

FROM PHANARIOTE CHRONICLES TO NATION-BUILDING

ANDREI PIPPIDI

(Institute for South-East European Studies, Bucharest)

Oser traiter de nouveau au moins un côté de l'histoire des Phanariotes peut être justifié seulement parce que les travaux sur les sources historiques grecques et roumaines du XVIII^e siècle ont traité chaque texte à part, pour approfondir son caractère particulier, sans mettre en relief ce qui en ressort comme concurrence entre deux des dynasties apparentées, mais rivales, qui ont régné durant cette époque sur la Moldavie et la Valachie. Les Ghika avaient eu leur chronique à eux, régulièrement entretenue, tandis que la tradition en faveur des Mavrocordato, bien plus active, a produit à plusieurs reprises une image qui leur fût favorable. À part les annales commandées par les princes, il y a eu aussi des manuscrits reflétant un point de vue personnel qui ont également circulé dans les deux pays. Certaines de ces initiatives portaient d'un état d'esprit qui désirait envisager le passé entier des Principautés.

Keywords: Phanariotes, Mavrokordato, Romanian Principalities, Ghika.

After Legrand and Sturdza it is superfluous to insist on the genealogy of the Mavrokordato dynasty.¹ Its origins are as well known as its performance in the administration of the Romanian Principalities. Prince Constantine, clearly following the tradition of his father Nicholas, well deserved being called an “enlightened despot”.² Their achievements, or only their endeavours in the area of culture, which were also grounded in their political vision, show them to have been Enlightenment-minded. In the two countries where they stirred up an intense intellectual activity, they impressed their contemporaries and set an example.

Coming from Constantinople, after having left their native island of Chios, they might have felt rejected as foreigners in Moldavia and Wallachia, where the throne had been occupied almost always by rulers who claimed legitimacy through their connection with the ancient domestic princes. They owed their ascent to the government of the Principalities to the distrust that the Ottoman vezirs had taken to the indigenous pretenders whom they condemned for weakness or disloyalty. Another factor leading to the appointment of foreign rulers was the increasing influence exercised by the “Ex aporriton” Alexander Mavrokordatos, who occupied

¹ Emile Legrand, *Généalogie des Mavrocordato de Constantinople, rédigée d'après des documents inédits*, Paris, 1900 ; A.A.C. Sturdza, *L'Europe Orientale et le rôle historique des Maurocordato*, Paris, 1913 ; M.D. Sturdza, *Dictionnaire historique et généalogique des grandes familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople*, Paris, 1983.

² N. Iorga, *Le despotisme éclairé dans les pays roumains au XVIII^e siècle*, in *Bulletin of the International Committee of Historical Sciences*, IX (1937), p. 101–115.

the office of Grand Interpreter to the Porte, a position that he preserved for about forty years. The second member of that family to have attained prominence, Alexander's son Nicholas (1680–1730) owed his ascent to power to his high culture and diplomatic merit, but also to his being distantly descended from the old Moldavian dynasty. Therefore, he soon included in his vast range of studies the history of Dacia, the antique name of the provinces he was appointed to rule, and he encouraged the flattering courtiers who emphasized the ties binding him to the Moldovan past.³

Sources on the history of the two Principalities were not easily accessible, however. At the time of his presence in Jassy and Bucharest (1716–1730, excepting the three years of his exile in Transylvania, as war prisoner of the Austrians, 1716–1719), Nicholas could have picked several manuscripts, with copies of chronicles written in Romanian, a language that he learned quite soon after his appointment. For Moldavia, two copies of Grigore Ureche's chronicle (till 1594)⁴ are certain to have been used, and the prince ordered for himself another copy⁵ in 1716. Its continuation (1595–1661) by Miron Costin existed in various copies, the most recent of them being transcribed in 1710,⁶ by Axinte Uricariul, a clerk of the princely chancery who also got the charge to write an account of the reign of Nicholas.⁷ A compilation of chronicles having as topic the reigns of Nicholas and including also the last one of them in Wallachia, as it was extensively praised by Radu Popescu, was realized in Bucharest in 1722 for the prince's library.⁸ Nicholas resorted to historical arguments to justify some of his reforms: while acting in the interest of the Porte, he strongly repressed the corruption of the tax-collectors and his constant stance on social ethics he drew from the ancient Greek thinkers and from Fénelon.⁹

³ At the Academy Library of Bucharest, ms 353 (signalled by V.A. Urechiiă in Miron Costin, *Opere complete*, I, București, 1886, p. 26–30), with the heraldic arms and the initials of Nicholas Mavrokordatos. This versified homage, written in 1727, stated: "The whole Dacia feels very happy under the reign of your lineage, conjoined with the Despots of the Serbian realm and with the Jagellons of Poland, by the glorious blood of such heroes".

