

**THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND THE PRESERVATION OF
WALLACHIA'S FISCAL POTENTIAL
(1730-1774)**

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Abstract

In this paper I analyze the way in which the Porte viewed and put into practice the principle of protecting the tax-paying subjects and, therefore, the fiscal potential of Wallachia in the eighteenth century. The Porte was directly involved in protecting and confirming not only its direct resources, like tribute and provisions, but also the ones entrusted to Wallachian princes, like salt mines, customs and taxes paid by neighbors for pasturing their livestock in Wallachia. The principle of protecting the wealth of the state was imposed also as the duty of the appointed princes, who risked losing their position if they disturbed the fiscal system, by oppression and heavy taxation. These aspects reveal the intensification of the actions undertaken by the Porte in 18th century to control the periphery.

Keywords *Ottoman Empire; Wallachia; center/periphery; fiscal potential; protection.*

In this article I try to articulate the way in which, during 1730 and 1774, the Porte protected, in theory and practice the wealth (*mal*: Măli (A.) means in the old language possession, property (...). As *māl* includes property in its different aspects, the word can also mean “taxes”. (Brill, 1991, p. 205); “māl, s.a. Any thing that can be accounted property; money, effects; (*in the provinces*) sheep (...) mālī (...) Pertaining to the treasury, to the public finances” (Redhouse, 1856, p. 969)) of Wallachia belonging to the *miri* (“Belonging to government, public” (Redhouse, 1856, p. 1068); “Throughout Ottoman history, it was used as a noun meaning “lands belonging to the

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government”, “land tax” levied from them, as well as “the public treasury” (...). During the 12th/18th century, although the notion of state absolute ownership over all *mîrî* lands prevailed, its actual control over the tenants and lease holders diminished as the empire declined” (Brill, 1993, p. 125)) (treasury), which was considered part of the total revenues belonging to the Muslims’ treasure (*Beyt-ül-mâl-ı müslimîn*). I will show that this principle was an essential aspect of the relations between the central power of the empire and the local factors in Wallachia. It determined the Porte to adopt specific measures designed to ensure the protection and stability of the population (*re’âyâ*) of Wallachia, but also of other sources of revenues, like customs, salt mines and the taxation on the grazing of the animals belonging to the people south of Wallachia. This principle was also invoked in the petitions (*arz*) of Wallachian princes sent to the Porte for the consolidation of various rights on these sources of revenue. The fact that the Porte repeatedly confirmed many of these rights strengthened the legitimacy and authority of the prince over these sources of revenue.

This topic relates to historiographical views that stress the duality of the relationship between a center and a periphery: the central power cannot simply enforce its views and power upon the province. Many, but not all, aspects of this apparently unilateral relationship are negotiated with the local factors and, furthermore, the peripheral condition of the province enables some degree of freedom of movement for the local power. This issue relates directly with two others, which will be discussed briefly: the first concerns the influence of corruption (bribery, patronage, favoritism) on the political decisions undertaken by the central power (here including those relating to the protection of Wallachia’s fiscal system), mainly in the cases of appointment, confirmation, deposition and replacement of the princes; the second issue relates to the actual methods and means that the Porte employed to grasp both the potential and the real value of Wallachia’s revenues. There is contradicting evidence of detailed reports carried out at the Porte’s request and of the local political actors’ efforts to conceal the real revenues of the province from the knowledge of the Ottoman agents. All these prove the existence of a certain ‘breathing space’ for the local political elites in Wallachia in their relations with the Porte.

The observations that form this article should be viewed within a larger historiographical picture of Wallachia and the Porte, shaped by two distinct features. The first views the Porte as the center and Wallachia as a province at

