

Greek as Ottoman? Language, identity and mediation of Ottoman culture in the early modern period¹

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Abstract

The scope of the paper is to examine the role of Greek as a conduit for the flow of cultural models between the Ottoman centre and the Christian periphery of the empire. The Danubian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia witnessed throughout the early modern period a number of linguistic shifts, including the replacement of Slavonic literature with the one written in vernacular. Modern Romanian historiography has portrayed cultural change as a teleological one, triggered by the monetization of economy and the rise of new social classes. What this model fails to explain, though, is the partial retrenchment of vernacular as a literary medium in the eighteenth century, as it faced the stiff competition of Greek. The aim of this paper is to look at the ascendancy of Greek in the Danubian principalities and corresponding socio-economic and political changes through Ottoman lens. Rather than a departure from the developments that facilitated the victory of Romanian over Slavonic, the proliferation of Greek can be interpreted as their continuation, reflecting the growing integration of Moldavian and Wallachian elites into the fabric of the Ottoman Empire at the time when a new socio-political consensus was reaching its maturity. By its association with Ottoman-Orthodox Phanariot elites, the Greek language became an important conduit by which the provincial elites were able to integrate themselves within the larger social fabric, while also importing new models from the imperial centre.

Keywords: Ottoman Empire; Danubian principalities; Greek language; Identity; Early Modern Period

In 1965, a prominent Romanian medievalist Petre P. Panaitescu produced what would eventually become his most lasting contribution to historiography. In a study suggestively

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entitled *The Beginnings and Victory of Writing in Romanian Language*², he reconstructed a process by which literature in Romanian vernacular emerged in the sixteenth and seventeenth century and replaced Slavonic literary tradition, associated with the voyvodal chancellery and the Orthodox Church. Panaitescu interpreted this linguistic shift as a product of social and economic transformations that swept through Moldavia and Wallachia throughout the early modern period.³ The principalities' gradual integration into the Ottoman Empire brought about a rapid monetisation of local economy and breakdown of large landed estates of the previous period. These changes weakened traditional centres and allowed new groups – most notably merchants and a new type of 'market-oriented' boyars – to step into the spotlight.⁴ From the point of view of these new groups, the prestigious tradition of Slavonic letters failed to meet their more pragmatic needs. As a result, it began to lose ground and – despite some attempts to salvage it – was replaced by vernacular by the second half of the seventeenth century.⁵

Panaitescu concluded his argument in the second half of the seventeenth century, at the point when Romanian effectively replaced the Slavonic tradition of yore. However, already by the beginning of the following century, the position of Romanian as the main medium of literary expression suffered a partial reversal due to the ascendancy of Greek as the language of culture. While the latter shift was by no means all-encompassing, and Romanian-language literature grew exponentially in absolute terms, the reversal was noticeable enough as to demand explanation. Aware of this fact, Panaitescu framed this trend as Moldavian-Wallachian elites' reactionary response to the cultural emancipation of lower social orders:

[T]hroughout the whole feudal period – as well as the capitalist one – there was a strong conviction among the ruling class of Romanian countries that popular masses should be kept away from culture. Once the boyars and state institutions were forced to renounce Church Slavonic for transactions and lay literary works, they turned to Greek. For boyars, the knowledge of Greek was a sign of distinction against the people; when, during the period of Phanariots' decline, neither Greek could retain its role as a sign of authority, it was

² Petre P. Panaitescu, *Începuturile și biruința scrisului în limba română* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei RSR, 1965).

³ The notion of 'early modernity' is somewhat controversial in the case of Moldavia and Wallachia. It has been generally absent from periodization employed by Romanian historiography, which usually employed the term 'late medieval period' to cover the seventeenth and eighteenth century. For the utility of the term in Romanian context, see Bogdan Murgescu, 'O alternativă la periodizarea tradițională: epoca modernă timpurie', *Studii și Articole de Istorie* 66 (2001): 5–18.

⁴ Panaitescu, *Începuturile*, 53–54.

⁵ The best-known attempt to salvage Slavonic tradition was that of Udriște Năsturel in the 1640s and 1650s, see *ibid.*, 182–95; Virgil Cândea, 'L'humanisme d'Udriște Năsturel et l'agonie des lettres slavones en Valachie', *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 6 (1968): 329–87.

replaced with French [...] used by Romanian boyars as a cultural screen against popular masses.⁶

The quote lays bare an implicit assumption that underpins much of Panaitescu's argument. At its core, the master narrative the author adopts is one of a teleological process, which inevitably leads to national modernity. From this standpoint, the ascendancy of any literary language other than Romanian cannot be anything but a regressive hurdle that needs to be overcome on the path to the emergence of modern national culture.

However, Panaitescu's conflation of Church Slavonic, Greek and French as 'reactionary' responses to 'progressive' vernacular flies in the face of his own argument. For, if it were the expansion of monetised economy in the seventeenth century that drove the ascendancy of vernacular, why would the following period bring a cultural reversal? After all, by the end of the eighteenth century, market relations in the Danubian principalities were far more widespread than they had been a century earlier, and commercial activity increased by order of magnitudes.⁷ Thus, one may ask, if the ascendant social and economic forces were strong enough to displace the Slavonic idiom in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, why would they face a backlash under even more favourable circumstances?

The prominence of Grecophone culture in this period was not limited to the Danubian principalities. Across the Ottoman domains the stature of the language grew considerably throughout the eighteenth century and was widely adopted by non-native speakers. By the second decade of the nineteenth century 'most of the middle-class Balkan Orthodox Christians were either ethnic Greeks, or largely acculturated into the Greek *ethnie*, or under heavy Grecophone influences.'⁸ However, the interpretation of this process by modern national historiographies – with the obvious exception of Greece – has been often marred by prejudices dating back to their foundational years. In Bulgaria, the ecclesiastical struggle against the Grecophone Ecumenical Patriarchate over the establishment of the national exarchate cast Grecophone culture as an imminent danger to Bulgarian national identity.⁹ In the Danubian principalities, a distinct 'black legend' was forged during the middle decades of the nineteenth century, whereby Grecophone 'Phanariot' rulers were blamed for all ills that befell the Moldavia and Wallachia and

⁶ Panaitescu, *Începuturile*, 191.

⁷ Bogdan Murgescu, *România și Europa: acumularea decalajelor economice, 1500–2000* (Iași: Polirom, 2010), 50–59.

⁸ Victor Roudometof, 'From *Rum Millet* to Greek Nation: Enlightenment, Secularization, and National Identity in Ottoman Balkan Society, 1453–1821', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 16, no. 1 (1998): 14.

⁹ As a result, the ideological currents of the early national Revival (*Vъзражданѣ*), particularly those of Paisii Hilendarski, were sometimes described in historiography as 'defensive nationalism', directed against Greek influences. On this topic, see Roumen Daskalov, *The Making of a Nation in the Balkans: Historiography of the Bulgarian Revival* (Budapest and New York: CEU Press, 2004), 23.

accused of causing their subsequent social and economic underdevelopment.¹⁰ Still, an important undercurrent in historiography – initiated in Romania by Nicolae Iorga – sought to rehabilitate the memory of the Phanariots within the framework of post-Byzantine cultural ecumene.¹¹

What most of those studies have in common is the underlying assumption that the Orthodox community within the Ottoman Empire was self-contained and can be understood with only a passing reference to the empire itself. In this sense, they reproduce – explicitly or implicitly – the vision of discreet religious *millets*, that enjoyed internal autonomy and remained insulated from the world around. It is only relatively recently that this perception has changed, with a new wave of scholarship analysing the ways in which Orthodox subjects of the sultan participated in and interacted with imperial structures and their counterparts on the other side of the religious divide.¹² As the long-standing paradigms of the ‘Turkish yoke’ and alleged Ottoman decline were rejected¹³, the revisionist wave opened new perspectives on how non-Muslim elites perceived, engaged, and – in some instances – were themselves the very product of the Ottoman polity. In the words of Antonis Anastasopoulos:

despite the existence of significant rifts within, [non-Muslims] shared certain basic common experiences and values, and above all what might be called its ‘Ottomanness.’ There is plenty of evidence which suggests that non-Muslim elites largely aspired to inclusion in the Ottoman elite and not the separation from it.¹⁴

¹⁰ On the constitutive elements of this discourse, see Matei Cazacu, ‘La “Légende noire des derniers Phanariotes”: un problème grec ou roumain?’ in Gelina Harlaftis and Radu G. Păun eds, *Greeks in Romania in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens: Alpha Bank, 2014), 98–102; Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, trans. James Christian Brown (Budapest and New York: CEU Press, 2001), 158–59.