⁴ At the Academy Library in Bucharest, mss 103 and 174, see I. Crăciun and A. Ilieș, *Repertoriul manuscriselor de cronici interne sec. XV–XVIII privind istoria României*, București, 1963, p. 51–52.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 81, ms. 120. In 1711 he expected the scholars to take interest in the history of Dacia.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 65, ms. 2601.

⁷ Ioan Șt. Petre, *Axinte Uricariul*, București, 1944. See also Axinte Uricariul, *Letopisețul țării Moldovei (1711–1715)*, ed. A. Eșanu, Chișinău, 1999. There is however a contrary opinion sustained by D. Velciu, *Cu privire la paternitatea lui Axinte Uricariul asupra cronicii celei de a doua domnii moldovene a lui Nicolae Mavrocordat (1711–1715)*, *Limbă și literatură*, 3–4, 1990, p. 331–342. On this author, see also Andrei Pippidi, *O cronică munteană și un cronicar moldovean: o ipoteză*, *Anuarul Institutului de istorie și arheologie „A.D. Xenopol”*, XXVI, 1, 1989, p. 541–546.

⁸ Crăciun and Ilieș, *op. cit.*, p. 96–97, ms. 58. See also Andrei Pippidi, *Pornind de la o carte nouă despre Radu Popescu*, *Anuarul Institutului de istorie și arheologie „A.D. Xenopol”*, XXV, 1, p. 425–444.

⁹ Jacques Bouchard, *Nicolae Mavrocordat, Domn și cărturar al Iluminismului timpuriu*, București, 2006.

This attitude paid off, at least when Latin and Greek eulogies are concerned that portrayed him as a crowned philosopher. The most passionate in his extolling of the ruler is Georgios Chrysogonos of Trebizond, who had been also a devoted attendant of the Brancovan family. In 1719 he was ready to proclaim, “the great wisdom of the divine hero whom the powerful right hand of our master has crowned in order to reign on Dacia.” The flattery reached cosmic dimensions: “The nature made you the noblest of princes, your elevated actions raised you like the sun, your pious behaviour led you to fame and you brought rain to your subjects by plentiful rivers of wise judgment.”¹⁰

One of the scholars invited from abroad by Mavrokordatos to his court, the Transylvanian Stephan Bergler, who took care of the Leipzig edition (1722) of the prince’s work *Περὶ καθηκόντων* and largely nourished his propaganda in learned international journals like *Acta Eruditorum*, admired his patron for “his eloquence, his piety and his wisdom” and referred to him as a “glory of the Greeks, faithful friend of the Muses”¹¹. Among the authors who spent time in making known the prince’s erudition and his splendid library the most profoundly involved was Jean Leclerc. This professor at Amsterdam who had become an arbiter of the literary studies¹² kept a correspondence from 1720 to 1727 with Mavrokordatos through the prince’s secretaries; the goal of constant going and coming of those letters was to acquire lots of books for His Highness, mostly the latest editions of Greek and Latin classics as well as works of epigraphy¹³. This relationship had also a third side, because it did extend to William Wake, Archbishop of Canterbury, in whose beautiful library, now inherited by Christ Church, Oxford, there are some precious Byzantine manuscripts offered by the prince of Wallachia¹⁴.

The Romanian witnesses usually expressed respect to this striking figure. For instance, according to Nicolae Costin: “He was a very honest man, extremely learned, not only in philosophy and history, but in everything a prince must know; he spoke many languages; a very religious man, feeling consideration to the Church; sober in eating and drinking; taking great care of the holy churches and impoverished monasteries; very generous in his concern for poor people and widows”.¹⁵

¹⁰ C. Erbiceanu, *Cronicarii greci*, p. 205 and following.

¹¹ Maria C. Marinescu, *Umanistul Ștefan Bergler (1680–1738). Viața și activitatea sa*, Revista istorică română, XI–XII (1941–1942), p. 163–215.

¹² Annie Barnes, *Jean Leclerc (1657–1736) et la République des Lettres*, Paris, 1938.

