his inferiors. In other ways the British Consul's account is typical and hardly flattering : "Money is their only stimulus... habit has made them spoliators... the prodigality of the Boyars is equal only to their avidity. Ostentation governs them in one manner, avarice in another. They are careless in their private affairs, and with the exception of a few they leave them in the greatest disorder. Many of them have more debts than the value of their own property... but their personal credit is not injured by these, neither do they experience one moment's anxiety for such a state of ruin." Wilkinson, as we shall see, had a chip on his shoulder, but is this description so different from that of Saint-Simon's *Versailles*? Wilkinson, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

15. For a less partial view, see Le Comte d'Hauterive, *Mémoires sur l'Etat Ancien et Actuel de la Moldavie*, dedicated to Prince Alexander Ypsilanti in 1787 (Bucharest, 1902), p. 176.

16. The Boyars displayed their "flair" on more than one occasion. In 1822 it was largely through the effort of skilful coterie that the Principalities regained their traditional autonomy. The combined Moldo-Wallachian election of Prince Alexander John Cuza was another instance of a clever stratagem to outwit the Turks and achieve union.

about the condition of the peasant masses, but it was good policy for the Sultan ostensibly to represent the poor as having rights of their own. Indeed on the Turkish side, a Boyar petition was a convenient device for occasional interference in the domestic affairs of the country. For the Boyars, such initiative represented a welcome opportunity to do away with an obnoxious Hospodar. Needless to add, such extra constitutional procedure had little humanitarian sincerity, and the conditions of the peasantry, far from improving, grew progressively worse in the course of the eighteenth century.

"There does not perhaps exist a people labouring under a greater degree of oppression from the effect of despotic power and more heavily burdened with impositions and taxes than the peasantry of Wallachia and Moldavia,"¹⁷ states William Wilkinson, a British Consul in a passage which, with a few variations, represents the verdict of almost all Western observers who visited the Principalities during the Fanariot period.¹⁸ The peasant, although originally free, was a serf in everything but name. In practice he laboured under heavy fiscal charges from which the Boyar class was generally exempt. The problem of how or when exactly he came to be reduced to bondage, is but another facet of the controversy we have already mentioned in connection with the origins of the Boyar class, and has consequently been subjected to much the same kind of rationalization, according to the partialities of the individual authors. To cut the Gordian knot, it has been convenient to attribute the introduction of serfdom in the Principalities to Prince Michael the Brave (1593-1601), though it is quite likely that this Prince simply confirmed by edict a pre-existing state of affairs. We know at least that a small category of free peasants survived up to the beginning of our period, the *Rezèches* in

17. Wilkinson, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

18. With few variations, the theme of oppression is invariably the same; e. g., Ch. Pertusier, *La Vallachie et Moldavie et de l'Influence Politiques des Grecs du Fanar* (Paris, 1822); though I. S. Raicevich, a Ragusan who served as Austrian consul, is more impartial than most, in his *Voyage en Valachie et en Moldavie* (Paris, 1822). Among other observers, Langeron blames fate for the peasant's poverty (his classic remark: "The Principalities are favoured by the nature, persecuted by fate," *Mémoires de Langeron*, Paris, 1813); Comte M. de Langeron, on the other hand, thinks the Russians are at fault in: *Coup d'œil sur l'Etat actuel de la Valachie et la Conduite de la Russie relativement à cette Province* (Paris, 1835), and Cunningham, British Vice-Consul at Galatz, writing in 1835, agreed with both but is harder on the Boyar: "The years the season has been favourable, the condition of the peasant is good, but when a wet or unfavourable season comes his position is very bad. He must save the crop of the Boyar while his own rots to the ground. When such is the case, the peasant actually dies of hunger." Cunningham to Foreign Office March, 1835, P. O. 78/110.

Moldavia and the *Mochnènes* in Wallachia.¹⁹ This is a fact which may or may not prove, as has been argued, that all peasants were originally free and were gradually reduced to servitude by the Boyars. One peculiar characteristic of this class of free peasants, namely that its members own land in common and that their villages have a separate judicial entity, attests to the possibility of some general form of communal peasant ownership on the early history of the Principalities, as in Russia.

