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THE IMAGE OF THE OTTOMAN SULTAN - BETWEEN ENEMY AND PROTECTOR

Düşman ve Koruyucu Arasında Osmanlı Sultanının İmaji

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Abstract: Vassals of the Devlet-i Aliyye-i Osmaniyye from the mid-fifteenth century until 1878, the Romanians were forced to define their own attitude towards the Ottoman sultanate, the core of the state and the source of the power. This paper proposes that while Moldavian initially demonized and Ottomans and their rule, their attitude changed during the reign of Suleyman the Magnificent and they were integrated in the Ottoman political system.

Key Words: Romania, Moldavia, Ottoman Empire, Medieval, Historiography

Özet: On beşinci yüzyılın ortalarından 1878 yılına kadar Osmanlı Devleti hâkimiyetinde kalan Romanyalılar Osmanlı sultanına olan yaklaşımlarını belirlemek zorunda kalmışlardı. Bu makale Romanyalıların ilk önce Osmanlı hâkimiyetini çok kötü olarak gördüklerini ancak Kanuni Sultan Süleyman devrinden itibaren bu yaklaşımın değişerek Osmanlı hâkimiyetini benimsediklerini tespit etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Romanya, Moldova, Osmanlı Devleti, Orta Çağ, Tarih Yazımı

1. Introduction

The first historical writings appeared in the Romanian¹ cultural area in the 15th century. They were tributary to the patterns borrowed from Byzantium through the Slaves (Bulgarians, Serbs) from south of Danube River. The first chronicle *Letopisețul anonim* [*The Anonymous Chronicle*]² was composed in Moldavia in the late 15th century at the court of the Ștefan cel Mare (Stephen the Great). This was the prototype for all the chronicles written from the late 15th century to the mid-16th century: *Letopisețul moldo-german* [*The Moldavian-German Chronicle*]³, *Letopisețul de la Putna* [*The Chronicle of Putna, with two versions*]⁴, *Letopisețul moldo-polon* [*The Moldavian-Polish Chronicle*]⁵, *Letopisețul moldo-rus* [*The Moldavian-*

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¹ The modern Romanian state was created by unifying Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania. In this paper we will use the terms Moldavians and Romanians as synonymous.

² Discovered and published by Ioan Bogdan in the book *Cronici atingătoare de istoria Românilor* [*Chronicles concerning the history of Romanians*], Bucharest, 1895. The chronicle relates the history of Moldavia from 1359 until 1507.

³ Discovered and first published in Poland by Olgierd Gorka in 1931. In Romania was published by I. C. Chițimia, *Cronica lui Ștefan cel Mare. Versiunea germană a lui Schedel* [*The Chronicle of Stephen the Great. The German version of Schedel*], Bucharest, 1942. The chronicler tells the story of the Stephen the Great from 1457 to 1499.

⁴ *The Chronicle of Putna no.1* was discovered and published by Ioan Bogdan, *Vechile cronici moldovenești pînă la Urechia* [*The old Moldavian Chronicles until Ureche*], Bucharest, 1891. *The Chronicle of Putna no.2* and *The Romanian translation of the Chronicle of Putna* were published by Ioan Bogdan, *Letopisețul lui Azarie*, Bucharest, 1909. The three chronicles recount the events of the Moldavian history between 1359 and 1518 (1526 Punta no.1).

⁵ It is a book written in Polish language, about the Moldavian history from 1352 to 1564. Since 1844 have been published several editions.

Russian Chronicle].⁶ *Cronica sârbo-moldovenească* [*The Serbian-Moldavian Chronicle*] it is unique in the Romanian historiography. It was written using Serbian chronicles of which whole passages were transcribed. These chronicles were continued by the first historians whose names are known to us: Macarie⁷, Eftimie⁸ and Azarie⁹, all three high representatives of the Moldavian orthodox church and very close to the princes of their time (Petru Rareș, Alexandru Lăpușeanu and Petru Șchiopul).¹⁰ In the first part of the 17th century the Romanian language began to be used in the official documents, in the private ones and in the historical and religious literature. Grigore Ureche was the first historian who wrote a chronicle in Romanian language. He was followed by Miron Costin and Ion Neculce, also great representatives of the premodern Romanian historiography.