¹³ Jacques Bouchard, *Les relations épistolaires de Nicolas Mavrocordatos avec Jean Leclerc et William Wake*, *Ο Ερανιστής*, XI, 1974, p. 67–92, and Id., *Nicolas Mavrocordatos et l’aube des Lumières*, *Revue des études sud-est européennes*, XX, 1982, 2, p. 237–246 ; Andrei Pippidi, *Aux confins de la République des Lettres: la Valachie des antiquaires*, *Studii clasice*, XVII, 1977, p. 233–246, reprinted in *Hommes et idées du Sud-Est européen à l’aube de l’âge moderne*, Bucarest-Paris, 1980. See now Jean Le Clerc, *Epistolario*, a cura di Maria Grazia e Mario Sina, IV, Firenze, 1997.

¹⁴ Jean Gouillard, *O scrisoare inedită a lui William Wake, arhiepiscop de Canterbury, către Nicolae Mavrocordat*, *Revista istorică*, 29, 1943, p. 229–233. See also Norman Sykes, *William Wake, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1657–1737*, Cambridge, 1957.

¹⁵ N. Costin, copied in *Cronica paralelă a Țării Românești și a Moldovei*, ed. by G. Ștrempel, București 1993, p. 229–230.

The compiler of another Moldavian chronicle agrees: “He was a most learned man, a great scholar and truly devoted to the Empire”, meaning of course the Ottoman one. And he adds: “During his second reign, he was gentle and mild, he honoured and loved the boyars as any prince should do, and he protected the poor people.” Let us listen further: “Through his many charitable acts, the country was spared many harms, he suppressed a lot of taxes and he was deeply affected in his heart as he was seeing the miserable people saved from slavery as they were, but reduced to indigence, crying mercy and being deprived of their families”. These are a few examples chosen at random. This excess of compliments seems to have exasperated some people around the prince. At least one of them, Michael Schendos, who had served Mavrokordatos as a physician, is the author of the most violent attacks against him in a pamphlet printed in London and Augsburg in 1723. He accused Nicholas of having poisoned his brother, of usurping his scholarly reputation and of having a harem of both sexes¹⁶.

A more balanced portrait we owe to Ion Neculce, who was also grateful to the prince for having returned him the confiscated possessions that he had lost in punishment for his allegiance to Demetrius Cantemir¹⁷. In his recollections about Nicholas, he pointed out that he had been “a very good observer of men, liberal in giving to the people who served him well”: therefore, he had entrusted with duties in administration only those men who were responsible and honest. He had a superior idea of his authority: “he intended to rule Moldavia like the Turkish Porte in a grand manner.” In his presence “he allowed no jests, no spectacles designed to amuse”. He wanted to be revered: “his door was tightly closed, nobody could enter to see him, only on the second or third day he called a boyar to tell him a few words, but none got to enter inside his apartments.” Such behaviour was very unusual at the Moldavian court. “Yet he took interest in the people of the country, in the destitute whom he was determined to treat with charity and justice, being always on their side.”¹⁸ This attitude is evident from his own comments at his arrival in Moldavia after the 1711 war, when he was stricken by the primitive and miserable condition of its inhabitants:

“The houses I saw were deserted, or destroyed by fire and reduced to ashes, most of the holy places were devastated as prey of the Tatar plunder” and the survivors were “all in a dreadful poverty, not only deprived of garment, but lacking even the daily food”.¹⁹

One of the advices left by Nicholas to the son he wished as successor was: “Do not believe easily the accusations thrown by peasants against boyars, but do

¹⁶ Library of the Brukenthal Museum in Sibiu, V II 6213: Michael Schendos Vanderbech, Philosoph. et Medicin. Doctor, *Apologia adversus Maurocordati sycophantias*, Augustae Vindelicorum, 1723. See P.Cernovodeanu, N.Vătămanu, *Un médecin princier moins connu de la période phanariote*, Michel Schendos Van der Bech, *Balkan Studies*, 18, 1977, 1, p. 13–30.

¹⁷ Iulian Marinescu, *Documente relative la Ioan Neculce*, Buletinul comisiei istorice, IV, 1925, p. 3–13.

¹⁸ Ion Neculce, *Opere*, ed. by G. Ştrempel, Bucureşti, 1982.