Between 1743 and 1757 Prince Constantine Mavrocordato, who at various times rules both in Moldavia and Wallachia,²⁰ made public profession of this enlightenment by decreeing the emancipation of all serfs — an act motivated, it is said, by a desire to gain indulgent sympathies in the West. The peasant could henceforth be considered as officially free, though his newly found freedom was purchased at a high cost. In terms of economic theory the labourer could now “sell” his services to his former master and exploit the relative scarcity of labour to his own advantage. However, this stipulated the operation of a free labour market which did not in fact exist. More often than not, the former liberated serf stayed on his master’s land and supplied a statutory number of working days — originally set at the modest rate of 12 days per annum by Prince Alexander Ypsilanti in 1774, but in practice, under the impact of extraneous economic forces, often amounting to as many as 25 or even 40 days.²¹ As his share of the bargain, the peasant could count on the free use of approximately two-thirds of the Boyar’s land so long as he paid tithes, one twentieth of the produce, and the customary fees (for the use of grazing land, for instance) to his master.

In return for the “sacrifice” of emancipation, the Boyars demanded some

19. The very opposite has been stated by opponents of this view, who maintain that serfdom existed since the formation of the Principalities and that the surviving free peasants were simply descendants of impoverished Boyars. This is essentially Iorga’s view (the peasants are descendants of second class Boyars); Gr. Tocilescu thinks they can be traced back to Roman veterans; Bolgiu, that they are unrewarded militiamen; R. Rosetti, that they are escaped serfs. The name for serf (*Rumani* or *Vecini*) appears on the earliest Slavonic documents. M. Emerit, *Les paysans Roumains depuis le Traité d’Adrianople jusqu’à la libération des Terres*, 1829-1864 (Paris, 1937), pp. 34-36.

20. Constantine Mavrocordat established quite a record among the Fanariots by reigning no less than six times in Wallachia and four times in Moldavia, thus achieving a total of twenty-two years reign.

21. Even when set at twelve days, the nature of the task required for the *corvée* was such that in practice it required twice that time to perform. It was substantially increased when the Boyars realized they could make money by cultivating wheat for export after the opening of the Black Sea to foreign trade under the Treaty of Adrianople in 1829.

compensation from the Prince. They obtained the retention of a special category of peasants — the *scutelnici*,²² who remained attached to their land (and were consequently not taxable by the state), and they also won for themselves complete exemption from any fiscal obligations. The burden of taxation which had always lain heavily on the poor, now fell exclusively upon the “freed” peasants, many of whom soon had occasion to regret their former bondage. The *Bir*, the chief direct tax which had at one time partially been levied on property, was now collected on income at quarterly intervals from each village *loude*.²³ This was comparatively a small matter, as was the *ajutorinta* imposed twice a year and even the hated capitation tax. Indirect taxation however touched every imaginable product and demands a whole vocabulary for the mere enumeration of separate items : there was a tax on certain types of livestock, the *văcarit*; on sheep, *oierit*; on pigs, *goştina*; on bee-hives, *dijmărit*; on wines, *vinărit*; on tobacco, *tutuhărit*; on smoke, *fumărit*; on cellars, *căminărit*; on oxen, *cornărit*; on shepherds, *erbărit*; there were taxes on salt, fats, soap, and inns, many of these collected once a month. Add to these the special charges which the Prince imposed at the time of his accession (the *Banii Steagului*, literally meaning “money for the flag”), the *Mucărel*, which had to be paid every three years with each renewal of appointment,²⁴ the not considerable but always increasing tribute to Constantinople, and the compulsory deliveries for ordinary or extraordinary “purchases”

22. The number of *scutelnici* a Boyar was entitled to receive varied according to importance and rank. J.-A. Vaillant estimates that a Boyar of the first class could obtain up to 150 *scutelnici*. J.-A. Vaillant. *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 193. It was, of course, in his interest always to bargain for more. In addition to the *scutelnici*, there was another category of peasants attached to the land, the *Poslujnici*, usually foreigners placed at the disposal of the Greek monasteries or of foreign residents of distinction. These two categories possibly amounted to no more than 30,000 in the Principalities, and if we are to add to this number other categories of serfs such as the *Sluji* or *Breslasi* (servants) and gypsy slaves (according to Wilkinson, 80,000 in Wallachia alone), the resulting fiscal loss to the state was considerable, since they were all exempt from taxation. M. Emerit, *Les Paysans Roumains*, p. 66. For an interesting study on the position of the gypsies, see M. Emerit, “De la condition des Esclaves dans l’Ancienne Roumanie” in *Revue Historique du Sud-Est Européen*, October-December, 1930.