¹¹ A foundational study in this respect is Nicolae Iorga, *Byzance après Byzance* (Bucharest: Institut d’Études Byzantines, 1935). See also Andrei Pippidi, ‘Phanar, phanariotes, phanariotisme’, *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 13, no. 2 (1975): 231–39.

¹² Radu G. Păun, ‘Some Observations on the Historical Origins of the “Phanariot Phenomenon” in Moldavia and Wallachia’, in Gelina Harlaftis and Radu G. Păun, *Greeks in Romania in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens: Alpha Bank, 2013), 43–90; Christine M. Philliou, ‘The Paradox of Perceptions: Interpreting the Ottoman Past through the National Present’, *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 5 (2005): 661–75; Christine M. Philliou, ‘Communities on the Verge: Unraveling the Phanariot Ascendancy in Ottoman Governance’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, no. 1 (2009): 151–81; Christine M. Philliou, *Biography of an Empire: Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011).

¹³ On the ‘Turkish yoke’ model, see Dariusz Kolodziejczyk, ‘The “Turkish Yoke” Revisited: The Ottoman Non-Muslim Subjects between Loyalty, Alienation and Riot’, *Acta Poloniae Historica* 93 (2006): 80; Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, updated ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 163–64. For the discussion of ‘decline thesis’ and its impact on the cultural history of the empire, see Dana Sajdi, ‘Decline, its Discontents and Ottoman Cultural History: By Way of Introduction’, in Dana Sajdi ed., *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee: Leisure and Lifestyle in the Eighteenth Century* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 1–40.

¹⁴ Antonis Anastasopoulos, ‘Introduction’, in Antonis Anastasopoulos ed, *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire* (Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2005): xvi.

In this context, the proliferation of Grecophone culture should be seen as an Ottoman phenomenon *par excellence* and not one restricted to the Orthodox communities of the empire. In the present study, I would like to touch upon a single aspect of this phenomenon as seen through an Ottomanist key, namely the role of Greek language allowing Moldavian and Wallachian boyars to partake in Ottoman imperial culture as an Orthodox ‘Ottoman-local elite.’

Early modern elites of the Danubian principalities were going through a process that shows striking similarities to the ‘Ottomanization’ of their Muslim counterparts throughout the empire.¹⁵ The changes in the imperial system of governance that took place since the late sixteenth century provided local notables with new opportunities of gaining wealth, political influence and social prestige. As their fortunes became increasingly intertwined with those of the Porte, these notables increasingly embraced not only their position within the imperial system of governance, but also a new facet of identity tied to the imperial centre. This newfound identity resulted in the emergence of what Ehud Toledano called ‘Ottoman-local elites,’ proliferation of cultural production that combined local traditions with distinctly Ottoman motifs, and material culture heavily influenced by that of the Porte.¹⁶ Although with some peculiarities of its own – given their position within the imperial system and religious difference – Moldavian and Wallachian boyars followed a similar path, adoption and adaptation of Ottoman material culture making considerable inroads in this period.¹⁷ As I will argue in the present study, Greek language provided a crucial cultural link in this process, acting as a conduit that allowed boyars to tap into Ottoman models even without the knowledge of Ottoman Turkish itself.

Given limited space and the enormous scope of the topic, in the present paper I will focus on few selected aspects of Moldavian-Wallachian and imperial socio-cultural developments, outlining the areas in which such transfers occurred. In the first section, I provide a short account of socio-political and cultural changes in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Danubian principalities and the Ottoman Empire, drawing attention

¹⁵ See Michal Wasiucionek, ‘Conceptualizing Moldavian Ottomanness: elite culture and Ottomanization of the seventeenth-century Moldavian boyars’, *Medieval and Early Modern Studies for Central and Eastern Europe* 8 (2016): 39–78.

¹⁶ Ehud R. Toledano, ‘The emergence of Ottoman-local elites (1700–1900): a framework for research’, in Moshe Ma’oz and Ilan Pappé, *Middle Eastern Politics and Ideas: A History from Within* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997), 145–62. On specific cases of such hybrid material culture, Ayda Arel, ‘Gothic Towers and Baroque Mihrabs: The Post-Classical Architecture of Aegean Anatolia in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries’, *Muqarnas* 10, no. 1 (1992): 212–8; Tülay Artan, ‘Questions of Ottoman Identity and Architectural History’, in Dana Arnold, Elvan Altan Ergut and Belgin Turan Özkaya eds, *Rethinking Architectural Historiography* (London – New York: Routledge, 2006): 85–109; Filiz Yenişchiroğlu, ‘Architectural Patronage of Ayan Families in Anatolia’, in Antonis Anastasopoulos ed., *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire* (Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2005): 321–341.

¹⁷ For this topic, see Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu, *From Işlic to Top Hat: Fashion and Luxury at the Gates of Orient* (Boecillo: Iniciativa Mercurio, 2011).

to parallels and ties between the two. Subsequently, I move to discuss the ways in which Greek language provided a link binding the imperial centre to the Orthodox periphery. In the third part, I identify the ways new forms of literacy that emerged in late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, both in terms of genres and points of contact between literary cultures. At the same time, I discuss shifts in mental topography that occurred in historiographical works of the period, as Moldavian and Wallachian authors increasingly ventured beyond the limits of the Danubian principalities and adopted the ‘Well-Protected Domains’ of the sultans as a more fitting framework for both the course of events they described and their own identity.

Societies in flux

Beginning in the second half of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was undergoing tremendous changes that thoroughly reshaped its political institutions and society at large. While long regarded as a sign of decline, these upheavals have been reappraised as a sign of adaptability that allowed the empire to weather the crises and extend its lifespan. The demise of ‘classical’ Ottoman institutions, such as prebendal *timar* system and the expansion of tax-farming are no longer cited as evidence that the empire lost its vitality, but rather as a pragmatic response to the expansion of market economy. Still, the changing conditions and blurring social boundaries caused considerable anxiety among the military-administrative class of *askeri*, leading many of its members to rail against the influx of ‘outsiders’ (*ecnebi*) from among the tax-paying population (*re’aya*).¹⁸ Voices of discontent and nostalgia for an idealised past that permeated the works of advice literature (*nasihatname*), which – taken at face value by modern scholars – contributed to the image of post-Süleymanic period as a political and cultural formation past its prime.

With new waves of scholarship and the rejection of the ‘decline paradigm,’ such blanket statements are no longer tenable. In its place a more complex and nuanced landscape presents itself, characterised by shifting patterns of everyday life, burgeoning intellectual debates¹⁹, and new forms of literacy.²⁰ Moreover, as has been repeatedly pointed out in recent contributions, the dissolution and reconstruction of established social boundaries involved numerous previously marginal groups into the matters of the empire and provided fertile ground for constant renegotiation and redefinition of

¹⁸ Rifa’at A. Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, second ed. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 21–2; Linda T. Darling, ‘The Sultan’s Advisors and Their Opinions on the Identity of the Ottoman Elite, 1580–1653’, in Christine Isom-Verhaaren and Kent F. Schull eds, *Living in the Ottoman Realm: Empire and Identity, 13th to 20th Centuries* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2016): 171–81.