¹⁹ Hurmuzaki XIV.

not consent to their unjust subjugation.”²⁰ Constantine Mavrokordatos (1711–1769) dutifully obeyed. His efforts, along forty years, assiduously reformed the fiscal, social, administrative and judicial institutions of both Wallachia and Moldavia. Almost all the improvements he tried continued the work of his father. Some testimonies show Constantine surrounded by the same ceremonial style. Petros Depasta, a “iatro-philosopher” at the Greek Academy of Bucharest, later promoted as grand logothete of Moldavia, was writing in 1762 the praise of the prince’s intellectual prominence and of his integrity, exalting him as a hero²¹. The longest account of Constantine’s accomplishments is due to Kaisarios Dapontes, the *Dacian Diaries*, a record of the Russo-Turkish War which, in the years 1736–1739, was largely fought on the territory of the Principalities.²² When it was published, in Venice in 1742, a reply was prepared by a rival party, organized to promote the interests of Gregory Ghika, the former prince of Moldavia whose place was then taken by Mavrokordatos. Agents kept by Gregory Ghika at Constantinople to help his expectations intended no less than to produce a chronicle of Wallachia and Moldavia stating the merits of the Ghika family.²³

Constantine produced the best impression to foreign visitors who were coming from enlightened Europe, like Markos Antonios Katsaitis or Jean Claude Flachet.²⁴ The latter dared to compare Mavrokordatos to Peter the Great; according to that Frenchman who came to Wallachia in 1766, any State in the world would have been happy to be governed by him. In order to be better known abroad, Constantine sent to Paris his great charter of reforms (7 February 1741) for being translated and published in *Mercure de France*.²⁵

His own opinion about what he had achieved until then was disappointed: “During eleven years, since by God’s grace we reign, either in one country, or in the other one, striving for the organisation of both countries and for the welfare of their inhabitants, we did not succeed to pay all our debts. This happened because in six years we had five new reigns, three of them in Wallachia and two in Moldavia, to which must be added the expense for five years of war”.²⁶ This sad balance sheet

²⁰ Hurmuzaki XIII, p. 461–462.

²¹ Erbiceanu, *op. cit.*, p. 295–335. There is also a „logos enkomiasitikos” made for recitation at Christmas 1736 in front of the prince: Ioannou D. Mpogatzou, *Λόγος ἐγκομισιαστικὸς πρὸς Κωνσταντῖνο Μαυροκορδάτο*, Επετηρίς ἰδρυματος νεοελληνικῶν σπουδῶν, 2, 1981–1982, p. 199–208.

²² E. Legrand (ed.), *Ephémérides Daces, Publications de l’Ecole des Langues Orientales Vivantes*, Paris, t. XIV (1880), XV (1881) and XX (1888).

²³ A. Camariano-Cioran (ed.), *Reprezentanța diplomatică a Moldovei la Constantinopol (30 august 1741 – decembrie 1742). Rapoartele inedite ale agenților lui Constantin Mavrocordat*, București, 1985, p. 189.

²⁴ Flachet was discovered by N. Iorga, *Știri nouă despre biblioteca Mavrocordaților și despre vieța muntenească în timpul lui Constantin Vodă Mavrocordat*, Academia Română, Memoriile secțiunii istorice, s. III, t. VI, 1926, p. 146–169.

²⁵ Anne-Marie Cassoly, *Autour de l’insertion dans le « Mercure de France » de la « Constitution » de Constantin Maurocordato*, *Revue des études sud-est européennes*, XIX (1981), 4, p. 751–759.

²⁶ A. Camariano-Cioran, *Reprezentanța diplomatică*, p. 108, he was writing on 29 February 1742.

was the result of huge informal payments extorted at each reappointment to the throne, in 1730, 1731 and 1735 in Wallachia, and in 1733 and 1741 in Moldavia, with supplementary burdensome charges also to the official payments to the Porte to finance the war against Russia and Austria. Some relief might be brought by a new change of place: “We shall strain now to spend one year in Moldavia for seeing what can be earned there, if we manage it.” In spite of the advice given by Nicholas Mavrokordato to his son to refrain from bringing with him many Phanariots, Constantine explicitly planned to extort more from Wallachia for the enrichment of his clients. Apart from financial gain, he had to consolidate his position against constant plots of the Wallachian boyars, or open challenges from them. A witness reported that the tax-payers in Wallachia were “waiting for the snow to melt in order to escape sooner across the border.” Corruption, which had become the rule, made it all worse: “anything can be done for money, the money-greediness is obvious everywhere, the people are saying that, as the sultan takes, those people who are taking for him should be assured to profit for themselves.”²⁷