23. *Loude* was a unit of five to ten heads of families in each village, collectively responsible for the tax. According to Wilkinson, there were 18,000 *Loude*s for the seventeen districts of Wallachia. He estimated that this total brought in the equivalent of 360,000 pounds sterling for the Hospodar. Wilkinson, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

24. The *Erbarit* was imposed on foreign shepherds from Transylvania descending into the plain for pasture.

made by Turkish agents twice a year for the provisioning of their capital (the provinces were not idly called the "Garden of Stamboul"!).

Nor were taxes the only heavy burden on the peasant's existence. There were frequent raids made by neighbouring Pashas, such as the notorious rebel, Pasvan Oglou; there were constant requisitions, following each of the numerous Russian occupations throughout the eighteenth century; there were cholera epidemics on the left bank of the Danube; the dreaded seasonal appearance of the locust; harvest failures; and occasional earthquakes. It is not hard to understand that strange haggard, expressionless gaze, that almost proverbial apathy or "natural stupour," so often noticed by foreign consuls, who far too readily ascribe it to laziness, cowardice, or plain stupidity.

Although communist writers have been hard at work attempting to discover a tradition of rural jacqueries in Roumania, bad as things were, the Moldo-Wallachian peasant rarely revolted, during the eighteenth century as they were too oppressed to do so. There existed, it is true, certain portents of revolutionary discontent towards the end of the century, in part encouraged by the tendency of a few Fanariot hospodars to assume the role of repentant despots. For, as has often been justly observed and verified at the time of the French and Russian revolutions, the most dangerous moment for a despotic government is when it begins to reform. In the meantime, pending a favourable circumstance for outright revolution, the Roumanian peasant had few other alternatives. He appealed infrequently to higher authority, for he had learned by experience the hopeless futility of such action. He could, it is true, risk his neck to escape across the Danube into Turkish territory, where at least he only had the Pasha's inefficiency to cope with.²⁵ A more profitable choice was that of turning *haidouc* and maintaining a Robin-Hood existence, robbing the rich in the shelter of the Carpathian Mountains. In desperation he often turned to the Jewish innkeeper or as a last resort, sold himself into bondage. At best, if he had any money, he became a priest.

Though the priest's life was for all intents and purposes indistinguishable from that of the villagers among whom he lived, and though he could never aspire to any advancement in ecclesiastical rank, since all five bishoprics in either Principality were exclusively reserved to the regular clergy, never-

25. The rate of peasant migration into Bulgaria, particularly toward the close of the eighteenth century, began to alarm Boyars and Princes. By 1821 the number of Wallachian peasants, according to Wilkinson, had fallen to around 1,000,000, and to half that number in Moldavia. Wilkinson, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

theless a secular village curate had a few compensations. For one thing, he was exempt from taxation. Unlike the regular clergy, he could marry. He was treated with awe and respect by his superstitious parishioners, and even the Boyar's wife might kiss his hand. Perhaps these acts of deference more often arose from fear than from reverence or from any genuine religious sentiment. So far as the average clergyman was concerned, it would be difficult to find much to respect in him, a man whose only formal schooling consisted in learning to intone the psalter correctly or to memorize by rote the office, whose cyrillic characters he could often hardly make out. It was fortunate indeed, and readily understandable, that the lower clergy had little real political influence in the country, even though the *Popa* instinctively felt compelled to chant *Te-Deums* with each succeeding Russian occupation, and to fulminate from his pulpit against the Papist, the Jew, and the Turk, whom, with little distinction, he equally feared and abhorred.²⁶ Unenlightened and perhaps unreformable, the village priest has been aptly described as the most useless personage in eighteenth century society. The native upper clergy aroused little concern in terms of either political power or landed estates. Although, both Metropolitans at Jassy and Bucharest and the bishops²⁷ *ex-officio* sat in the Boyar Assemblies, they only occasionally made their voices heard, and although as much as one fifth of the soil of the Principalities was labeled "Church lands," only a fraction thereof was controlled by the native upper clergy. The vast majority of these estates, through a strange anomaly were in the hands of certain Greek monks and Eastern bishoprics, the famed "dedicated monasteries."