¹⁹ See, for instance, Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

²⁰ Dana Sajdi, *The Barber of Damascus: Nouveau Literacy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Levant*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

communal and individual identities, as well as their ties with the imperial centre.²¹ Thus, instead of a stagnant and moribund shadow of its former self, the Ottoman society of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries appears to us as a dynamic society in constant flux.

Although the phasing out of *devşirme* as a recruitment tool meant that Ottoman administrative apparatus was increasingly staffed by free-born Muslims, non-Muslims found numerous opportunities within the changing environment. Tax-farming, one of the main vehicles that drove socio-economic developments, involved Christian notables in a variety of ways, as contractors, revenue collectors and creditors. Prominent Orthodox families, such as the Benakis, took advantage of the changing revenue system, gaining wealth and social power in their areas of activity²²; in the words of Ali Yaycıoğlu, ‘they were, so to speak, Christian ayans.’²³ The economic recovery of the empire following a series of political, demographic and environmental upheavals of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries reinvigorated commerce, and Orthodox merchants often found patrons among local power-holders. Contrary to the established notions, the *zimme* population was willing to grant the Ottoman polity at least passive legitimacy, and on numerous occasions lent their active support and celebrated military exploits of the Porte.²⁴ Although this did not remove the confessional boundaries, both Christian and Muslim elites mingled and socialised with each other, creating mixed elites with a shared material culture.²⁵

²¹ The scholarship on this topic is vast, see Cemal Kafadar, ‘Self and Others: The Diary of a Dervish in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul and First-Person Narratives in Ottoman Literature’, *Studia Islamica* 69 (1989): 121–50; Rhoads Murphey, ‘Forms of Differentiation and Expression of Individuality in Ottoman Society’, *Turcica* 34 (2002): 135–70; Derin Terzioğlu, ‘Man in the Image of God in the Image of Times: Sufi Self-Narratives and the Diary of Niyāzī-i Mıṣrī (1618–94)’, *Studia Islamica* 94 (2002): 139–65; Baki Tezcan, ‘Ethnicity, Race, Religion and Social Class: Ottoman Markers of Difference’, in Christine Woodhead ed., *The Ottoman World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012): 159–70; Salih Özbaran, *Bir Osmanlı kimliği: 14.–17. yüzyıllarda Rûm/Rûmî aidiyet ve imğeleri* (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2004).

²² See for instance, Dimitrios Papastamatiou, ‘Tax-Farming (*Ültizām*) and Collective Fiscal Responsibility (*Maktu*) in the Ottoman Southern Peloponnesus in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century’, in Elias Kolovos, Phokion Kotzageorgis, Sophia Laiou and Marinou Sariyannis eds, *The Ottoman Empire, the Balkans, the Greek Lands: Towards a Social and Economic History* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2007): 289–306.

²³ Ali Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 149.

²⁴ Nuh Arslantaş and Yaron Ben Naeh eds, *Anonim bir ıbraniçe kroniğe göre 1622–1624 yıllarında Osmanlı devleti ve İstanbul* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2013); Olga Todorova, ‘The Ottoman State and Its Orthodox Christian Subjects: The Legitimistic Discourse in the Seventeenth-Century “Chronicle of Serres” in a New Perspective’, *Turkish Historical Review* 1 (2010): 108–10; E. Schütz, ‘Eine armenische Chronik von Kaffa aus der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts’, *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 29 (1975): 161.

²⁵ Josip Matasović, ‘Fojnička regesta’, *Spomenik* 68, no. 53 (1930): 171–2; Ljiljana, Beljkašić-Hadžidedić, ‘Oriental (and Turkish) Influences on the Folk Costumes of Bosnia and Herzegovina’, *Etnološki Pregled* 26 (1990): 104–5. This, however, did not necessarily translate to intellectual debates between Orthodox clergy and the *ulema*, see Aleksandar Fotić, ‘Belgrade: A Muslim and Non-Muslim Cultural Centre (Sixteenth-Seventeenth Centuries)’, in Antonis Anastasopoulos ed., *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire* (Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2005): 74–75.

In parallel to this process, the Orthodox elite of the imperial capital enjoyed gradual ascendancy starting from the mid-sixteenth century. As Radu Păun has pointed out, the two processes – at the imperial centre and on the Moldavian-Wallachian periphery – were interactive and frequently involved same actors operating in both arenas.²⁶ In Istanbul, the Phanariot circle established their position within the Ottoman system of governance and factional environment of the Porte, consolidating their power base around the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the positions of dragomans of the Porte.²⁷ Although its ‘core’ consisted of a relatively restricted number of lineages, the structure of their households – similar to that of Muslim grandees – provided opportunities for recruitment of outsiders. Career opportunities and upward mobility they enabled served as a magnet for ambitious individuals from across the imperial domains, much in the same way as Muslim grandee households did.²⁸ At the same time, they served as sites not only of recruitment, but also of acculturation into the cultural idiom of this social group, which took place primarily through informal apprenticeship. Within this in-house training, a particular emphasis was put on linguistic skills, required for the offices of dragomans, which constituted the central node within the ‘Phanariot’ network. As a result, the culture of the Ottoman-Orthodox ‘Phanariot’ elite took shape around those central lineages (*hanedan*).

The social and economic developments in the Danubian principalities were in lockstep with those across wider Ottoman space, albeit with certain differences. The expansion of Moldavian-Wallachian market economy, a process driven by Ottoman influence²⁹, upended traditional hierarchies and forced established lineages into stiff competition with new rivals. From the second half of the sixteenth century, the Danubian principalities witnessed a massive influx of newcomers from the territories south of the Danube.³⁰ Despite considerable amount of vitriol against these newcomers (in a discourse

²⁶ See Păun, ‘Some observations’, 46–47.

²⁷ Damien Janos, ‘Panaiotis Nikoussios and Alexander Mavrocordatos: The Rise of Phanariots and the Office of Grand Dragoman in the Ottoman Administration in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century’, *Archivum Ottomanicum* 23 (2005): 177–96.

²⁸ Philliou, *Biography of an empire*, 27. The parallelism between the two is put on display in a story narrated by an eighteenth-century Moldavian boyar and historian, Ion Neculce. Neculce recounts a story of two young boys from an Albanian village – a Christian and a Muslim – who set out for Istanbul in search for a patron. Upon arrival to Istanbul, they part ways, with the Muslim boy – future Grand Vizier Köprülü Mehmed Pasha – joining a household of an Ottoman grandee, while his Christian friend Gheorghe Ghica, who would eventually become the ruler of Moldavia and Wallachia, joining a Christian one. While the story is clearly invented, it nonetheless reflects the similarity between patterns of household recruitment, Ion Neculce, *Opere: Letopisețul Țării Moldovei și O samă de cuvinte*, ed. Gabriel Ștrempel (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1982), 187–88. See also, Palmira Brummett, ‘Placing the Ottomans in the Mediterranean world: the question of notables and households’, *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 36 (2010): 77–96.

²⁹ Bogdan Murgescu, *România și Europa: acumularea decalajelor economice, 1500–2000* (Iași: Polirom, 2010), 50–59.