While the prince struggles with this mix of practical, social and political difficulties, the chroniclers perceive his innovations rather gloomily, if not with caustic mockery. There are some qualities which are traditionally assigned to him, like “mild and gentle”.²⁸ His honesty and generosity are often remarked. For instance, some sources recognized the scrupulous justice he exercised, the rules he prescribed against corruption, the reduction of the fiscal system and even the self-sacrifices he undertook instead of increasing the taxes. Nevertheless, we are told that the popular feeling was adverse to changes: “He was cursed” because “his new rules made much harm to the country”.²⁹ This means a more serious accusation than the usual complaints about the invasion of locusts,³⁰ or about the poor harvests, which gave the people the apprehension that their prince was “unlucky”.³¹ Between 1745 and 1749, servitude was abolished in both principalities,³² bringing to a revolutionary outcome earlier steps to reform. Contemporaries found hard to keep pace with his far reaching reforms of current social and fiscal arrangements. Only part of the clergy approved the creation of typographies and schools, while the majority, being illiterate, lamented when literacy became a compulsive

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2, 92, 116–118, 124, 167.

²⁸ Pseudo-Enache Kogălniceanu, Ioan Canta, *Cronici moldovenești*, ed. by Aurora Ilieș and Ioana Zmeu, București, 1987, p. 155.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 156–158. It was considered as an eccentric measure “to forbid taking even one egg without paying for it, this interdiction being valid for civil servants, as well as for everybody else” (*Ibid.*, p. 15). However, “the whole nation detested him” (*Ibid.*, p. 160).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 39–40.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2. Some years later, “a lucky prince was he, as at his prayers, the gracious God sent so much rain that the people did not find place where to put the overabundant harvest” (*Ibid.*, p. 39).

³² Gheorghe I. Brătianu, *Două veacuri de la reforma lui Constantin Mavrocordat 1746–1749*, in *Academia Română, memoriile secției istorice*, s. III, t. XXIX, 1947; Florin Constantiniu, *Constantin Mavrocordat, Reformatorul*, București, 2015.

condition for being tax-exempt.³³ The prince's personal commitment to learning and morality was looked upon as an oddity.

Other criticisms came from the boyars: a chronicler complained that "the doors of the council-hall were broadly opened to the commoners, with whom the prince used to talk a lot. He gave them so much credit that none of the boyars was tolerated to say anything to a peasant, because that man called loudly the prince to come to his help. For the complaint of a peasant, even of the lowest level, a boyar of high status was scoffed at and, sometimes, sent to prison".³⁴ An example of such resentment may be found when a Wallachian boyar is denounced to have stirred the revolt of his pairs by telling them that "nobody could box the ears of a peasant, because the serfs were trampling down the boyars, and nothing can be worse than such a thing".³⁵ The same chronicler disapproved Constantine "to have raised to prominence some boyars of inferior grade".³⁶ The boyars saw this redistribution of offices as infringing their hereditary privileges, but the prince needed to consolidate his power and he aimed at fastening the ties between him and his subjects.

The first seed of the main conflict that occurred, threatening Constantine's position, originated in the thirties. A cousin of his, Gregory Ghika (1695–1752) was a competitor to the throne of both principalities. He had started as grand-interpreter since 1716, a dignity which he held for ten years, until he succeeded to his uncle John Mavrokordatos as prince of Moldavia. Like Constantine, he balanced between the two countries: in Moldavia three times (1726–1733, 1735–1741 and 1747–1748), twice in Wallachia (1733–1735 and 1748 to his death in Bucharest). There were also two brief interruptions, in 1730, for a few days, when his deposition was asked and won by a revolt of the janissaries in Istanbul, and in 1739, because the Russian troops occupied Jassy. The discontinuity caused by the frequent sale of the highest office was partly attenuated by the small circle of pretenders and government elites who ensured some continuity. Unquestionably, money was the standard ingredient of the Phanariot regime, regardless of the personal qualities that distinguished the rival pretenders. Along the first half of the century, almost all the princes and grand-drogmans were close relatives, as members of the same two families, Mavrokordatos and Ghika.

The younger cousin, Constantine was a scholar, not gifted for intrigues, living as much as possible in the respect of religious principles. Heir of a magnificent library, he must have suffered when he was bound to sell some of the rare Byzantine manuscripts and Western editions of classical authors collected by Nicholas.³⁷ His cousin Gregory seems to have been more versatile. The spies who

³³ Pseudo-Enache Kogălniceanu, p. 15–16, 37.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁵ A. Camariano-Cioran, *Reprezentanța diplomatică*, p. 158.

³⁶ Pseudo-Enache Kogălniceanu, p. 142.