The events recorded in the Moldavian chronicles expressed the view of the political and religious elite over internal and external political and military happenings, but they can also be used to study domestic and foreign institutions and customs. Most of the information was related to the Ottoman Empire, a situation explained by its influence on the political, economic and military fields of Romanian society. The core of the Ottoman state, the source of the power and legitimacy, was the sultanate. The sultan was responsible for the proper running of the state. According to the oriental doctrine, the sultan was the owner of all the land, his legal power was expressed by the secular law, named *kânûn*. Traditionally, he was the chief of the army, his command being legitimized through military conquests. He was also the leader of the Divan and the “shepherd” of his subjects. This paper aimed to assess how the sultanate and his representatives were perceived by the Moldavians in a time when the Ottoman military and political pressure had become overwhelming.

2. The Titles Attributed to the Sultans

The Slavonic- Romanian chronicles of the 15th and 16th centuries refer to the Ottoman state leaders calling them *царь Творский*, which was translated into Romanian with the terms *czar* (*țar*) or emperor (*împărat*).

The term *sultan* meant the holder of power and was associated with the ideas of sovereignty and power.¹¹ The word was taken into Romanian language since the 16th century, when the political relations between Moldavians and Ottomans were very intense. Along with the word *sultan* the Romanian language has taken into many other terms, all designating Ottomans institutions and realities: *vizier* (*vizir*), *ağa* (*agă*), *bey* (*bei*), *harâc* (*haraci*), *re'âyâ* (*raia*), *sipâhi* (*spahiu*).¹² In the 15th and the 16th centuries only two of the Romanian-Slavonic chronicles used the concept *sultan*. The first, *The Moldavian-Polish Chronicle*, was written by a Polish mercenary who lived in Moldavia, and the second, *The Serbian-Moldavian Chronicle*, was a compilation of similar works written south of Danube River.

⁶ Published with a Romanian translation by Ioan Bogdan, *Vechile cronici*. It is the Russian translation of the Chronicle of Putna.

⁷ Published two times and with two different translations by Ioan Bogdan in *Vechile cronici*, and *Letopisețul lui Azarie*. The chronicler recounts the events between 1504 and 1551.

⁸ Published by Ioan Bogdan, *Vechile cronici*... The chronicle narrates the events from 1541 until 1554.

⁹ Also published by Ioan Bogdan, *Letopisețul lui Azarie*. Tells the events of the Moldavian history between 1551 and 1574.

¹⁰ In 1959, P. P. Panaitescu has published a new edition of these chronicles. The new and better translations and the solving of a few chronology problems make this edition the main tool of the study of the old Romanian historiography. P. P. Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din sec. XV-XVI publicate de Ion Bogdan* [*The Slavonic-Romanian Chronicles XV-XVI centuries published by Ion Bogdan*], The Academy Publishing House, Bucharest, 1959.

¹¹ *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W. P. Heinrichs și G. Lecomte (editors), volume VIII, Leiden-E.J.Brill Publishing House, 1995, p. 1000-1001.

¹² Emil Suci, *101 cuvinte de origine turcă* [*101 words of Turkish origin*], Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2011, p. 24.

In some chronicles the Sultan Mehmed II is mentioned with the title *bei*. Beğ or bey, meaning master, is attested in the Turkic world since the 8th century, in the Orkhon inscriptions. The title was used by the rulers of the Anatolian beyliks, including the first Ottoman commandants Osman I and his son, Orhan I.¹³ In the Muslim world, this concept does not correspond to a defined function(s), but has various uses determined by a specific administrative or social context. It is generally an honorific title, reserved for dignitaries, but it can also be used with the following meanings: chief, master, lord, husband, big brother.¹⁴ In the Ottoman world, this title was synonymous with *amīr* and was employed by the pashas, the senior civil and military officials, the chieftains of the nomadic tribes and the sons of the aristocrats. The 15th-16th centuries chronicles used the title referring only to Mehmed II: “Mahmet beg, the Turkish emperor”.¹⁵

Emir is another title seldom used by the chroniclers. It appears three times, one time related with the sultan Bayezid I, and two times when Macarie associated the title with the sultan Suleiman the Magnificent.¹⁶ Emir is the Arabic equivalent of the Turkic word bey (beğ).¹⁷ In the Arab world *amīr al-Mu'minīn* is a concept associated with the military command (*amr*), which was exercised especially in expeditions against the infidels.¹⁸ The takeover of this title by a Sunni sovereign had a major political and religious meaning, indicating the intention to claim the caliphate. The title was adopted occasionally by the Ottoman rulers, but this did not mean, at least officially, a claim for the caliphate, even after the occupation of Egypt by Selim I (1517).¹⁹ The word *emir* enters into Romanian language in the 16th century, by the mediation of Serbian language.²⁰ The derivative concept *emirate* was adopted two or three centuries later, following the French influence.