³⁰ For recent studies of this topic, see Lidia Cotovanu, ‘“Chasing away the Greeks”: the Prince-State and the undesired foreigners (Wallachia and Moldavia between the 16th and 18th centuries)’, in Olga Katsiardi-

in many respects similar to the anti-*ecnebi* rhetoric of the Ottoman authors), a process of integration (*Verflechtung*) of the two groups gradually took place, bringing about a new social and cultural synthesis. Cultural and social capital of the ‘Greco-Levantines’ – including their linguistic skills and access to the sources of credit in Istanbul – became crucial resources within the principalities and a link between the political arenas of the periphery and that of the imperial centre.³¹ The result was the emergence of a new political consensus among the elite at the beginning of the seventeenth century. This social rearrangement brought about both vertical integration and horizontal divergence within the ranks of the boyar class, with its upper echelons – more integrated into the Ottoman social and political system – consolidating their hold on power against the lower ranks. This process was subsequently formalised in the reforms of Constantin Mavrocordat, which divided the order into boyars and *mazili*.³²

Although these developments occurred within the context of the Orthodox community, they were nonetheless enabled and conditioned by the socio-economic and political context of the Ottoman Empire. The ‘bridging capital’ – to use the definition of Ronald Burt – that this process of convergence provided, further integrated the peripheral elites into the realm of imperial governance.³³ These developments remained in lockstep with parallel transformations in other parts of Ottoman domains, where the integration of Ottoman-local elites resulted in what Ariel Salzman called ‘governance in vernacular.’³⁴ Taking it into consideration, nothing indicates a retrenchment postulated by Panaitescu, but rather a further step in the developments he identified as key factors in the rise of Romanian vernacular. However, this evolution occurred within a different geographical framework – one of the Ottoman Empire and not of the Danubian principalities.

Hering and Maria A. Stassinopoulou eds *Across the Danube: Southeastern Europeans and their travelling identities (17th–19th centuries)* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017), 215–53; Lidia Cotovanu, ‘L’émigration sud-danubienne vers la Valachie et la Moldavie et sa géographie (XV^e–XVII^e siècles): la potentialité heuristique d’un sujet peu connu’, *Cahiers Balkaniques* 42 (2014): 2–19; Radu G. Păun, ‘Pouvoirs, offices et patronage dans la Principauté de Moldavie au XVII^e siècle’, unpublished PhD dissertation, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2003.

³¹ Radu G. Păun, ‘Les grands officiers d’origine gréco-levantine en Moldavie au XVII^e siècle: offices, carrières et stratégies de pouvoir’, *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 45, nos 1–4 (2007): 166.

³² Dan Pleșia, ‘Statutul boierimii și evoluția boierilor de la reforma lui Constantin Mavrocordat până la desființarea rangurilor și privilegiilor (1859)’, *Arhiva Genealogică* 6, no. 3–4 (1998): 169–83; Paul Cernovodeanu, ‘Mobility and Traditionalism: The Evolution of the Boyar Class in the Romanian Principalities in the 18th Century’, *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 24, no. 3 (1986): 249.

³³ On the concept of bridging capital, see Ronald S. Burt, *Brokerage and Closure: An Introduction to Social Capital* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 54–55.

³⁴ Ariel Salzman, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire: Rival Paths to the Modern State* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), 150–63.

Language as a conduit

If the socio-economic developments of the early modern period provided incentives for Moldavian-Wallachian boyars to partake in the imperial culture, in what language were they able to engage it? Seemingly, Ottoman Turkish would seem the most obvious choice, given its status as the language of the chancellery and its status as a *lingua franca* of the empire's heterogeneous elite.³⁵

Just how widespread was the knowledge of Ottoman Turkish in the Danubian principalities is extremely difficult to establish and would require profound research effort.³⁶ There is no doubt that some boyars and rulers – especially those who resided in Istanbul for extended periods of time, such as Mihnea III (ruler of Wallachia, 1658-9) or famous literate Dimitrie Cantemir – had acquired proficiency. However, their linguistic skills cannot be generalised. There are indications that some member of the elite actively sought to learn Turkish, and, in some cases, we are able to establish the names of their tutors. Many of them were not only native speakers, but also members of the Ottoman bureaucracy, particularly in the eighteenth century.³⁷ This comes as no surprise since many positions, and particularly those of voivodes' agents at the Porte (Rom. *capuchebaias*, Tur. *kapı kethüdas*), required familiarity not only with the language itself, but also with the conventions of the Ottoman administrative format and political discourse.³⁸

³⁵ On this topic, see Linda T. Darling, 'Ottoman Turkish: written language and scribal practice, 13th to 20th centuries', in Brian Spooner and William L. Hanaway, *Literacy in the Persianate world: writing and social order* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 171–95. It is important to note at the same time that diverse ethnic-regional background of Ottoman officials meant that many were polyglots, retaining their mother tongues following their entry into the ranks of officialdom, see İ. Metin Kunt, 'Ethnic-Regional (*Cims*) Solidarities in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Establishment,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5, no. 3 (1974): 233–39; Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 72–73. Moreover, the palace education of the elite promoted knowledge of Persian and Arabic along with Ottoman Turkish, see Emine Fetvaci, *Picturing History at the Ottoman Court* (Bloomington – Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), 49–57. It should be kept in mind at the same time that the cultural parameters of the group identified as *Rumis* or a narrower circle of *Osmanlıs* changed throughout the early modern period.

³⁶ On this topic, see Ion Matei, 'Notes concernants l'enseignement des langues orientales dans les Pays roumains', *Studia et Acta Orientalia* 5–6 (1967): 93–116; Lia Brad Chisacof, 'Turkish: Known or Unknown during the 18th Century in the Romanian Principalities?', in Florentina Nițu et al. eds, *Turkey and Romania: A History of Partnership and Collaboration in the Balkans* (Istanbul: TDBB, 2016).

³⁷ See for instance, Ion Matei, 'Notes concernants l'enseignement', 97; Ion Matei, 'Le maître de langue turque de Dimitrie Cantemir: Es'ad Efendi', *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 10, no. 2 (1972): 281–88.

³⁸ On the *kapı kethüdas* of Moldavian–Wallachian voivodes, see Ioan D. Condurachi, *Soli și agenți ai domnilor Moldovei la Poartă în secolul al XVII-lea* (Bucharest: Cultura, 1920); Aurel H. Golimas, *Despre capuchebăile Moldovei și poruncile Porții către Moldova până la 1829* (Iași: Tipografia 'Ligii Culturale', 1943); Viorel Panaite, 'Reprezentanța politică a Țării Românești la Poarta Otomană în epoca lui Constantin Brâncoveanu', *Revista de istorie* 42, no. 6 (1988): 877–94; Ion Matei, *Reprezentanții diplomați (capuchebăi) a Țării Românești la Poarta Otomană*, eds Nagy Pienaru and Tudor Teotoi (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2008). On the institution of *kapı kethüdas* within a wider Ottoman context, see Michael Nizri, 'Rethinking Center-Periphery

However, although part of Moldavian-Wallachian elites clearly knew Ottoman Turkish, there are also indications that it was by no means a rule, particularly in the seventeenth century. This holds true even in the case of boyars, whose official duties required them to maintain frequent contacts with Ottoman officials. A case in point is Miron Costin, one of the most influential political and literary figures in late seventeenth-century Moldavia. Although he had received an education in the Jesuit college in Bar far more thorough than most of his peers and on numerous occasions conversed with high-ranking officials of the Porte, his knowledge of Turkish did not extend beyond a couple of basic phrases. In general, the survey of extant dictionaries and phrase book suggests ‘a poor knowledge of Turkish, a preference for the basics.’³⁹ This general conclusion stands in contrast with some outstanding cases of language skill by individual members of the elite, which – like Constantin Mavrocordat – felt comfortable code-switching between Romanian, Greek and Ottoman within a single text.⁴⁰ This suggests that the knowledge of Ottoman Turkish was unevenly distributed within among the boyars and was by no means a prerequisite for membership in the elite.⁴¹

Against his background, a late-eighteenth century remark by Demetrios Katardzis (Rom. Dumitru Catargiu) is particularly interesting, as he argued that Greek students should learn Turkish as their first foreign language, while Romanian ones should acquire the knowledge of Greek.⁴² Tellingly, despite his being a high-ranking Wallachian official, Katardzis did not consider it necessary for Greek speakers to master Romanian, the language of administration and the vast majority of population in the principalities. Instead, what he seems to have encouraged was the promotion of Greek as a central medium of communication, operating at the interface between Romanian and Ottoman Turkish and connecting the two disparate linguistic spheres. That this was not only Katardzis’ programmatic postulate but mirrored the linguistic realities of many members

Communication in the Ottoman Empire: The *Kapı-Kethüdası*?, *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 59, no. 3 (2016): 473–98.