the periphery of the empire, so rather than focusing of the former's intensified breaching of the latter's privileges and autonomy, I am more interested in the way in which the Porte tried to preserve its interests in Wallachia within the political, social and economic context of the eighteenth century. The second feature stems from recent research in Ottoman studies which focus on the explanations for the Empire's continuity until the beginning of the twentieth century, instead on the classical paradigm of its continuous fall. (Cristoph Neumann considers that "only in the last few decades has the paradigm of 'Ottoman decline' been subjected to criticism (...). This debate has resulted in the widespread (but not unanimous) rejection of the decline paradigm and also in the wholesale transformation of Ottoman studies", Cristoph Neumann, "Political and diplomatic developments", in Suraiya Faroqhi (ed.), (The Cambridge History of Turkey, 2006, p. 45); Karen Barkey also notes that "It is now much more common to be a revisionist historian of the empire and to declare war on the decline paradigm. The pendulum has now swung in that direction of demonstrating imperial health through state-provincial relations", (Barkey, 2008, p. 198)) By analyzing the relationship between the Porte and Wallachia through Ottoman 'politics of difference' (Burbank & Cooper, 2010, p. 1-22) I try to stress the particular way in which power and control over Wallachia's resources and fiscal institutions were negotiated and re-negotiated with local factors in a changing environment. (Karen Barkey's definition of the empire is very useful: "a "negotiated" enterprise where the basic configuration of relationships between imperial authorities and peripheries is constructed piece meal in a different fashion for each periphery, creating a patchwork pattern of relations with structural holes between peripheries. In that construction we see the architecture of empire emerge: a hub-and-spoke structure of state-periphery relations, where the direct and indirect vertical relations of imperial integration coexist with horizontal relations of segmentation", (Barkey, 2008, p. 1.))

I use the term "Porte" for the political decision-making factors at the centre of the empire (Istanbul), the sultan, the grand Vizier and other notables who influenced the political decisions. However, it is not the scope of this study to analyze the mechanisms of decision-making at the central level of the Ottoman Empire in 18th century. For Wallachia I use different terms, like country, province or principality, but it is important to stress that these are imperfect translations of the official Ottoman terms, *eyalet*, *vilayet*, or *memleket*, which were used together with other terms in order to emphasize

both Wallachia's incorporation in the empire and its political, administrative, religious and financial autonomy within the empire. (Panaite, 2013, p. 436-442) For the uniformity of this text I will use only the term 'prince', usually employed by European writers in 18th century, for the appointed tributary ruler of Wallachia, instead of the local titles (*hospodar, domn*) or the ones assigned by the Ottoman authorities (*voyvoda, bey*). (Panaite, 2013, p. 361-364) All the names for the Ottoman towns and *kazas* of the Danube area are the contemporary Romanian ones. Finally, even my study is on Wallachia, I also use, especially in the last part of the paper, historical evidence from Moldavia's case because of the similar political and juridical statutes of the two principalities.

The protection of the Ottoman subjects was a central concept in Ottoman definition of politics. Viorel Panaite showed that right from the 16th century, Wallachians and Moldavians enjoyed similar rights to those of the other non-Muslim subjects of the empire regarding life, liberty, possessions and religion. By protecting the *re'âyâ* against the abuses of the Ottoman authorities from the Danube area and also from foreign countries, the Porte aimed at securing the prosperity of the principalities, which should have enabled the inhabitants to pay their taxes and send sufficient provisions. (Panaite, 2013, p. 417) Thus, as Panaite emphasized, "the politics of the state towards the *re'âyâ* was guided by the principle of protecting the tax-payer, which was not an abstract principle, but a *necessity* of the Ottoman society" (my emphasis). (Panaite, 2013, p. 419) As a consequence of the intermediary political position of the prince (between the sultan and the subjects), this principle was imposed as a major responsibility of the princes appointed by the Porte. (Panaite, 2013) The obligation of the princes to assure the prosperity and stability of their principality, along with the penalties risked in case of the failure to do so, was stressed in Ottoman documents from the 16th century. (Panaite, 2013, p. 376) In the first part of the article I will analyze the 18th century evidence for the Porte's implications aimed at the protection of Wallachia's sources of revenues and in the second part I will discuss some aspects of the prince's obligations to protect their subjects, based especially on Cantemir's writings.

Many official orders issued in the name of the sultan emphasized the link between the prince's obligation to collect the state revenues (*mal-ı miri*) on time, to send enough supplies to Istanbul and to the cities by the Danube and the need to protect the tax-payers and to secure demographical stability. This link was central in the Porte's conception of Wallachia's status within the

empire. It also established a balance between the rights and obligations, specific to tributary state: both at the level of the subjects (*re'âyâ*), which had to be protected but were obliged to work the land in order to pay their taxes; and at the level of the princes, who enjoyed the right to administrate the fiscal system and to be protected by the abuses committed by non-Wallachian subjects, but had to secure domestic order and to pay the duties to the Porte on time.

Most of the surviving documents which emphasize this principle were issued by the central power in the context of the abuses perpetrated on the Wallachian subjects, in Wallachia or south of it, by the inhabitants, civilians and soldiers, of the districts (*kaza*) in the Danube area (Giurgiu, Brăila, Vidin, Silistra etc.).