³⁷ Andrei Pippidi, *Hommes et idées du Sud-Est européen à l'aube de l'âge moderne*, Bucarest-Paris, 1980, p. 215–235; idem, *Manuscritos bizantinos de la biblioteca de los Mavrokordatos*, in *El cielo en la tierra. Estudios sobre el monasterio bizantino*, ed. Pedro Badenas, Antonio Bravo, I. Perez Martin, 3, Madrid, 1997, p. 329–340.

kept him under surveillance in Istanbul, when he was there in relative disgrace, informed Constantine about his occult meetings with Ottoman dignitaries, insatiable of bribes. When he visited them, Ghika went in disguise, before sunrise. He also met Greeks at parties with dancing damsels, of which he was said to have a harem, where they drank wine and listened to popular songs. These were opportunities to contrive political schemes and negotiate big business.³⁸ For both Constantine and Gregory, the number of Phanariot attendants and ministers³⁹ under their reigns was about the same, 21-23 %. Having received a thorough education, Ghika never forgot to take in his luggage several coffers with books. He liked to read “the chronicle of the country” and in 1732, when he was in Moldavia, he cared to visit old monasteries.⁴⁰ The competition between Mavrokordatos and Ghikas in researching historical traditions contributed to transform the cultural perceptions of the Moldavians and Wallachians and laid the foundations of a common identity.⁴¹ Both countries found themselves, for a while, ruled by the same family and even, in 1744–1747, by two brothers: Constantine in Wallachia and John Mavrokordatos in Moldavia.

The dynastic chronicle of the Ghikas (*Μολδαβική ιστορία*) subsists in a unique codex, lacking its beginning and its end.⁴² It was written by a courtier of Prince Gregory in Romanian, but we have the translation into Greek (by the author himself?). Among other sources concerning the history of Moldavia (since the foundation of the principality, as it took 595 pages before reaching the year 1695), it used a *vlachikos chronographos* which can be identified: it is Radu Popescu’s chronicle.⁴³ Another anonymous work covering the history of Moldavia from 1661 to 1729 has been probably ordered by Gregory Ghika since 1726, when he was appointed for the first time, an event which the official chronicler called “a divine gift for Moldavia”.⁴⁴ In 1729, when Nicholas Mavrokordato, that great lover of historical manuscripts, was still alive, a French collector of such antiquities, Sevin, announced to Bignon, the Paris librarian, that Gregory Ghika „has ordered to

³⁸ A. Camariano-Cioran, *Reprezentanța diplomatică*, p.79 (feasting), 84, 177–178, 220 (gifts), 85, 88, 90, 92, 94 (expenses), 101, 103, 111–115, 161–163, 165, 174, 252, 279 (pleading with the Turks) etc.

³⁹ Ion Ionașcu, *Le degré de l’influence des Grecs des Principautés Roumaines dans la vie politique de ces pays*, in *Symposium. L’époque phanariote*, p. 226–227.

⁴⁰ N. Iorga, *Cea dintîi vizită domnească la monumente istorice și opera lui Grigore Matei Vodă Ghika*, *Buletinul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice*, XIX, 1926, p. 143–146.

⁴¹ Axinte Uricariul, *Cronica paralelă a Țării Românești și a Moldovei*, ed. by G. Ștrempel, București, 1993.

⁴² *Cronica Ghiculeștilor*, ed. by Nestor Camariano and Ariadna Camariano-Cioran, București, 1965.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 244. See Radu Popescu, *Istoriile domnilor Țării Românești*, ed. C. Grecescu, București, 1963, p. 126. I am attempting to argue that the Moldavian author might be the same chronicler usually known under the name of Pseudo-Enache Kogălniceanu, but it is a supposition still insufficiently founded.

⁴⁴ *Cronica anonimă a Moldovei 1661–1729 (Pseudo-Amiras)*, ed. Dan Simonescu, București, 1975; *Cronica Ghiculeștilor*, p. 256.

search in the monasteries of his small State” (Moldavia) for recuperating forgotten sources. They were needed for compiling “*une histoire de Moldavie et des provinces voisines, composée en langue du pays. Elle n’a point encore vu le jour et on en parle comme d’un chef d’œuvre*”.⁴⁵ This was, undeniably, the chronicle of the Ghikas as the true legitimate dynasty of both countries, the so-called *Cronica Ghiculeștilor*. Its author must have been a Moldavian, writing in the Romanian language, not, as some did suppose, the Levantine Alexander Amiras, who was employed just then to translate into Greek the corpus of chronicles asked by Nicholas Mavrokordatos.⁴⁶