³⁹ Chisacof, ‘Turkish: known or unknown’, 267.

⁴⁰ See, for instance, the *capuchebaias*’ reports from the reign of Constantin Mavrocordat, which abundantly employ untranslated quotations in Turkish, rendered in Greek script, see Ariadna Camariano-Cioran ed., *Reprezentanța diplomatică a Moldovei la Constantinopol (30 august 1741 – decembrie 1742)* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei RSR, 1985).

⁴¹ Indicative in this respect is Voievode Nicolae Mavroyeni’s complaint from 1789 that none of the boyars knew Turkish, see Ion Matei, ‘Notes concernants l’enseignement’, 104; Johann Strauss, ‘The Rise of Non-Muslim Historiography in the Eighteenth Century’, *Oriente Moderno* 18, no. 1 (1999): 219. Mavroyeni was at the same time one of the rulers most embedded in Ottoman institutions, even establishing his own *vakıf*, see Sophia Laiou, ‘Between Pious Generosity and Faithful Service to the Ottoman State: The *Vakıf* of Nicholas Mavrogenis, End of the Eighteenth Century’, *Turkish Historical Review* 6, no. 2 (2015): 151–74.

⁴² Demetrios Katardzis, *Ta dokimía*, ed. C. Th. Dimaras (Athens: Hermes-OMED, 1974). See also, Jean Caravolas, *Histoire de la didactique des langues au siècle des Lumières: précis et anthologie thématique* (Montréal and Tübingen: Presses de l’Université de Montréal, Gunter Narr Verlag, 1994), 234.

of the elite. A considerable share of eighteenth-century boyars fully embraced bilingualism, including in their private papers.⁴³

Interestingly, it seems that members of the elite generally followed a pattern similar to the one outlined by Katardzis. Although we find some Romanian-Turkish dictionaries and phrasebooks, the clear majority of those trying to learn Turkish used materials in Greek. This holds true for boyars of local origin, such as Ienachiță Văcărescu, whose learning aids were composed in Greek, despite his being a Romanian native speaker.⁴⁴ The preference for Greek as a primary language of expression in both works intended for a wider public and private papers cannot be attributed solely to the insistence of some voievodes, such as Constantin Mavrocordat⁴⁵, but rather confirms that the Moldavian-Wallachian elite internalised a cultural identity defined by effective bilingualism. What is important, however, is that its emergence was deeply entangled with the boyars' status as an 'Ottoman-local elite,' which retained Orthodox religious identity, but nonetheless was deeply involved in the fortunes of imperial governance. Moreover, just as for many members of this class Greek constituted a stepping stone between Romanian and Ottoman Turkish, it also constituted a conduit through which they could access the cultural production of the imperial centre.

Fountains and chronicles: new modes of literacy in the Ottoman Empire and the Danubian principalities

Just as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries brought major changes to the socio-political landscape of the Ottoman Empire and the Danubian principalities, they also ushered important changes in the realm of culture. These included new ways of interacting with the written word. Within the field of Ottoman studies, the issue that attracted the most attention has been the introduction of printing and the establishment of the first printing press by İbrahim Müteferrika (himself a convert from the Transylvanian town of Kolozsvár) in the 1720s.⁴⁶ Printed books have also been at the centre of the debate within Romanian historiography, given that Wallachia and – to a lesser extent – Moldavia, had been important centres of printing in South-eastern Europe throughout the early modern period that included not only publications in Cyrillic script, but also ones in Greek, Arabic

⁴³ See, for instance, Constantin Caragea, 'Ephemerides idiocheiroi Konstantinou Karadza', in *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor*, vol. xiii/1, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus (Bucharest: Socec, 1909): 77–158. I would like to thank Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu for drawing my attention to this source.

⁴⁴ I would like to thank Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu for bringing this to my attention.

⁴⁵ V.A. Urechia, *Istoria școalelor*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Imprimeria Statului, 1892), 14. I would like to thank Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu for drawing my attention to this document. It is important to note, however, that the same voivode also insisted on conducting administrative matters in Romanian, see Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria românilor*, vol. 7 (Bucharest: n.p., 1938), 142.

⁴⁶ For a full account of İbrahim Müteferrika's activity and his printing venture, see Orlin Sabev, *İbrahim Müteferrika ya da ilk Osmanlı matbaa seriveni 1726–1746* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2006).

and Georgian.⁴⁷ Although the overall condition of the industry slumped in the first decades of the eighteenth century, it soon bounced back with more printing shops' being established. Thus, it would seem, the region was undergoing a crucial moment in the alleged 'print revolution', a similar process that had swept through Western Europe.

However, for all the allure that the introduction (or re-invigoration) of printing brought, its impact on the literary landscape should not be overstated. Both in the Danubian principalities and in the Ottoman Empire, the literary culture remained an overwhelmingly scribal one. As Orlin Sabev pointed out, although İbrahim Müteferrika's venture was by no means a failure, it also put on display the small size of potential customers.⁴⁸ Technical challenges likely discouraged the publication of crucial religious texts, and the prices of printed copies were comparable with those of manuscript ones.⁴⁹ Finally, we cannot rule out that the pressure of scribes, whose livelihood was threatened by the introduction of printing press, played a role in slowing the process.⁵⁰ In the Danubian principalities, the institutional framework in which printing developed was very different, but ultimately produced similar results. The ecclesiastical control over the presses defined their output, which consisted almost entirely of liturgical books and theological treatises.⁵¹ By their very nature, such publications were limited with regard to the potential readership, catering predominantly to the needs of churchmen. Moreover, as in the Ottoman case, book prices remained high.⁵² Although some voivodes and boyars – such as Nicolae Mavrocordat and the Cantacuzinos – were avid bibliophiles and amassed large collections of printed books (along with manuscripts)⁵³, most Moldavian-Wallachian

⁴⁷ On this topic, see Cornelia Papacostea-Danielopolu and Lidia Demény, *Carte și tipar în societatea românească și sud-est europeană (secolele XVII–XIX)* (Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1985); Daniela Lupu, *Tiparul și cartea din Țara Românească în epoca domniilor fanariote*, revised ed. (Bucharest: Muzeul Municipiului București, 2014).

⁴⁸ Orlin Sabev (Orhan Salih), 'The First Ottoman Turkish Print Enterprise: Success or Failure?' in Dana Sajdi ed., *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee: Leisure and Lifestytle in the Eighteenth Century* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 80–81; idem, 'Waiting for Godot: The Formation of Ottoman Print Culture', in Geoffrey Roper ed., *Historical Aspects of Printing and Publishing in Languages of the Middle East* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), 108.