We note that in the Moldavian chronicles, there was not a single rule regarding the use of those terms cited above. The use of a title is simply random.

3. The Ottoman Sultan: Enemy and Protector

In the texts of the Moldavian chroniclers of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th centuries, the Ottoman sultans' names and facts are invoked and evoked without comment. They are pagans and the enemies of the Orthodox faith who lead the infidels' army in combat.

By the mid-16th century, starting with the works of Macarie, Eftimie and Azarie, this perception became complicated. Thenceforth two very different images were forced to coexist. On the one hand a virulent attitude rejecting the religious otherness of an enemy who was more dangerous since he had an impressive military and political force that Moldavia was not able to effectively oppose, and on the other hand we notice an attempt to make the Ottoman suzerainty bearable for the Romanian medieval mentality.

“The moment 1538” signify the Moldavian campaign of Suleiman I which resulted in the removal of Petru Rareș from the throne of Moldavia and the bringing of a sultan's protégé (Ștefan Lăcustă) as ruler. From an Ottoman point of view, this campaign (*Gazây-i Kara*

¹³ Selcuk Aksin Somel, *Historical Dictionary of the Ottoman Empire*, Scarecrow Press, Maryland, 2003, p. 43.

¹⁴ *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, volume I, 1995, p. 1193.

¹⁵ *Letopiseșul de la Putna nr.1 [The Chronicle of Putna no.1]*, p. 50; *Letopiseșul de la Putna nr. 2 [The Chronicle of Putna no.2]*, p. 63; *Traducerea românească a Letopiseșului de la Putna [The Romanian translation of the Chronicle of Putna]*, p. 72; *Cronica sârbo-moldovenească [The Serbian-Moldavian Chronicle]*, p. 192 in P. P. Panaitescu, *ibid.*

¹⁶ *Cronica sârbo-moldovenească [The Serbian-Moldavian Chronicle]*, p. 192; *Cronica lui Macarie [Macarie's Chronicle]*, p. 103-104 in P. P. Panaitescu, *ibid.*

¹⁷ Robert Mantran (editor), *Istoria Imperiului Otoman [History of the Ottoman Empire]*, All Publishing House, Bucharest, 2001, p. 23.

¹⁸ *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, volume I, 1991, p. 458.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Emil Suciu, *ibid.*, p. 33.

Boğdan) was considered *gazâ* (a holy expedition), a part of the holy war *djihâd*, thus the sultan had claimed the conquest of Moldavia by sword and had released a letter (*Fetihnâme-i Kara Boğdan*) that announced his victory. This event had generated a number of viewpoints in the Romanian historiography. Mihai Maxim says that the sultan's allegation was abusive.²¹ The same idea was expressed by Ștefan Gorovei who had minimized the campaign's effects on the international political and legal status of Moldavia.²² Tahsin Gemil argues that the document emitted by the sultan when Ștefan Lăcustă had taken over the Moldavian throne was not an *'ahdnâme*, but a *berât*, an appointment diploma like those used by the sultans when nominated high officials of the Ottoman administration.²³ In completion to the previous idea, Viorel Panaite states that the sultans invoked the right of the sword to increase their involvement in the internal affairs of Moldavia.²⁴