1733 is the year when Gregory Ghika was transferred to Wallachia and replaced by Constantine Mavrokordatos. The latter launched at once as a subject of enquiry the history of the two principalities. The task was not difficult, because a clerk of the princely chancery had worked for Ghika at collecting old chronicles. His short account of Moldavia and Wallachia was prepared so soon that in the following year it was ready, as well as its translation into Greek.⁴⁷ The text is written without any bias against Ghika but, of course, in favour of Mavrokordatos. It presents on two parallel columns the information gathered from already transcribed or adapted sources. In 1737, under a new reign of Gregory Ghika, Vasile Buhăescul was deputy secretary of the chancery, a promotion which rewarded his work. The fact that in 1739, Buhăescul welcomed the Russian troops explains the existence of a Russian version of that chronicle in the Moscow archives.⁴⁸ Only in 1741 his career takes a fresh start because Constantine Mavrokordatos has come again to rule Moldavia.⁴⁹

The enquiry undertaken on “the parallel chronicle of Wallachia and Moldavia”, a much larger version of the work we just mentioned, left no doubts about its being began in Moldavia after 1730⁵⁰. However, the “parallel chronicle” needed more time and information than the short version of 1733–34 which had satisfied Constantine Mavrokordatos. Vasile Buzilă must have been the author who conducted to its end the enterprise.

It is a turning point of our story. The return of Prince Constantine in 1741 marked a refurbishment of his historical projects. This time they were aimed further

⁴⁵ Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Spre unificarea istoriografiei naționale. „Cronica paralelă” (Iași 1733)*, in *Între istoria reală și imaginar. Acțiuni politice și culturale în veacul XVIII*, Iași, 2003, p. 95–168.

⁴⁶ Athanassios N. Karathanassis, *L'exemple d'un érudit grec en Moldovalachie: Alexandre Amiras (1679–1740 c.)*, *Balkan Studies*, 23, 2, 1982, p. 321–340.

⁴⁷ Crăciun and Ilieș, *op.cit.*, p. 119–120. See Em. E. Kretzulescu, *Cronica lui Vasile Buhăescul cămărașul*, *Revista pentru istorie, arheologie și filologie*, XIV, 1913, p. 151–170, XV, 1814, p. 219–225, XVI, 1922, p. 162–186; Andrei Pippidi, *În jurul cronicarului Vasile Buhăescul*, *Anuarul Institutului de istorie și arheologie „A.D. Xenopol”*, Iași, XXIII, 2, 1986, p. 835–841. Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Între Vasile Buhăescul și Vasile Buzilă. O problemă de „paternitate” literară*, *Ibid.*, XXV, 1, 1988, p. 139–185, assigns the authorship of that chronicle to Vasile Buzilă.

⁴⁸ I.C. Filitti, *Lettres et extraits concernant les relations des Principautés Roumaines avec la France*, Bucarest, 1915, p. 258.

⁴⁹ Corneliu Istrati (ed.), *Condica lui Constantin Mavrocordat*, III, Iași, 1987, p. 15–16, 326.

⁵⁰ Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Spre unificarea istoriografiei naționale*, p. 155.

than the small group of readers available in the Principalities. New intentions are explained in the correspondence with Braşov and Bratislava that went on for two years, 1742–1743, until Constantine’s removal from office closed it. One of the aims pursued was to have a history of Moldavia in Latin, which would have overlapped the material already collected at home. A further step towards the Western approach to history is attempted by addressing fourteen questions to the Saxon scholar Johann Filstich from whom the prince expected a historical framework for Antiquity and Early Middle Ages.

The answers to those questions arrived to Jassy in the last days of 1742, associated with a bibliography recommended for the study of Romanian history. Filstich (1684–1743) had been in connection with Nicholas Mavrokordato, he had translated Romanian chronicles into Latin and, though he was dying, he was able to reply. Among the problems treated were the survival of the Getae after the Flood and the localization of Sarmizegetusa, which was placed correctly in Haţeg. Filstich signalled also other ruins: “*aliaque stupenda opera sunt erecta, incolis Dacis, antea ignota*”.⁵¹ Some Hungarian Jesuits from Bratislava were also recruited to document Dacian ancient monuments. Three of them visited Moldavia at the prince’s invitation, they left a report, but, apart from a preliminary project, nothing else followed.⁵²