The story of this extraordinary spoliation has its beginning in the heroic traditions of the early history of the country, when Princes and Boyars, animated by genuine religious fervour, made generous donations for the foundation of monasteries to celebrate some victory against the Turk, in gratitude

26. Wilkinson is particularly severe with regard to the *Popa*: "Even the most precise doctrines of the Christian religion are corrupted by the... selfish views of low-breed ignorant priests, a sort of men who have here made themselves a manifest disgrace to the sanctity of the Christian name." He further states that "the majority can neither read nor write" and would be greatly astonished to find out the difference between Catholicism and their Church. Wilkinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-168 et seq. The standard anecdote of the times is that of a Metropolitan in a sermon denouncing the "papist" teachings of Voltaire.

27. There were five to six bishoprics in each Principality — the bishops being drawn exclusively from the regular clergy and not as a rule allowed to marry. The chief bishops of Wallachia, who were in case of vacancy the three chief candidates for Metropolitan, were those of Ramnic, Arges, and Buzau.

for recovery from disease, or simply for the repose of their souls. These monasteries, essentially consecrated to prayer, were also associated with works of charity and often served as hospitals for the sick, as hostels for wayfarers, or as educational institutions and were used for other deserving ends connected with monastic foundations all over Europe. With the coming of the Fanariot Princes many of the patrons or administrators perhaps fearful of increasing Turkish interference, decided to "dedicate" these lands, for increased protection, to certain powerful institutions in the Holy Lands, to Mount-Athos, Mount-Sinai, or the Holy Sepulchre, to the Bishoprics of Antioch and Alexandria, or even to the great Patriarchates of Jerusalem or Constantinople. In the course of time the newly-appointed Greek abbots, taking advantage of the loosely-worded original acts of dedication, came to claim real rights of ownership, with the active support of their Fanariot compatriots. Needless to add, the pious intentions for which these monasteries had initially been endowed were soon forgotten. Although obligated to pay annual subsidies to their respective Patriarchates and smaller sums to the state, the abbot's primary concern was the maximum exploitation of their monastic estates and their extension either by additional purchase or legal expropriation. Whenever the abbots were heard in the Boyar Assembly, in which they carried some weight, they pressed for the multiplication of peasant dues, for the extension of the tasks of the *corvée*, and for an increase in the share of tax-exempted foreign workers. Not only did they generally succeed in obtaining complete satisfaction for their demands, but, notwithstanding constant denunciation, they frustrated every attempt at reform or disestablishment until 1863.²⁸ The clue to this prolonged survival lies in the simple fact that the Greek monks were the loyal allies of Russia. During successive Russian occupations they supplied food, accommodation and information to the Tsarist occupying forces. Such services earned them the tangible benefits of constant Russian diplomatic support in the face of stiffening nationalist and Turkish opposition.

There is a missing link in the social pyramid, so often noted by foreign travellers : only a Hospodar, Boyars and peasants are mentioned; no refe-

28. The native Hospodars secured a short-lived disestablishment of the "dedicated monasteries" between 1822 and 1828 because most of the abbots had been thoroughly compromised in the Greek revolution of 1821. The monasteries were reinstated by the Russians following their occupation of the country. The British Consul Colquhoun, in a dispatch to his government in 1845, described the little success native administrations had had in even discussing the subject with the Russian authorities. Colquhoun to Foreign Office, Bucharest, March 25, 1845, P. O. 95/214.

rence is usually made to the existence of a middle class. Yet most of the travelogues refer to the existence of a prosperous retail district in Bucharest, and describe the expensive tastes of the aristocrats — and this kind of commerce inevitably implies a middleman. Some historians have drawn a fine distinction within the Boyar class itself. There was a world of difference they contend, between the first class Boyar sitting in the Divan, who enjoyed social privilege and power, and the numerous representatives of the lower ranks who held certain privileges, but actually had no power and were socially snubbed by the elite. The second and third class Boyars would consequently fit in nicely into the role of a middle estate. The distinction, however, is misleading if we think of the Boyar, no matter how modest, as essentially a landowner or a court functionary who either shared in the universal contempt of his class for commercial pursuits or did not have the requisite capital to engage in them. In any case, when it was so much easier to become a Boyar than start a successful commercial venture, why degrade oneself to an occupation which did not quite befit a “gentleman”? These considerations account for the relatively small number of natives who entered the professions or engaged in trade.