The conquest by the sword also supposed the right of the Ottoman army to plunder the country and enslave its inhabitants. On this point our sources provide contradictory information: the Moldavian-Polish Chronicle says that Moldavia had not suffered pillage during this expedition, while Macarie paints the picture of a hell on earth, with the Ottoman soldiers characterized as the agents of the evil being. We wonder why the two accounts of the same event are so different. Macarie was an eyewitness to these events, but as a person close to the ruling family he may be suspected of presenting the Ottoman actions in a bad light so as to provide Petru Rareș mitigating circumstances. On the other hand the anonymous author of the Moldavian-Polish Chronicle is a Pole who lived in Moldavia in the second half of the 16th century. About him we can propose two hypotheses. First, he had written at some distance from the events and perhaps not witnessed directly the happenings that occurred in the year 1538, although the 16 years that separate the end of the first reign of Petru Rareș from the writing of the chronicle are not as many years as to cancel the memory of such a great campaign, and if we assess the whole text, we see that the author is a very knowledgeable man. If it had been destruction and pillages, he would have known for sure. A second hypothesis is based on his ethnic origin: from the point of view of a Pole (and a soldier), the admission of the Ottoman conquest by sword and the subsequent robberies signified cancelling any claims of his country over Moldavia.

Until 1538 the princes of Moldavia had paid their tribute (*harâc*) and had collaborated militarily with the Ottomans. Ștefan cel Mare (Stephen the Great) was the first Moldavian ruler who received military aid from the Ottomans against the Polish in the battle of Codrii Cosminului (1497). *The Anonymous Chronicle* recorded the capture of six Polish spies of which three were sent to Istanbul and three were hanged by the Moldavian ruler.²⁵ This episode and the participation of 2,000 Turkish soldiers in the battle against the Polish king was, from an ideological point of view, collaboration with the pagans, with the enemies of the Christian world. But, from the records, the chroniclers did not seem to be annoyed by this situation. One wonders why? We believe that by the late 15th century, the Moldavian prince had assumed a part of his obligations: the payment of the tribute, the delivery of information and military collaboration. After 1538, two subsequent events reported in chronicles came to confirm that the sultans had enforced their sovereignty over Moldavia and the Moldavians had assumed entirely the status of tributaries. Immediately after returning to the throne, Petru Rareș, helped by the

²¹ Mihai Maxim, *Țările Române și Înalta Poartă. Cadru juridic al relațiilor româno-otomane în Evul Mediu [The Romanian Principalities and the Turks. The legal framework of the Romanian-Ottoman relations in the Middle Ages]*, The Encyclopaedia Publishing House, 1993, p. 245.

²² Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Petru Rareș*, The Military Publishing House, Bucharest, 1982, p. 158.

²³ Tahsin Gemil, *Agresiunea otomano-tătaro-poloneză [The Ottoman-Tatar-Polish aggression]*, in Leon Șimanschi (editor), *Petru Rareș*, The Academy Publishing House, Bucharest, 1978, p. 158

²⁴ Viorel Panaite, *Pace, război și comerț în Islam. Țările Române și dreptul otoman al popoarelor (secolele XV-XVII) [Peace, War and Trade in Islam. The Romanian Principalities and the Ottoman Law of Nations. 15th – 17th centuries]*, All Publishing House, Bucharest, 1997, p. 410.

²⁵ *Letopisețul anonim al Moldovei [The Anonymous Chronicle of Moldavia]*, in P. P. Panaitescu, *ibid.*, p. 20.

prince of Wallachia and Turkish troops from the border area, invaded Transylvania and had taken prisoner its prince, Ștefan Mailat, and had send him to Istanbul.²⁶ Although not stated directly by the chronicler Eftimie that intervention in Transylvania took place at the behest of the sultan Suleiman I, according with the military obligations assumed by the vassal prince of Moldavia. In his chronicle Grigore Ureche was more nuanced in recording the Moldavian-Ottoman relationships at the mid-16th century. Relating the campaigns from the Petru Rareș first reign in Transylvania, Grigore Ureche showed that the Moldavian prince was acting on his own initiative, but after his return to the throne in 1541 the Transylvanian expedition took place at the direct order of the sultan: "... *the imperial command came to Petru voivode from the sultan Suleiman, and said to go against the Hungarians and catch Mailat, voivode of Transylvania*".²⁷ The chronicler used the word *hocim*, the Romanian adaptation of the Turkish *hüküm*, which meant imperial command.