An imperial order (*hüküm*) from 1731, addressed to Süleyman, *turnacı bâşı*, the Ottoman dignitaries in the Danube region and to the prince of Wallachia, Constantin Mavrocordat, with the purpose of ending the abuses committed by the *lâz* merchants, stipulated that:

the disturbance ... of the country (*vilâyet*) will cause in time the withholding of the state revenues (*mal-ı miri*) and since my imperial wish is that for the protection of the principality (*memleket*) from disorder and for the protection of the *re'âyâ* and *beraya* [the nobles] ... and for the avoidance of the reduction and withholding of the state revenues from the mentioned country, you [Süleyman] ... shall make all the efforts to execute this order of great significance (our emphasis). (Veliman, 1984, p. 195)

Another order, from 1756, sent to the military commanders of Vidin, stated that the inhabitants from Vidin create troubles and agitation among the population of Wallachia, and thus cause gaps and shortcomings in the money for *cizye* (tribute) of the *vilâyet*, which is the property inherited by the sultan. (Veliman, 1984, p. 344, doc. 130) And in another *fermân* (imperial order), from 1761, it is shown that, even though Wallachia was free from being trampled, enjoyed freedom in every respect and its inhabitants should have been peacefully and happy and free to possess their properties and lands, the soldiers and civilians from the towns by the Danube, south of Wallachia are causing the shrinking of the state revenues, disturbing the regulations (*nizam*) and upsetting the poor *re'âyâ*. (Mehmed, 1976, p. 272 (doc. 260)).

The negative effect that these transgressions had on the ability of the Wallachians to pay taxes is stressed also in other documents, like those from 1741 (Veliman, 1984, p. 269, doc. 101), 1747 (Veliman, 1984, p. 299-300, doc. 116) and 1761 (Veliman, 1984, p. 275-276, doc. 262).

In some documents, the principle of protecting the tax-paying subjects is linked with one of the most urgent problem that the princes were facing in this period: the widespread fleeing of the population, usually the peasants, but sometimes also the nobles. (Cantemir showed that the complaint that the policy of the prince caused the nobles to flee constituted a grave accusation, (Cantemir, 1909, p. 107) Some of the orders issued by the Porte show that the abuses of the Muslim population from south of Wallachia produced the fleeing of the Wallachian subjects and assign the responsibility of restoring the order to the Ottoman dignitaries from the *kazas* on Danube. Others emphasized the responsibility of the prince to ensure demographical stability and the country's prosperity. There are also more precise documents, in which both the princes and the other Ottoman dignitaries were ordered to take the appropriate measures to bring home specific groups of Wallachians that fled or that were retained by force.

Two imperial documents from 1742 (Veliman, 1984, p. 269 (doc. 104)) and 1759 (Veliman, 1984, p. 369 (doc. 140)) are explicitly concerned with ending the fleeing of Wallachian peasants. Another one, an imperial order from 1765, addressed to the Ottoman officials in Vidin, specified that:

Because of the persecutions and tyrannies of these people [soldiers and civilians from the *kazas*], the inhabitants [of Wallachia] ran from oppressions, so that their number always dropped, thus, every time there were occurring difficulties in collecting and procuring of the *miri*'s wealth and also of the established taxes, the High Porte sent an *mübaşir* [official, delegate], who, by removing and casting out the tyrants and malefactors, put an end to the persecutions. (Mehmed, 1976, p. 294 (doc. 274))

The same document outlines the pragmatic conception of Ottoman policies in Wallachia: "It is well known that many supplies and the money for Wallachia's tribute, which is allocated to the remuneration of those at the borders, can be procured only with a great number of *re'âyâ*." The same principle was acknowledged by the authorities of Vidin, later that year. (Mehmed, 1976, p. 297 (doc. 277))

In other cases, like a document from 1765 shows, the decrease of the population of Wallachia was caused by the detention of the Wallachian peasants who go yearly in the neighboring *kazas* for reaping. The Porte demanded the release of the workers and their proper payment by the ones who were responsible for this situation. (Mehmed, 1976, p. 293 (doc. 275). This document refers both to Walachia's and Moldavia's population.)