Commercial functions were thus performed almost entirely by an increasingly numerous and prosperous foreign community which certainly deserves some recognition. Most of the foreigners had originally been received into the country grudgingly and with suspicion. But, since they fulfilled a real need and became indispensable in proportion as Boyar luxuries became Boyar necessities, they gradually took up permanent residence in the Principalities: German clothiers from Leipzig;²⁹ coachmakers from Vienna; furriers from Poland; Jewish cabaret owners and professional money lenders from all over Eastern Europe; French apothecaries, physicians, and professors; Armenian or Ionian merchants and shipmasters at the Danubian ports of Braila and Galatz; and the countless Greeks who failed to earn a Boyar's title and consequently used their linguistic talents as lawyers and clerks — all of these categories and many more filled the social vacuum and in the eighteenth century contributed to the formation of a middle class. For once the nucleus of a foreign community had established itself in Moldavia and

29. The street name *Strada Lipsanilor* (derived from Leipzig), and the extension of that name to a general district are to this day a tribute to the importance trade with Leipzig had once assumed. The very term *Nemtesc* (meaning German) was synonymous with Western (European) when referring to clothing; for instance, “*costum nemtesc*” meant Western as opposed to oriental or Roumanian apparel.

Wallachia it was impossible to keep newcomers out, particularly when the latter discovered that by virtue of the Capitulation Treaties with the Western Powers, they were entitled to avail themselves of exceptional privileges under the protection of their respective consulate. Thus, with the opening of the Western consulates at the close of the eighteenth century, the foreign community assumed an entirely new role and lost all interest in assimilation with the Roumanians whom they both exploited and despised.

The position of a consul in the Danubian Principalities, or for that matter in the scales of the Levant, bears little relationships with the usual attributes of that office in Western nations, because of the unusual extraterritorial rights conferred on westerners throughout the Ottoman Empire by virtue of the Capitulations.³⁰ The "Capitulatory regime" had its justification in the fact that Christian and Moslem Law, being based on two widely divergent ethical codes, had in fairness to both parties to be administered separately. It was not clear, however, upon what basis these extraterritorial concessions could be applied without qualifications in Moldavia and Wallachia, two Christian Principalities with virtually no Moslem population. Anticipating this objection the foreign consuls in Bucharest and Jassy invoked quite another to maintain the validity of the capitulations. They argued that under the Fanariots justice was so venal that it was impossible to rely upon the equanimity of local tribunals in reaching a verdict where a foreigner was concerned.³¹ It was at any rate much simpler for the consul to deal personally with petty disputes among his *protégés*,³² since he was authorized to impose

30. "The term capitulation... may be explained as designating a treaty, by the terms of which foreigners residing in Turkey are entitled to special immunities and rights and are more or less subject to the laws of their respective countries." Most such treaties followed the pattern of the Treaties concluded by the Porte with Francis I in 1535 and with Queen Elizabeth of England in 1579. They also guaranteed freedom of trade subject to a uniform duty of 3 per cent, though few of the commercial privileges were in fact enjoyed because of Turkish monopolies and other obstructions. The best general account of the Capitulations is that of N. Souza, *The Capitulatory Regime in Turkey: Its History, Origin, and Nature* (Baltimore, 1933). The author agrees with most Roumanian historians "that the system was incompatible with modern political concepts and particularly inapplicable in the Principalities." *Ibid.*, p. 171.

31. The absurdity is all the more evident when it is recalled that the Turks themselves, in their disputes with the natives, were judged by native tribunals. J.-C. Filitti, "Despre Abuzurile Consularilor, in *Epoca Regulamentara*," *Viata Romaneasca* (June 1910). p. 343.