⁴⁹ Orhan Ersoy, 'İlk Türk Basımevi'nde Basılan Kitapların Fiyatları', in *Basım ve Yayıncılığımızın 250. Yılı Bilimsel Toplantısı* (Ankara: Türk Kütüphaneciler Derneği, 1980), 37; Sabev, 'Waiting for Godot', 109.

⁵⁰ Although scribal and religious opposition to printing has been often cited as the main factor contributing to the slow development of Ottoman printing press, the evidence in this respect is contradictory. For a comprehensive discussion of this issue, see Orlin Sabev (Orhan Salih), 'Formation of Ottoman Print Culture (1726–1746): Some General Remarks,' in Irina Vainovski-Mihai ed., *New Europe College Research Program 2003–2004, 2004–2005* (Bucharest: New Europe College, 2007), 311–315.

⁵¹ Apart from controlling majority of presses, church authorities also exercised censorship of printed books, see Lupu, *Tiparul și cartea*, 61–65.

⁵² Papacostea-Danielopolu and Demény, *Carte și tipar*, 116–20.

⁵³ On the topic of the libraries of Moldavian and Wallachian boyars, see Radu G. Păun, 'Lectures et bibliothèques de la noblesse dans les Principautés roumaines (XVIII^e siècle): bilan et perspective de recherche', in Frédéric Barbie ed., *Actes des symposium internationale La livre. La Roumanie. L'Europe*, (Bucharest: Biblioteca Metropolitană, 2012): 140–68.

boyars continued to operate within a more flexible scribal medium, better suited for the cultural context of the time. The continued predominance of scribal over print culture meant that most readers engaged with the text either via manuscripts or epigraphy, and it is primarily within these types of media that we should treat as *loci* of change and transfer of Ottoman imperial idiom mediated by Grecophone culture. From this perspective, I will in the remainder of the section I will touch upon one sphere that exhibits parallel developments in both arenas: historiography.

The end of the seventeenth and the eighteenth century saw two major developments in the Ottoman and Moldavian-Wallachian historiographic traditions, which can be summarised as a consolidation at the centre and an expansion of their peripheries. By the latter I mean the emergences of new, previously marginal voices, which engaged in history writing, resulting in what Dana Sajdi has called ‘nouveau literacy.’⁵⁴ These new authors came from social strata that had not been previously associated with the genre (or literary production altogether) and relatively distant – either socially or geographically – from traditional cultural milieus. These included artisans, townsfolk and religious minorities, for whom the socio-economic reconfiguration of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries provided new opportunities.

On the other side of the spectrum, the end of the seventeenth century witnessed the resurgence of the court and central power as a patron of historiographic works after almost over a century of absence. In the Ottoman case, the period of imperial consolidation and formation of an imperial cultural idiom in the sixteenth century witnessed the establishment of the post of court historian, known as *şehnameci*.⁵⁵ However, by the 1600s the position became effectively defunct, and the weakening of sultanic power and the rise of political households resulted in the latter taking effective control over historiographic discourse.⁵⁶ As a result, the Ottoman historiography of the seventeenth century is highly partisan in nature, as chroniclers attached to grandee *kapıs* tailored their narratives according to the political interests of their patrons.⁵⁷ In this respect, the appointment of

⁵⁴ Sajdi, *The Barber of Damascus*, 7–10. See also See Bruce Masters, ‘The View from the Province: Syrian Chronicles of the Eighteenth Century’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 114, no. 3 (1994): 353–62; Percy Kemp, ‘History and Historiography in Jalili Mosul’, *Middle Eastern Studies* 19, no. 3 (1983): 345–76.

⁵⁵ Christine Woodhead, ‘An Experiment in Official Historiography: The Post of *Şehnameci* in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1555–1605’, *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 73 (1983), 157–82.

⁵⁶ For a fascinating discussion over the *şehname* genre and its ultimate disappearance, see Baki Tezcan, ‘Politics of Early Modern Ottoman Historiography’, in Virginia Aksan and Daniel Goffman eds, *The Early Modern Ottomans: Mapping the Empire* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 183; Christine Woodhead, ‘Reading Ottoman *Şehnames*: Official Historiography in the Late Sixteenth Century’, *Studia Islamica* 104–105 (2007): 67–80.

⁵⁷ On this topic see Gabriel Piterberg, *The Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play* (Berkeley – Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003); Tezcan, ‘Politics’, *passim*.

Mustafa Na'ima to the new post of *vakanüvis* constituted a turning point.⁵⁸ Although his attachment to the Köprülü faction certainly coloured Na'ima's narrative, the scope of his work was significantly broader; it constituted an attempt at remoulding the chronicles of the previous century and casting their conflicting narratives into a coherent canon. This attempt by the imperial centre to reasserting its place proved a success and Na'ima's work and that of his successors at the *vakanüvislik* became the central point of reference for subsequent generations of Ottoman historians. As Baki Tezcan pointed out, the positive reception of Na'ima's work reflects its compatibility with a new political consensus that emerged among the Ottoman elite in the early eighteenth century after a century of tumultuous change.⁵⁹

A similar process of centre's resurgence as the arbiter within historiographic field took place in the Danubian principalities and was largely inspired by the Ottoman model. First steps in this respect come during the reign of Constantin Brâncoveanu (Wallachia, 1688-1714), whose patronage over historians resulted in a few minor chronicles⁶⁰, as well as the official account of his reign produced by Radu Greceanu.⁶¹ Already at this early stage, this new wave of historiography displays a close connection with Ottoman sources and models, with Greek operating at the interface of Romanian-speaking and Turkish-speaking audience. Another short Greek language narrative regarding a military campaign led by Voivode Mihai Racoviță in 1717 against the Habsburg was clearly appreciated by both sides of the linguistic divide, being translated both into Romanian and Ottoman Turkish.⁶²

However, by far the most ambitious historiographical project of this period was launched in Moldavia by Nicolae Mavrocordat (who occupied the thrones of Moldavia on multiple occasions between 1709 and 1730). As a son of influential Grand Dragoman Alexandros Mavrocordatos, whom he succeeded at the post, had intimate acquaintance with Ottoman officials and the developments at the court, and numerous friends among Ottoman political and intellectual elite. As such, he was certainly aware of the historical endeavour that Mustafa Na'ima was engaged in at this time. His own patronage seems to

⁵⁸ The most comprehensive account of Na'ima's biography and work remains Lewis V. Thomas, *A Study of Na'ima*, ed. Norman Itzkowitz (New York: New York University Press, 1972).

⁵⁹ Tezcan, 'Politics', 191.

⁶⁰ On the Greek presence at Brâncoveanu's court, see Athanassios E. Karathanassis, 'Des grecs à la cour du Constantin Brâncoveanu, voévod de Valachie (1688–1714)', *Balkan Studies* 16, no. 1 (1975): 56–69.

⁶¹ Radu logofătul Greceanu, *Istoria domniei lui Constantin Basarab Brâncoveanu Voievod (1688–1714)*, ed. Aurora Ilieș (Bucharest: Editura Academiei RSR, 1970).

⁶² Nicolae Chiparissa, 'Diegesis ton symvaton en Moldavnia kata to 1716 etos...', in Constantin Erbiceanu, *Cronicarii greci care au scris despre români în epoca fanariotă* (Bucharest, 1888), 65–86. The Turkish version of this account, preserved in the National Library in Ankara, has been recently published, Merve Karaçay Türkal, '18. yüzyılın ilk yarısında Eflak ve Boğdan üzerinde Osmanlı–Avusturya mücadelesine dair anonim bir eser: *Vakayî-i Eflak*', *Turkish Studies* 12, no. 9 (2017): 34–53. See also Johann Strauss, 'The Rise of Non-Muslim Historiography', 220.

follow a similar logic with the scope of creating a Moldavian historiographical canon. The task ultimately befell on scribe (*uricarul*) Axinte, who eventually produced a compilation of Moldavian and Wallachian chronicles known as *The Parallel Chronicle of Moldavia and Wallachia*.⁶³ Although it drew solely on local historical production, the Ottoman inspiration behind its creation seems clear and emulated Na'ima's project. While Axinte's original input was more modest than that of Na'ima, the two ventures served a similar purpose: providing a hegemonic historical narrative controlled by the political centre.