The argument of stopping the fleeing of the peasants was also invoked by the tributary princes in their appeals (*arz*) to the sultan. In 1734, Grigore II Ghica showed that because of the disturbances at the border, some of his subjects have scattered for fear and have caused disorder in the country. (Veliman, 1984, p. 208 (doc. 74)) The same argumentation was used by Constantin Mavrocordat, in a similar context, in 1736 (Mehmed, 1976, p. 222 (doc. 215)) and 1737. (Mehmed, 1976, p. 225 (doc. 218))

Besides the repeated statement of the commitment for protecting the Wallachian subjects, the Porte issued clearer orders for the return of those who fled. In 1738, in a *fermân* the Porte showed that it was informed of the Wallachian subjects' run south in the Danube area and ordered the authorities there to "lift and move them [the Wallachian subjects] to their native places, so that the mentioned *vilâyet* would be prosper and populated as before". (Veliman, 1984, p. 226 (doc. 84)) In 1763, the sultan ordered the Ottoman authorities in the Danube area and Constatnin Racoviță, the prince of Wallachia, to take appropriate measures for the return of the subjects and the gypsies that were scattered along the Danube since the time of the previous princes. (Guboglu, 1960, p. 68 (doc. 217))

The difficulties of resolving the demographical issue are proved by other imperial orders, in 1744 (Guboglu, 1960) (Veliman, 1984, p. 299-300 (doc. 116)), (Siruni) The Porte issued orders concerning the peasants' flight also in times of war. In 1768, for example, the sultan ordered the authorities in Vidin to "protect Wallachia and its *re'âyâ*", who were about to run at the rumor that other armies will pass through the country. (Mehmed, 1976, p. 314 (doc. 288))

The return of large groups of fugitives was a priority in the Porte's policies towards Wallachia, whatever the causes of the fleeing were. The causes who were recognized officially in documents were, apart from the abuses of the Muslim population from south of Wallachia, drought and famine, tax evasion and the prince's oppression. The implications of the Porte in these circumstances are very important for the theme of this article, because they were not regulations of the juridical and economic relations between

Wallachia and the surrounding districts, as it was the case in the examples mentioned above, but implications, at least at the level of informing, in the administration of Wallachia. The often repetition of these orders demonstrate the difficulty faced by the Porte when trying to resolve this problem.

In 1743, the sultan issued an order in which he acknowledged that the prince of Wallachia, Mihai Racoviță, requested the second intervention of the Porte for the return of Wallachian subjects, who fled because of drought and famine, because after the first intervention, the peasants dispersed themselves again. This new flight created unrest among the rest of the population and caused the decrease of the state wealth. After examination in the Imperial Chancellery, it was discovered another similar order (for the return of the people who fled) dated ten years before. (Mehmed, 1976, p. 240 (doc. 231))

In 1744, another imperial order shows that Mihai Racoviță, prince of Wallachia informed the sultan that some of his subjects, in order to evade taxes, ran in the nearby *kazas* and also refused to pay the local taxes there, under the pretext that they were subjects of Wallachia. By responding officially to Racoviță's complaint, the sultan reinforced the obligation of Wallachian subjects to pay the taxes to their prince. A similar order from 1720 was found, again, at the Imperial Chancellery. (Veliman, 1984, p. 282 (doc. 111))

The efforts made by the Porte to protect Wallachia's fiscal system are related also to other sources of revenue, like customs, salt mines and the selling of salt and the taxes imposed on neighbors from the Danube area who took their sheep and cattle for grazing in Wallachia's territory. Just in the case of regular taxes paid by the ordinary subjects, the official implication of the Porte in these matters served to strengthen and legitimize the right of the prince to control and collect these revenues.

A *fermân* issued in 1736 reminded the authorities from Silistra that "the raising and collecting of *gümriik* taxes, which were named *vamă* [customs] were entrusted, from the past until now, by the prince to two nobles" who collected these customs from the merchants who came and went in Wallachia. It is specified, again, that acting contrary to this order and old practice will cause damage to the state wealth. (Mehmed, 1976, p. 238 (doc. 216)) In 1744, a similar order addressed to the Ottoman authorities in the Danube area endorsed the prince to raise customs and other tithes, as an older *fermân*, from 1722-1723 stipulated. (Mehmed, 1976, p. 245 (doc. 235))

In 1758, the Porte interfered with a *fermân* in the issue of the salt mines of Oltenia (western part of Wallachia). The *ağa* (commander) of the janissaries in Vidin appointed in Oltenia, contrary to the previous orders, an *ağa* who was oppressing the people there, and, a fact considered more grave, has seized the salt mines and dismissed the people who were in charge with the farming (*mukataa*) of the mines. By robbing and selling the salt he caused damages to the state wealth and also to the farmers. (Veliman, 1984, p. 349-350 (doc. 133))