32. They particularly resented the constant possibility of a law-suit being reopened upon the advent of a new Hospodar.

certain sanctions which ranged from fines to striking the name of an offender off the consular register, an action which often led to deportation. It was far more difficult to adjudicate criminal offences, particularly where the aggrieved party was a native. If the accused was a *bona fide protégé*, the consul could in theory, after a preliminary investigation on the spot of the crime, claim the right of transmitting the case for a decision to the closest consul general, and ultimately to a tribunal back home.³³ In practice, criminal cases of this nature were far more often, on the insistence of the local government, referred to local tribunals, but the consul or his representatives retained the right of supervising the fairness of the proceedings.

In order to be effectively maintained, the Capitulatory regime required rigid surveillance not only in the two capitals but also in every provincial district where the number of *protégés* warranted the presence of a consular official or *staroste*. The origin of the right of appointing such officials is obscure; there is certainly no reference to it in the original Capitulations. Probably the consuls relied on certain prescriptive traditions. Since there was no limit to the number of such subordinate functionaries a consul could create without reference to Constantinople, and since the number of *protégés* could be increased at will through the mere sale of a patent of protection, it was quite naturally in the interests of the foreign consulates at Bucharest and Jassy to avail themselves increasingly of the services of the *starostes*, particularly since these services went officially unpaid. The *starostes'* office had its own rewards in the handsome profits made from the sale of patents and in the prominent social position they enjoyed in each community. It is difficult generally to rely upon figures, but most contemporary accounts will agree that, of all Western powers, Austria had by far the most extensive and efficient network of *starostes* covering both provinces, with the total number of subjects entitled to Hapsburg protection estimated as high as 200,000 in Moldavia alone — a figure probably higher than the combined number of *protégés* of all other consulates before 1821. After that period, through the endless multiplication of patents of protection, in most instances sold to individuals without the remotest claim to them, the rise in the number of *protégés* became sufficiently alarming to attract the attention of local authorities.

Because of their unusual powers the consuls of the Great Powers at Bu-

33. The French consuls usually referred criminal cases to the Royal Court of Assize at Aix-en-Provence, although criminals often went free because of the difficulty of drawing up an indictment. The first English Foreign Jurisdiction Act clarified a confused situation in consular jurisdiction when passed on August 24, 1834. N. Souza, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

charest and Jassy assumed the role of veritable ambassadors. Not only did they conform in point of ceremony to the Byzantine pageantry established at Court, but their retinue necessitated lavish expenditures they could not always afford on their salaries. The official entry of a consul in either capital, his assumption of office, the entertainment of the hospodars on certain festive occasions, were all formal affairs, which have been vividly described by foreign travellers in their quaint local setting at the consulates, the Prince's Palace or at the residence of the Metropolitan. The consul's duties also entailed entertaining travellers, exchanging hospitalities with powerful Boyars, and needless to say keeping their respective governments informed upon the latest intrigues of the other Great Powers or on the secret intentions of the Turkish Government. Above all, however, the consul was the leader of a small community of artisans, merchants and professional men whose welfare and security rested in his hands entirely.

To sum up : the Old Regime in the Principalities presents an aspect striking not so much for the numerous evils and iniquities inherent in any despotic government, but in its anomalies and contradictions—a foreign farmer-Prince at the apex of the hierarchy, invested with the semblance but not the reality of power; a strong native Boyar class with inherited wealth and social privileges but few clearly defined duties; an ignorant and oppressed peasantry which had secured the theoretical advantages of freedom in exchange for greater physical and financial exploitation; a native secular clergy lacking a *raison d'être*, since it could provide neither spiritual comfort nor educational leadership; wealthy and influential foreign monasteries that rendered no social, medical or charitable service but existed on sufferance (despite continued protests and general indignation) thanks to the protection of the Tsar of all the Russias; finally a foreign middle class domiciled in but owing no allegiance to its adopted country, and enjoying extraterritorial status under the protection of the consulates. At the very bottom, rejected by society, lay the despised and browbeaten slave. It is a strange picture, most notable perhaps for its lack of cohesion. The *ancien régime* in France at least, no matter what its flaws, formed more of an integrated society.

There was a certain feeling of common allegiance binding the two privileged estates, the nobility and the clergy, and a sense of mutual self interest even with the third estate. In addition through the policy of the kings a certain basis was established for the development of national sentiment. During the 18th century period of Fanariot rule all these pre-requisites to

national consciousness seemed were lacking. This is the reason why Roumanian cultural nationalism initially at least, found a more fertile soil in Transylvania.

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