The second event which certifies a high degree of Ottoman control over the Moldavian princes was narrated by the chronicler Eftimie. In May 1544 the son of Petru Rareș, Iliăș, was sent to Istanbul, at the Ottoman court, an event which caused commotion at Suceava.²⁸ This story is unique in the Moldavian chronicles, because before and after 1544 we found no other notes on sending a prince to be the hostage of the sultan. Since 1476, sultan Mehmed II had required of the Moldavian ruler Ștefan cel Mare (Stephen the Great) the fulfilment of the vassal obligations: the payment of the tribute and sending a son to Istanbul. If the request would have been complied with since the reign of Ștefan cel Mare (Stephen the Great) or his successors (Bogdan III, Ștefan cel Tânăr "the Young"), why had the departure of Iliăș Rareș caused such a stir? The fact that after 1544 we can find similar information, about any other Moldavian prince who travelled to Istanbul to ensure compliance with the vassal obligations of his country, makes us believe that, after 1538, the Moldavians were quick to adapt the new balance of forces and the presence of a Moldavian prince at the Ottoman court it has become a routine that needed no entry in the chronicles.

From Macarie's point of view the Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent is "*thrice cursed emperor*", "*the barbarian emperor*" and "*the great and proud emperor of the Turks*".²⁹ A monk and a high official of the Moldavian church, Macarie ascribed to the Ottoman ruler one of the seven deadly sins which the Christian faith condemns: pride, which is considered the most important and serious of all because it is the source of evil. It is the deadliest sin which results in eternal damnation.

The word barbarian evoked a traditional image of the otherness; it entered the Europeans' vocabulary since Greek Antiquity and was used to designate foreigners as a community. Over time this concept developed the meaning "uncivilized". Etymologically, "barbarian" evokes stuttering or a speech difficult to understand; the sound "b" is related to "slurred speech".³⁰ The word was used only by Macarie, who attached this image to the Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent: "*the barbarian emperor*" (*împăratul varvar*) and "*the barbarian soul*" (*sufletul barbar*).³¹ We notice a significant change of attitude in Macarie's chronicle when he recorded the events related with the second reign of Petru Rareș. As he reached Constantinople, the ruler of Moldavia appeared before the Ottoman emperor whose trust he had won. Suleiman I was "the barbarian soul", but one who was capable of humanity, who was spreading kindness and peace.³² The chronicler does not give up the struggle for Christianity,

²⁶ *Cronica lui Eftimie [Eftimie's Chronicle]*, in P. P. Panaitescu, *ibid.*, p. 117.

²⁷ Grigore Ureche, *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei [The Chronicle of Moldavia]*, edited by P. P. Panaitescu, State publishing house for literature and art, Bucharest, 1955, p. 153.

²⁸ *Cronica lui Eftimie [Eftimie's Chronicle]*, in P. P. Panaitescu, *ibid.*, p. 118.

²⁹ *Cronica lui Macarie [Macarie's Chronicle]*, in P. P. Panaitescu, *ibid.*, p. 94, 101-102.

³⁰ Maurice Sartre, „Vous avez dit Barbare?”, *L'Histoire*, no. 327, January 2008, p. 38.

³¹ *Cronica lui Macarie [Macarie's Chronicle]*, in P. P. Panaitescu, *ibid.*, p. 101.

³² *Ibid.*

which had become an ideal, but the political and military superiority of the Ottomans forced the acceptance of their hegemony and imposed the necessity of an official explanation to make it bearable not only for the Moldavian people, but also for their elite.³³ The sultan had become a benchmark for what legitimacy meant, mundane and divine order as God has instituted, an instrument through which the divine will be enforced. With the takeover of the Byzantine capital, in 1453, the Ottomans inherited the imperial tradition of the Greek emperors.³⁴ The chronicles that Macarie, Efitimie and Azarie had written synthesized this perception of the sultan as a legitimate descendant of the *basileis* in the concept *самодръжесць* (*αὐτοκράτωρ*, in Greek; the only master), which was attached to the Suleiman I's name.³⁵ From the 14th century this concept was a part of the title of the Wallachian and Moldavian princes. This word had a major significance, because it meant independence from outside and internal full authority over his subjects. We note that starting with 1538, from an ideologically point of view a fundamental attribute of central political authority in the Romanian countries (Wallachia and Moldavia) is related to the Ottoman sultans.