Another clear confirmation of the prince's jurisdiction over the revenues from customs and salt mines was made by the Porte in 1770, during the war with Russia:

the abandonment [of the work in] the salt mines, extracted always for the prince ... as well as the assessment of customs that were always taken from the merchants who come and go, do not bring any gain and benefit to the subjects ... and even damages the regulation (*nizam*) regarding the selling and buying of goods transported without customs by the merchants, as well as causing unnecessary losses to the *miri* and to the mentioned prince [Manole Giani Ruset]. (Veliman, 1984, p. 454 (doc. 169). This document also mentions that the damages done to the customs imposed on merchants and on the salt mines are unrelated with the subjects, but belong to the *miri*, and their regulation (*nizam*) brings benefits to the subjects.)

Another source of revenues pertaining to the prince of Wallachia which was regulated by the central power of the empire was the taxes paid by the Ottoman subjects from the *kazas* near the Danube for grazing their sheep and cattle in Wallachia. This issue was marked by a contradiction between the statute of Wallachia, which specifically banned the trampling of the country, the efforts to put an end to the abuses committed by the neighbors from south by expelling them, and, respectively, the gains resulted from the special taxes these people would pay to the prince of Wallachia.

There are many Ottoman documents which show the recurring efforts of the Ottoman or Wallachian authorities, carried out under the Porte's directives, to destroy, according to the liberties of the country, the various houses and shelters (*cısla*, *çiftlik*, *oda*) erected by the Ottoman subjects from south of Wallachia. In 1741, a *fermân* addressed to the *kadı*s (judges) of Brăila and Giurgiu stated that in Wallachia there was no piece of land without an owner and that everybody possessed land with certificates, so that, according to previous orders, the buildings (*cısla*, *çiftlik*) built there were wrecked.

(Veliman, 1984, p. 263-264 (doc. 101)). One year later, the sultan ordered Mihail Racoviță, the prince of Wallachia, to destroy, according also to previous orders (1728-1729 and 1741-1742) the shelters where many individuals settled illegally, to the detriment of the local population. (Guboglu, 1960, p. 54 (doc. 147)) Similar orders were issued also in 1750 (Veliman, 1984, p. 313-315 (doc. 121)), 1760 (Veliman, 1984, p. 377-378 (doc. 141)) and 1765. (Mehmed, 1976, a *nizam* for Moldavia which banned the construction of houses and shelters by Muslims and which was taken as a model for Wallachia)

Other official orders were concerned with interdictions only related to the working of Wallachia's land, which suggest that grazing on Wallachia's territory could have been considered normal and legal. A series of documents from 1763 reveal the measures undertaken by the Ottoman authorities to cease the abuses of the *re'âyâ* from south of Wallachia, which, supported by *a'yans* (local notables) "sow and cultivate without any fear any every estate and land of Wallachia, reap the herbs and transport them to their home places, thus causing the desperation of the landowners." (Siruni, p. 33 (doc. V). However, this document mentions the interdiction to mix into the pastures of Wallachia. The other documents in this series are not concern with grazing and pastures: p. 34 (doc. VI), 35 (doc. VII)) Another *fermân* from 1768 prohibited the inhabitants from Giurgiu to sow, reap and cut the woods, as well as to trouble the *re'âyâ* of Wallachia, but did not mention anything about grazing. (Guboglu, 1960, p.77 (doc. 254, 255))

In some Ottoman documents the Porte recognized the advantages that could be drawn from imposing taxes on neighbors who came for grazing in Wallachia and even officially set the amount to be paid. In 1731, the sultan ordered that the inhabitants from the *kazas* near Danube who took their sheep for grazing in Wallachia paid, "according to the old custom of the country and to numerous eminent orders previous issued" the tax of 8 akçe for every sheep, in order to end the prejudices and shortcomings that affected the *miri*. (Veliman, 1984, p. 198 (doc. 68)) This order was issued again in 1739-1740 and 1744, when it was reaffirmed, as an answer to Constatnin Mavrocordat's petition (*arz*), that those from south of Wallachia who didn't pay the taxes for sheep and cattle, contrary to the custom of the country (*âdet-i belde*), were causing great damages to the *miri*. In this last document, the negative effect of the refusal to pay these taxes is mentioned three times. (Mehmed, 1976, p. 243-244 (doc. 234)) In 1743 the sultan authorized Mihail Racoviță, prince of