The Moldavian-Wallachian attempt to mould a coherent historiographic canon was never as successful as that of Ottoman *vakanüvislik*, largely due to fierce competition between 'Phanariot' dynasties (*hanedan*). The political rivalry spilled over to history-writing as each household sought to impose its interpretation of the events. What is crucial from our point of view is that this battle over history unfolded largely in Greek-language works. Although Axinte's compilation was never translated, most of the court-sponsored chronicles were either translated or composed entirely in Greek. This is the case for other chronicles sponsored by the Mavrocordatos⁶⁴, as well as a whole corpus of chronicles associated with the rival Ghica family.⁶⁵ This language option was not dictated by ethnic origin of the authors, who in some instances were native speakers of Romanian⁶⁶, and in other instances produced both versions themselves.⁶⁷ The choice of producing chronicles in both languages or even opting for Greek suggests that their content aimed at two different audiences, and projected their patrons' belonging to two different communities. On the one hand, the Romanian versions were accessible for (relatively) wider public in

⁶³ Axinte Uricarul, *Cronica paralelă Țării Românești și a Moldovei (1290–1724)*, ed. Gabriel Ștrempel, 2 vols (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1993–94).

⁶⁴ Vasile Buhăescu, 'Istoriile Țării Românești și ale Moldovei' in *Calendar istoric și popular pe anul 1857* (Bucharest, 1857): 1–71. On the author, see Andrei Pippidi, 'În jurul cronicarului Vasile Buhăescu', *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie din Iași* 23, no. 2 (1986): 835–41; Petru Depasta, 'Konstantinos voevodas etoi dakikon apomnemoneumaton xyngraphe', in Erbiceanu ed., *Cronicarii greci*, 295–335.

⁶⁵ Dan Simonescu ed. *Cronica anonimă a Moldovei, 1661–1729 (Pseudo-Amiras)* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei RSR, 1975); Nestor Camariano and Ariadna Camariano-Cioran eds, *Cronica Ghiculeștilor* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei RSR, 1965).

⁶⁶ Nestor Camariano and Adriana Camariano-Cioran, 'Introducere', in Nestor Camariano and Adriana Camariano-Cioran eds, *Cronica Ghiculeștilor: istoria Moldovei între anii 1695–1754* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei RSR), ix–x.

⁶⁷ An example in this respect is the chronicle authored by Alexandru Amiras and covering the period 1661–1729. The authorship of the chronicle has been an object of controversy, with its editor attributing to him only the translation into Greek, see Dan Simonescu, 'Introducere' in Dan Simonescu ed. *Cronica anonimă a Moldovei, 1661–1729 (Pseudo-Amiras)* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei RSR, 1975), 18–23. However, in a later contribution, N.A. Ursu provided convincing arguments in favor of Amiras' authorship, see N.A. Ursu providing convincing arguments that identify the Moldavian official as the author of both versions of the chronicle, see N.A. Ursu, 'Paternitatea lui Alexandru Amiras asupra "Cronicii anonime" a Moldovei de la 1661 până la 1729', *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie "A.D. Xenopol"* 33 (1996): 159–74. On Alexandru Amiras himself, see Athanassios E. Karathanassis, 'L'exemple d'un érudit grec en Moldovlachie: Alexandre Amiras (1679–1740 ci.)', *Balkan Studies* 23, no. 2 (1982): 321–40.

the Danubian principalities, which was not literate in Greek, while the translations appealed to Greek-speaking boyars, but also a wider ‘Orthodox-Ottoman communication space’ of the sultans’ domains.⁶⁸

However, the chronicles of this period differed in more than just the language chosen by their authors but showed a much deeper engagement with the Ottoman world as a whole. In the seventeenth century, the geographical scope of Moldavian and Wallachian historians was generally limited to the principalities themselves, rarely venturing beyond the confines of a single polity. In the case of Moldavian tradition, this was mediated given that its two authors – Grigore Ureche and Miron Costin – had attended colleges in Poland-Lithuania, which deeply influenced their work.⁶⁹ A more encompassing account of universal history was provided by another genre – that of chronographs (*cronografje*) – rooted in the Byzantine and post-Byzantine tradition.⁷⁰ However, close contacts with the imperial centre did not result in works devoted to the Ottoman Empire as a standalone subject.

This began to change at the dawn of the eighteenth century, as chroniclers of the period began to increasingly frame their narratives – and the history of the Danubian principalities as a whole – within a larger Ottoman context. In eighteenth-century works, the stage on which the events unfold becomes larger and more focused on the events in other parts of the ‘Well-Protected Domains.’⁷¹ This shift is most noticeable when we compare seventeenth-century narratives with their later retellings. A particularly instructive example in this respect is the account of the rise to power of the Ghica family, as rendered by Miron Costin and Ion Neculce. For the former, the career of Gheorghe Ghica – the first member of the family to come to the Danubian principalities and subsequently ascend the throne – unfolded almost exclusively within Moldavia.⁷² Ion Neculce knew Costin’s account and borrowed large parts of his text into his own account of Ghica’s ascendancy. However, what was the focal point of Costin’s interpretation of events, is relegated to the background in favour of the future voivode’s youth in Rumelia

⁶⁸ On this term, see Konrad Petrovsky, *Geschichte schreiben im osmanischen Südosteuropa: eine Kulturgeschichte orthodoxer Historiographie des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2014), 14.

⁶⁹ On Polish influence on seventeenth-century Moldavian historiography, see Petre P. Panaitescu, *Influența polonă în opera și personalitatea cronicarilor Grigore Ureche și Miron Costin* (Bucharest: Academia Română, 1925). On the issue of universal history in early modern Moldavian and Wallachian historiography, see Paul Cernovodeanu, ‘Préoccupations en matière d’histoire universelle dans l’historiographie roumaine aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles’, *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire* 9, no. 4 (1970): 677–97; 10, no. 2 (1971): 293–312; 10, no. 4 (1971): 705–28; 11, no. 1 (1972): 53–77; 13, no. 1 (1974): 73–94.

⁷⁰ On chronographs, see Demostene Russo, *Studii istorice greco-române* (Bucharest, 1939); *Cronograf tradus din grecește de Pătrașco Danovici*, ed. Gabriel Ștrempel, 2 vols (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1998–99).

⁷¹ Ion Matei, ‘Contributions aux débuts des études de turcologie en Roumanie, XVI^e–XVIII^e siècles’, *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 26, no. 2 (1988): 102.