In 1541 Petru Rareș was able to regain the sultan's favour and with it his throne. In the Chronicle of Macarie the sultan's motivations for the appointment of Petru Rareș as ruler in Moldavia were all ethical: the beautiful character and the ability to rule of the Moldavian prince awakened both the compassion and the admiration of the powerful Ottoman ruler and led him to restore his throne and his country.³⁶ Writing almost one hundred years later, Grigore Ureche, a chronicler without the personal and emotional involvement noticeable in Macarie's book, had given us a realistic analysis of the reasons that led Suleiman I to restore Petru Rareș as prince of Moldavia. First, Ureche spoke about "Turkish greed", the sultan and his great vizier, Lütü Pasha, received great amounts of money and other gifts in return for forgiveness and the Moldavian throne. Second, the same chronicler recalled another reason for the events that led to the second rule of Petru Rareș. He said that the emperor "could not settle the country".³⁷ The killing of Ștefan Lăcustă in December 1540 and the election of a new ruler, Alexandru Cornea, by the boyars were actions that directly defied the sultan and his imperial will. "The settlement of the country" had meant for the Moldavians and also for their suzerain power the assurance of the internal and external stability. This was the desire of the whole Moldavian society as well as of Suleiman I who needed peace on the northern border of the empire, especially in the context of the forthcoming expedition in Hungary. We argue that the phrase "the settlement of the country" is the equivalent of the Ottoman concept *himâyet* which meant the sultan's protection for his vassals and subjects. In the work of Grigore Ureche Suleiman I emerged as a peacemaker and protector of the country, the guarantor of the stability and the internal order.

4. Conclusion

From the mid-15th century to the 1538-1541, the Moldavians challenged Ottoman power, trying to maintain their independence. The struggle on the battlefield was reinforced by ideological war which stressed the idea of the Christians fighting the awful pagans. The Sultans as representatives of the Ottoman state and heads of the army embodied all the evils assigned to the Turkish people in the Wallachian and Moldavian mentality. This kind of approach

³³ Mihai Berza, "Turcs, Empire Ottoman et relations roumano turques dans l'historiographie moldave des XVe-XVIIe siècles", *Revue des études sud-est européennes*, volume X, 1972, no 3, p. 606.

³⁴ Nicolae Iorga, *La place des Roumains dans l'histoire universelle*, volume II, Albatros Publishing House, Bucharest, 1998, p. 98.

³⁵ The Greek translation of the Latin word *Imperator*. In the Byzantine era the military sense was diminished, the main interpretation focusing on the idea of a monarchy that was politically autonomous. The title appeared on coins in the 10th century. Alexander P. Kazhdan (editor), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, volume 2, University Press, New York, 1991, p. 235. See also Andrei Pippidi, *Tradiția politică bizantină în Țările Române în secolele XVI-XVIII [The Byzantine political tradition in The Romanian Principalities in the XVI-XVIII centuries]*, The Academy Publishing House, Bucharest 1983, p. 26.

³⁶ *Cronica lui Macarie [Macarie's Chronicle]*, in P. P. Panaitescu, *ibid.*, p. 102.

³⁷ Grigore Ureche, *ibid.*, p. 118.

represents the main stream of the Romanian historiography from the Middle Ages to the present day.

However, by referring to the first historical Romanian writings, we argue that in medieval Moldavian historiography the image of the Ottoman sultans was composed of two divergent elements: on one hand they were the enemies, the oppressors, the pagans, the barbarians who pillaged the country; on the other hand, from the mid-16th century to the mid-17th century, in the context of a highly unstable internal situation, the sultans became the last resort to ensure the throne of Moldavia, the safety of the country and its inhabitants. The turning point was the year 1538 when the Sultan Suleiman I imposed his authority without any possibility of a further challenge. The Moldavians blended their own ideas about the duties of the prince with the Ottoman concept of *himâyet* and transferred to the sultans the ultimate power of assuring the stability and peace in the country. We argue that this change in the way that Moldavians perceived the Ottoman ruler marks the beginning of their integration in the Ottoman political network. We cannot maintain the widely spread idea in Romanian historiography that the Moldavian (and the Wallachian) political and cultural elite was struggling against the Ottoman system throughout those past centuries trying to elude it. They were part of it and tried to use it to their advantage from the mid-16th to the early 19th century and they even admired, feared or despised the Ottomans and, occasionally, made fun of their weaknesses. Further research might investigate the 18th and 19th centuries and the duality and duplicity of the Romanian elite: how to claim national rights but not really breaking with the Ottoman establishment.

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