Wallachia, to collect the taxes for the grazing of the horses and sheep owned by the inhabitants of the *kazas*, again, not to shrink the revenues of the country. (Mehmed, 1976, p. 54 (doc. 147)) (Guboglu, 1960, p. 54 (doc. 149))

Nevertheless, we have also evidence for some type of lawful properties that the Ottoman subjects from outside Wallachia could have owned here. In 1744, an order was issued for the demolition of the buildings that the soldiers and civilians from the *kazas* owned in Wallachia, but it also stipulated that those who minded their own business, possessed real properties (*sahih emlâc*) and who didn't engage in wrongdoings should not be bothered and persecuted. (Mehmed, 1976, p. 249-250 (doc. 238)) One *fermân* from 1747 addressed to the authorities in Vidin showed that the janissaries from this city reestablished buildings in Wallachia, having seized by force the estates of the landowners. (Veliman, 1984, p. 299-300 (doc. 116)) We can assume that only those shelters and houses raised by the Ottoman subjects from outside Wallachia who seized these territories by force and were involved in misconducts risked severe punishments ordered by the Porte; and that some of these buildings were raised legitimately, in agreement with the landowners and the authorities, by people who paid taxes for grazing in Wallachia.

This issue is better understood in connection with four other documents. The first is a *fermân* from 1733 by which the sultan ordered Grigore II Ghica, the prince of Wallachia, both the demolition of *cışlas* and the perception of taxes for grazing. From this document we find that the inhabitants from the Danube area and from Silistra controlled the lands of the *re'âyâ* and the nobles of Wallachia and brought horses, sheep and other animals for grazing in the winter in *kışlaks* they have founded here. They didn't pay taxes, took animals owned by Wallachians and even attacked the tax-collectors, among other persecutions. The order for the demolition was issued twice, in just a few months time. (Mehmed, 1976, p. 221-222 (doc. 214))

The second document is a sultan's order from 1745 addressed to Ottoman authorities from all towns by Danube, from Brăila and Ada Kale. The document mentions countless previous high orders, with or without *hatt-ı hümayûn* (imperial autograph) for the subsequent matters: destruction of *cışlas*, *çiftliks* and *odas* established in Wallachia by the inhabitants from the *cazas* in the Danube area; the stopping and prohibition of reconstructing these buildings; and the payment of the established taxes by the people who graze their animals on Wallachia's soil, without invoking excuses and claiming to rule over the subjects of Wallachia. The importance of this document is given

by a detailed description of the mechanisms by which these people became the masters of these places:

Some of the former princes – taking from the hands of the metropolitan bishop, bishops and church priests and of all nobles and captains and notables and subjects that live in the principality of Wallachia most of the proprieties and lands that they possessed from father to son, from the imperial conquest onwards – they gave them, under the name of *cîșlas*, to those from those places ... and some of the crooks, when they saw them, had founded – *without permission* - *cîșlas* and dared to rule by force any place they wanted, so that the poor subjects and the rest of the inhabitants had not places for plowing and pastures left, which has caused disturbance to the regulation of the principality and the stagnation of the collection of the fiscal wealth.

The essential point here is that the document mentions explicitly that previous orders were issued for the destruction of the buildings raised without permission, but not of those built with the permission of the princes of Wallachia, and for the collection of taxes from those who take sheep, cattle and other animals to *cîșlas*, pastures and plains. (Veliman, 1984, p. 286-289 (doc. 112)) One similar distinction between those Ottoman subjects outside Wallachia who settled here with permission and those who didn't had permission or didn't obeyed the laws and the customs of the country is indicated by a later *fermân*, dated 1765. This document reports the efforts made to end the abuses and disorders produced in Wallachia by the merchants or the ones who pretended to be merchants. It is acknowledged that "it became impossible to distinguish between the honest merchants and offenders and tyrants". (Mehmed, 1974. This document also suggests that some of those who came in Wallachia for commerce raised buildings and shelters and owned horses, cattle and beehives)

The third document emphasizes, this time, the responsibility of the Wallachian landowners for the alarming number of Ottoman subjects from Danube who settled here. It is a *hüccet* (a court decision) signed in 1760 by El-hâc Ahmed, official appointed by the Porte for Wallachia's regulations (*el-müvellâ-ı nizâm-ı memleket-i Eflâk*) in the presence of the delegates sent by the Porte (*mübaşirs*) and those sent by the prince, as well as nobles, abbots, lesser officials, the chieftains of the villages, subjects and merchants from