About John Mavrokordatos, the chroniclers have little to say of approval. His life style did not resemble Constantine’s: “nothing else than banquets and feasts and promenades”. Therefore, “the boyars, all of them, had taken such a high standing that they did not pay him any attention, doing only what they wished... They imitated the prince, they loved revelries, tournaments and jokes”. The only exception was “when he called foreign painters whom he ordered to decorate the great church of the court” and together with the portraits of the founders “he asked to be depicted himself with the princess and their sons and *all his ancestry*”.⁵³ This building up of the predecessors was already a tradition in the family and it will emerge again later. It was transmitted from Constantine to his son. Alexander (1742–1812) was only once prince of Moldavia (1782–1785), and that episode did not encourage the Ottoman government to repeat the experience. The surname of “Deli-bey” (the Crazy Prince) is a sign of the same scorn felt by the ruling class for a ruler who, instead of adapting himself to established convention, searched popularity through his paternalist manners. Like the legendary caliph, he went in disguise to control the prices in shops, applied rigorous punishments for any fraud

⁵¹ Adolf Armbruster, *Historiographische Beziehungen zwischen der Moldau und Kronstadt zur Zeit des Fürsten Constantin Maurocordatos*, *Revue des études sud-est européennes*, XIII, 1, 1975, p. 51–75 and 2, p. 209–229.

⁵² Nicolaus Nilles, S.J., *Symbolae ad illustrandam historiam Ecclesiae Orientalis in terris Coronae S. Stephani*, Oeniponte, 1885, p. 570, 1023–1028.

⁵³ Pseudo-Enache, *ed.cit. supra*, p. 23–24, and Pseudo-Ioan Canta, p. 161, where John is blamed for diverting himself “at night, going downtown with enjoyments and games”.

and was loved by the poor.⁵⁴ His most favourable image is conserved by a Greek chronicle written in 1798. According to the anonymous author, Mavrokordatos had been appointed also as prince of Wallachia in 1791, but his entering in function was prevented by the conclusion of the peace of Şiştov. In an earlier circumstance, in 1783, he had rejected the offer of a Russian intermediary who promised him Moldavia's autonomy under the protection of the Russian Empire, in the same conditions which were conceded to Crimea. In his dignified answer, Alexander refuses treason, invoking the tradition of allegiance to the Porte inherited from his ancestors: he is proud to be the sixth prince of his family. "Let your Empress better consider me as a Turkish friend of hers, this will not affect my quality of Christian, because my religion compels me to be faithful to my Emperor." In the same words in which he recalled the long line of Mavrokordatos princes he argued in a dispute with the Austrian consul who had brought him a menacing warning from Vienna: "If Prince Kaunitz is prince of the Holy Roman Empire, I am myself prince of the very sacred Ottoman Empire... I am a prince born in a family who has reigned for two hundred years, as a reigning sovereign I want to tell what I like, I am not afraid neither by the Emperor, nor by Prince Kaunitz".⁵⁵ The Austrian chancellor had supported to Mavrokordatos a solicitation of the Willeshoven Company, the first firm which introduced steamers on the Danube (1782). A letter to Kaunitz sent from Jassy in 1784 is signed with the old form "de Scarlati"⁵⁶ as Nicholas, Constantine and John had used. The Greek chronicle from which we quote these interesting details contains also some pages about the previous generations of the family. The first Alexander and his sons, Nicholas and John, are quickly mentioned. On Constantine, the author, writing half a century after his death, is nevertheless well informed.

An awareness of a common identity on its way to become a national one, has gradually developed in the two Principalities in this interval. As the Porte entrusted the rule of Moldavia and Wallachia alternatively to members of the same families, they both had lists of similar names in different successions. Not only princes changed office from one Principality to another, but their whole array of councillors and staff.

The separation of the two countries was thus rendered somewhat less exclusive by these mutual contacts, which increased the perception of commonalities and gradually resulted in a common framework. The starting point was the attempt to join the two pasts in the competitive chronicles of the Mavrokordatos and Ghikas.

⁵⁴ Manolachi Drăghici, *Istoria Moldovei pe timp de 500 ani*, II, Iaşi, 1857, p. 47.

⁵⁵ N. Iorga, *Textes post-byzantins. I. Chronique de Constantin Maurocordato et de son fils Alexandre*, Bucarest, 1939. See also Hurmuzaki-Nistor, *Documente*, XIX, 1, 1922, p. 197, 224, 232.

⁵⁶ A.A.C. Stourdza, *L'Europe Orientale et le rôle historique des Maurocordato*, Paris, 1913, p. 343. See also Hans Halm, *Habsburgischer Osthandel im 18. Jahrhundert*, München, 1954.