⁷² Miron Costin *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei dela Aron Vodă încoace*, ed. Petre P. Panaitescu (Bucharest: Fundația Regală pentru Literatură și Artă, 1943), 191–92.

and his term as the *capucebaia* in Istanbul, most notably his ties with Köprülü Mehmed Pasha.⁷³ For the eighteenth-century chronicler, these periods, rather than his service on the Moldavian court, constituted the deciding factor in Ghica's career. As the entanglement between the imperial centre and Moldavian-Wallachian periphery deepened, eighteenth-century historians increasingly considered the Ottoman domains as their 'decision space' as well as – I would argue – 'identity space'.⁷⁴

To a considerable extent, this process culminated in the appearance of Moldavian and Wallachian works devoted specifically to the Ottoman Empire and its rulers.⁷⁵ Although the genre of works depicting successive Ottoman rulers had been popular both in the western Europe and in the Ottoman Empire, it seems to have been absent from the written tradition of the Danubian principalities.⁷⁶ However, from the second half of the seventeenth century, such works begin to appear.⁷⁷ The first reference to such work – commissioned by Constantin Brâncoveanu – puts into display both the link to Ottoman cultural idiom and the mediating role of Greek language. The production of the text was a three-step process, with the text composed by in Ottoman Turkish, and subsequently translated into Greek and, finally, subject to stylistic revision.⁷⁸ This was by no means the only work of this type to be produced in the Danubian principalities, and the growing popularity of such texts suggests the growing relevance of the Ottoman imperial space as a point of reference for the Moldavian and Wallachian authors.⁷⁹ At the same time, in composing historiographic texts, the authors make ample use of Ottoman sources, both documentary and narrative. The eagerness to include that these authors increasingly

⁷³ Neculce, *Opere*, 187–88. See also Michal Wasiucionek, 'Ethnic Solidarity in the Wider Ottoman Empire Revisited: *Cins* and Local Political Elites in the 17th-century Moldavia and Wallachia', in Marinos Sariyannis et al. eds, *New Trends in Ottoman Studies: Papers Presented at the 20th CIÉPO Symposium Rethymno, 27 June – 1 July 2012* (Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2014), 232–46.

⁷⁴ On these notions and the relationship between them, see Charles S. Maier, 'Transformations of Territoriality, 1600–2000', in Gunilla Budde, Sebastian Conrad and Oliver Jan eds, *Transnationale Geschichte: Themen, Tendenzen und Theorien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 35.

⁷⁵ I deliberately leave out Dimitrie Cantemir, Moldavian voivode and the author of well-known works on the Ottoman Empire. This dictated both by the fact that the massive amount of scholarship on his oeuvre makes it impossible to address his work within the limits of this paper, and by the fact that his writings took final shape during his exile in Russia and were not intended for Moldavian and Wallachian audience.

⁷⁶ On these genres, see E. Natalie Rothman, 'Visualizing a Space of Encounter: Intimacy, Alterity and Trans-Imperial Perspective in an Ottoman–Venetian Miniature Album', *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 40 (2012): 47–49; Bronwen Wilson, 'Reflecting on the Face of the Turk in Sixteenth-Century Venetian Portrait Books', *Word and Image* 19, nos 1–2 (2003): 38–58.

⁷⁷ The first known work of this kind was produced in 1655 and held in the Caşin monastery, with its text published by Nicolae Iorga, see Nicolae Iorga ed., *Studii și documente cu privire la istoria românilor*, vol. 9 (Bucharest, 1905), 190–213; Matei, 'Contributions', 104; Stefan Lemny, 'Approches roumaines de l'histoire ottomane', *Dix-Huitième Siècle* 28 (1996): 24.

⁷⁸ Bucharest, Romanian Academy Library MS Grec 970; Matei, 'Contributions', 105; Strauss, 'The Rise of Non-Muslim Historiography', 220.

⁷⁹ For the list of these works, with relevant bibliography, see Matei, 'Contributions', 107.

considered the Ottoman discourse and the imperial space relevant for interpreting the events they participated in as well as for defining their own identity on the historical stage.

In many respects, these trends coalesced in the life and oeuvre of Ienachiță Văcărescu. This fascinating source, extant in a single manuscript bears the title *The History of the Most Powerful Ottoman Emperors*; however, the title only partly reflects its contents.⁸⁰ In fact, while the first part of the text provides a historical account of the Ottoman Empire (with ample use of Ottoman sources), the following part is *de facto* an autobiography of Văcărescu himself, who depicts himself as a loyal servant of the Porte, particularly in fulfilling diplomatic duties. On occasions, he declares himself ‘a Turk,’ not in the religious sense of being a Muslim, but rather as an expression of his political association with the Sublime Porte.⁸¹ In many respects, the trajectory of Văcărescu, a scion of Wallachian boyar family, who had learned Ottoman Turkish while keeping his personal notes in Greek, and weaved himself discursively into the fabric of the Ottoman polity, is the perfect illustration of the cultural and political identity of the Orthodox ‘Ottoman-local’ elite of Moldavia and Wallachia.

Preliminary conclusions: Ottomanization and Hellenization

In modern historiography, the proliferation of Grecophone culture among Orthodox population of the Ottoman domains has been interpreted in a variety of ways. For Panaitescu, whom I quoted at the beginning of the present study, it constituted a hurdle on the path towards Romanian national culture and reactionary response of the elite. Others interpreted these developments in a more positive light, claiming it to correspond with the advent of humanism, Enlightenment or nationalism to South-eastern Europe. Underpinning these arguments is a tacit assumption that western Europe and its culture constituted the natural point of reference for Christian elites, as opposed to the cultural idiom of the Ottoman space, which they happened to inhabit. Either consciously or not, this approach runs the risk of perpetuating a refurbished variant of the ‘Turkish yoke’ narrative.

However, as I have tried to demonstrate throughout the present study, the proliferation of Grecophone culture in the Balkans, including the Danubian principalities, cannot be disentangled from the Ottoman context and its cultural production. Nor did it represent a reversal of modernizing trends that had brought about vernacular literature among non-Muslim subjects of the sultan; instead, it formed an integral part of the

⁸⁰ Ianache Văcărescu, *Istoria Othomanească*, ed. Gabriel Ștrempel, (Bucharest: Biblioteca Bucureștilor, 2001). For Văcărescu’s life, see Cornel Cârstoiu, *Ianache Văcărescu: viața și opera* (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1974).

⁸¹ For an interpretation of Ianache Văcărescu’s strategies of self-fashioning and his multiple identities, see Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu, ‘Using Luxury and Fashion for Constructing a Social Status: Ianache Văcărescu’s Case’, *Journal of Early Modern History* (forthcoming).

dynamic cultural environment of Ottoman early modernity, with clear parallels to the cultural developments among Muslim population of the empire.

Within the Ottoman social, political and cultural landscape, the boyar elites of the Danubian principalities occupied a position that was in many ways doubly marginal: confessionally, as an Orthodox community within a Muslim empire, and due to their position on the imperial periphery. The adoption of Grecophone culture allowed them to mediate this double marginality, integrating them not only with the Grecophone cosmopolitan culture of the Phanar, but with the Ottoman culture at large. While the Hellenization of the Moldavian-Wallachian elites put them into contact with some cultural currents of European thought of this time, it also triggered a deeper engagement with the cultural tradition of the imperial centre. As a result, it serves as a word of caution against a mechanical application of the notions derived entirely from the European tradition, as the ongoing debate over 'Ottoman Enlightenment' shows.

Inevitably, the present study cannot but touch the surface of the relationship between Ottoman socio-political system, the proliferation of Greek language and the culture and identity of the Moldavian-Wallachian boyars in the early modern period. However, as I have tried to argue, in approaching this topic, we should follow the cue inscribed in the fountains Moldavian Voivode Grigore Alexandru Ghica founded in Jassy in 1766. The *çeşmes*, built and decorated in style very much in vogue in the Ottoman capital at that time, contain a total of four inscriptions, in Romanian, Greek, and Ottoman Turkish. However, even a Romanian inscription does not resemble those of the earlier period, instead containing a poem clearly modelled after Ottoman chronogram *genre*. By employing all three languages, Ghica put on display three crucial aspects of his identity: that of Moldavian voivode, member of the Grecophone Orthodox community, and an Ottoman servant. As I would argue, the second of those identities played a crucial role in binding the other two together and bringing out the hybrid cultural and socio-political world in the Ottoman periphery.