Craiova (the most important city in Oltenia). The document confirms the demolition of no less than 131 houses, 7 booths and 2 big inns in Craiova and 700 *çiftlik*s and *cıslas*, 112 mills erected by the soldiers from the towns and fairs on Danube in 452 estates of Oltenia. Both the delegates sent by the Porte and those sent by the prince – a crucial aspect, which reveals the converging goals of the Porte and the prince – accused the inhabitants of Oltenia for the important role they had in creating this critical situation:

The cause of the troubles and upsets of the inhabitants of the named principality ... is due to the fact that *the mentioned inhabitants*, neglecting the consequences and without thinking better, obeying to vain greed, *leased and entrusted their estates to those soldiers* (my emphasis).

In order to put an end to this situation, all the inhabitants gathered at Craiova pledged that if they will lease out their estate to Muslims, then that estate would be confiscated for the *miri* through the mediation of the prince and that if they won't inform about the leasing they would pay the *miri* 10.000 gurush. (Veliman, 1984, p. 375-379 (doc. 141))

The fourth document concerns Moldavia, but it is relevant to this article's theme because it offers valuable information about the way the taxes for grazing of the animals belonging to the inhabitants at the borders of the principality. It is a *hüküm* (command) from 1767 addressed in the name of the sultan to Grigore Callimachi, the prince of Moldavia. It states that the taxes and customs for the merchants' oxen who grazed in Moldavia were collected from ancient times without resistance. But some of these merchants did not pay these duties, causing shortcomings and gaps in the *mal-ı miri*. These duties were recognized gathering by the Muslim merchants and the nobles and inhabitants of the principality, as a testimony, at the *şeri'at* (holy law) meeting. The nature of these duties was negotiated separately between Moldavians and people from Tighina, who notified the Porte about the mutual agreement. Muslims from other places refused the payment, demanding the same taxes paid by those from Tighina, but the *kadı* of Brăila asked and received an order issued by the sultan which confirmed that all expect the inhabitants from Tighina should pay the same duties, as it was established. (Veliman, 1984, p. 424-425 (doc. 159))

Dimitrie Cantemir's (1673-1723) *Descriptio Moldaviae* (*The Description of Moldavia*, finished in 1716) contains crucial descriptions and explanations of the relationship between the Porte and the tributary principality. Cantemir's

views are central to the article's subject, not only for the fact that his writings had a considerable influence on later well-known writers on Wallachia and Moldavia, but also for the fact he was concerned, unlike many other authors, with a more in-depth explanation of the obligation of Moldavian princes towards the Porte, including the need to assure the stability and protection of his subjects, an obligation which could have proved decisive for the deposition of the princes.

In the chapter titled "Despre ocârmuirea stăpânirii Moldovenești" ("About the governing of Moldavia"), of his *Description of Moldavia*, Cantemir describes the main interdictions in foreign politics imposed on the princes in opposition to the liberty in domestic affairs:

The power to start a war and to make peace, to form alliances and to send emissaries (...) to the surrounding dominions was forbidden to the rulers of Moldavia; but they were granted all the liberty and the power they enjoyed before, in establishing laws, punishing the subjects, to ennoble or to remove the title of noble, to establish taxes, to appoint the high priests and others like these". (Cantemir, 1909, p. 82)

However, the theoretical limitations imposed by the Porte on the domestic policies of the princes are stressed in the passage in which Cantemir reproduce the directives given by the Grand Vizier to the prince at his appointment. The prince had to be faithful to the Porte, give information about the enemy states (Cantemir, 1909, p. 118), pay the tribute and the gifts in time, but he had also obligations pertaining to his domestic policies:

"... you shall rule your subjects with gentleness; protect the righteous and do not overlook the wrongdoers; *you shall be content with the principedom's revenues settle by law and custom and you shall not oppress your subjects with anything by force*" (my emphasis). (Cantemir, 1909, p. 109)

The Moldavian scholar notes elsewhere in this work the limitations imposed by the Porte on the fiscal policies of the princes:

when the prince wants to impose burdensome taxes in the country, nobody can divert them without putting his live in danger, *but the prince is still obliged by the Turkish court to answer for his oppressions*; and he should expect a bigger punishment especially when someone complains against him to the Vizier for the shedding of innocent blood (...); *and when*

all the country complains for the burdensome taxes, then he [the Vizier] often punishes him with exile or with the confiscation of all of his estates (my emphasis). (Cantemir, 1909, p. 144)

