CHAPTER 8

‘Chasing Away the Greeks’: The Prince-State and the Undesired Foreigners (Wallachia and Moldavia between the 16th and 18th Centuries)

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The 17th-century Wallachian and Moldavian intellectuals record the remote remembrance of the fact that at the beginning of the political existence of the Danubian Principalities people came from everywhere and settled there.1 Recent studies have confirmed these testimonies, and traces of these early migratory flows have been found at the princely Court, in the monasteries, in the urban commercial life, and in the countryside. It was an immigration from neighbouring areas, originating in regions inhabited by a large Orthodox population: Ruthenia, north-east of Moldavia, controlled by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; Transylvania, in the west of Wallachia, a part of the Hungarian Kingdom; and especially the southern Slavic regions where the Bulgarian and Serbian States lived their last days before surrendering to new Ottoman masters.2 These flows of individuals or collective movements grew relentlessly as the Ottoman Empire spread towards the Danube and even further (from the 14th up to the first half of the 16th century).3 Linked with this immigration from neighbouring areas, mostly connected with the Orthodoxy of Slavic origins – although the Armenians, the Jews, the Hungarians, and the Catholic Germans were also represented4 – one finds, starting with the second half of 14th century, traces of migrants originating from regions attached to the Greek Orthodoxy. Apart from the high prelates designated by the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate as leaders of local Churches, and apart from the early signs of

1 Giurescu, Letopiseţul, pp. 7, 15; Costin, Opere, p. 233; Grecescu and Simonescu, Istoria, p. 2.
2 For these first waves of immigration towards the Principalities, the reader will find complete references in Cotovanu, Migrations et mutations, 1st part.
3 Wallachia became a tributary State to the Porte in 1417, Moldavia in 1456. In exchange for an annual payment, the two countries kept their political, administrative and judicial autonomy: see Gorovei, “Moldova în ‘Casa păcii’”, Guboglu, “Le tribut”, and Panaite, Pace, război şi comerţ.
4 For the role of the Armenians, Hungarians, and Germans in the development of the commerce and of the first towns in the Principalities, see Iorga, “Istoria evreilor”; Iorga, “Armenii”; Siruni, “Armenii”; Râdvan, “Consideraţii”; Râdvan, “Considerations".
monastic life spread by Greek-speaking monks,\(^5\) one finds in the Princely Council and in the princely Court people bearing Greek or Albanian names adapted to the Romanian phonetics, very rare in the Principalities: Andronic, Filos, Caloian, Ghinea, Golin, Deadiul, Duca, Manoil, Pahulea, Piper, Polivar, Sinadino, Sarandino, Sarul, Spanopula, Uranie, etc. Their numbers grew stronger during the 15th century,\(^6\) and exploded in the middle of the 16th century, for reasons that will be presented in the following pages.\(^7\) All fields of local life were accessible. One recognizes them in the Wallachian and Moldavian sources – written in Slavonic and, starting from the end of the 16th century, also in Romanian – especially by their names, their stated place of origin, the collective name ‘the Greek’ (‘grecul’) or ‘the Albanian’ (‘arbănaşul’) assigned individually,\(^8\) the signs of using the Greek writing (private documents, autograph signatures, votive inscriptions) and, in specific cases, religious donations towards the native regions. A complete inventory of such indicators for the long period of time stretching from the 14th to the 17th centuries showed a strong concentration of places of origins of these Greek-speaking migrants in the Balkan dioceses of the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate, especially in Epirus, Thessaly, and Western Macedonia. Less significantly, others arrived from Constantinople, often in the entourage of the Princes named by the Sultan and from the isles of the Levant.\(^9\)

The incessant movement of these peoples towards Wallachia and Moldavia does not represent a secondary phenomenon. On the contrary, it is an element shaping both public and social space. These migratory flows have

\(^5\) Barbu, “O mărturie”; Solomon, “Mitropoliţii greci”; Cotovanu, “Alexis de Kiev”. The first large monasteries of Wallachia were founded by monk Nicodim, who arrived from Serbia, a man close to the Patriarchate of Constantinople: see Lăzărescu, “Nicodim” and Nastase, “Le Mont Athos”.


\(^7\) For the increasing bibliography of the subject, see the more or less recent studies by Camariano-Cioran, L’Épire; Caproșu, O istorie a Moldovei; Chelcu, “Implicarea elementului grecesc”; Păun, Pouvoirs, offices; Păun, “Les grands officiers”; Lazăr, Les marchands; Falangas, Μορφές; Falangas, Présences grecques; Luca, “The Rise of the Greek”; Cotovanu, “Le diocèse de Dryinoupolis”; Cotovanu, “Despre ctitorii arbănaşii” ; Cotovanu, “À la recherche de nouveaux contribuables”.

\(^8\) I intend to put the collective nouns into quotation marks, because they are used out of their context. I will return later on their multiple meanings.

\(^9\) Cotovanu, “L’émigration”.