Cantemir describes also the role that corruption played in the deposition of princes. He mentions, at one point, that the prince is escorted by an Ottoman official (a *kapıcı-başı*) when someone accuses him with a greater charge, or when the Turks want to squeeze more money from him. (Cantemir, 1909, p. 84) Elsewhere, he writes that the deposition of a prince occurs when the Vizier decides so, either because he detests him or because the prince made a mistake; (Cantemir, 1909, p. 106) and that the prince is more fortunate when his fault for which the Turks are planning to depose him is not clear, because it is easier to bribe them. (Cantemir, 1909, p. 146) Cantemir suggests that even the more grave accusations can be diverted by the prince through bribery. When he is friend with the Vizier and other Ottoman dignitaries with influence at the sultan “*he doesn't have to fear the complaint of the nobles, nor even that of the whole country, because a skillful lawyer at the Turkish court takes everything upon him to defend the prince, when he can ably show the adjustment of the affair*” for which he was accused (my emphasis). (Cantemir, 1909, p. 84-85) Cantemir also suggests that in cases in which bribery determines the dethroning of the prince, the accusation of oppressing the country still appears in official imperial orders, as a formal pretext. (Cantemir, 1909, p. 107) Conversely, when a prince is confirmed, the Vizier argues in front of the sultan for the loyalty of the prince, the payment of all the duties and the governance with kindness and justice, as the subjects showed in their supplications in which they begged for the renewal of his rule. (Cantemir, 1909, p. 130) The possibility of this accusation (or, conversely, this acclaim) being merely a pretext reveals the great difficulty historians are facing when trying to find out whether the accusation of oppression, attested in official documents, represented a real cause for deposition (or its absence a good motive for confirmation) or not. This issue must be examined from case to case, because, as Cantemir is suggesting, it is clear that harsh domestic policies could have severely endangered the prince's reign and even life.

Most of the Porte's implications in Wallachia between 1730 and 1774 were aimed at protecting the province from abuses committed here by the authorities, soldiers, merchants and other inhabitants of the *kazas* from the Danube. The main ground for this was the pragmatical idea that the protected

re'âyâ produce the necessary money for taxes and provisions for the empire. This logic also enabled the Porte to officially recognize and protect categories of revenues that were not directed owned by the sultan, but were entrusted to the princes: salt mines, customs and taxes on grazing paid by Ottoman subjects from outside Wallachia. The customs and taxes on grazing, and the benefits they brought to the treasury, encouraged many Ottoman subjects to settle here and, eventually, caused disturbances in the country. The tension between the benefits and the abuses produced by these people is revealed by the fact that the Ottoman authorities recognized officially the difficulty to discern 'good' merchants and breeders, who pay their taxes to the prince, from evildoers. Often at the request of the princes, the Porte sent repeatedly delegates in Wallachia to resolve these issues. In some cases, they acknowledged the responsibility of the local landowners for creating this situation by accepting the leasing of their properties to Muslims. As the case of the agreement between Moldavia and Tighina shows, the issues of the taxes paid in Moldavia (and presumably in Wallachia) by the inhabitants from the *kazas* were negotiated locally and the Porte involved usually when discontent and complaints arrived.

The responsibility of protecting the *re'âyâ* of Wallachia was assigned by the sultan to the appointed princes. As Dimitrie Cantemir early in the 18th century showed, the accusation of violating this obligation, of persecuting and burdening the subjects could have very easily end their reigns. However, the practical implementation of these penalties by the Porte is more difficult to comprehend, because of the widespread corruption which affected the appointment of the princes.

All these matters were specific for the relations between the Porte and Wallachia/Moldavia all the way since the 16th centuries, as Viorel Panaite showed. But I think that the vast amount of evidence for the 18th century is not just due to the better preservation of documents from this century, but also to intensified efforts undertaken by the Porte in order to adapt to new political and economical difficulties. This observation is in tune with those made by Karen Barkey regarding the general historiographical developments concerning the Ottoman Empire:

As a rethinking of the Ottoman social order has unfolded, many studies have focused on reconstructing the provincial perspective in the empire, focusing on state-provincial relations in many different regions to understand the dynamics

of eighteenth-century rule. In these studies, we see *the emergence of a novel picture, in that many of them show how involved the state was with control of the provinces. The central state was active in controlling its governors, the local notables, and the various Janissary corps in the provinces* (my emphasis). (Barkey, 2008, p. 199)

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