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Using Luxury and Fashion for Constructing
a Social Status

The Case of Ianache Văcărescu

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USING LUXURY AND FASHION FOR CONSTRUCTING A SOCIAL STATUS: IANACHE VĂCĂRESCU'S CASE*

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Abstract: The paper explores the intricacies of eighteenth-century cultural mediation through the eyes of Ianache Văcărescu, a high-ranking Wallachian boyar and a man of letters, entrusted in 1782 with the sensitive task of bringing the fugitive sons of the incumbent Wallachian ruler back from the Habsburg court in Vienna. Analyzing Văcărescu's account of the mission, I examine the nexus of luxury consumption, court civility, and social distinction and the ways they were experienced and also constructed the differences between European and Ottomans elite civility and cultural boundaries. In composing *The History of the Most Powerful Ottoman Emperors*, Ianache Văcărescu offered details about his place in a diplomatic network which spread across the Ottoman Empire and Central Europe.

In the winter of 1782, Ianache Văcărescu, grand treasurer (*vistier*) of Wallachia, set out on a secret mission to the Imperial court of Vienna. The two sons of the Phanariot prince Alexandros Ypsilantis had run away from home in search of adventure in the wondrous realms of Europe. At the time, Wallachia was under Ottoman domination, and the Prince was directly appointed by the Sultan and integrated into the Ottoman administrative system.¹ After the establishment of the Phanariot regime, princes and

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¹ For more on this, see Christine Philliou, *Biography of an Empire: Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution* (Berkeley, 2011).

boyars preferred to avoid crossing the border to the West, although no official interdiction limiting their freedom of movement was ever pronounced. In other words, the roads and journeys of the political elite were directed for a century towards the Ottoman Empire. Brașov and Sibiu, in Habsburg Transylvania, were only temporary refuges in times of war, where boyar families might find a safe haven for a matter of months, or on occasion years, depending on the duration of the war and military occupation.

I am interested in how Ianache Văcărescu, in his capacity as a princely officeholder, Ottoman subject, and diplomatic agent, mediated between Istanbul and Vienna, using the knowledge and abilities that he had accumulated in the course of his meetings and travels. Was Ianache Văcărescu what Natalie Rothman calls a “trans-imperial subject”?² In other words, can he be seen as a social actor who used his linguistic knowledge and his diplomatic relations to straddle and traverse the imperial borders? The advantage for such an enquiry lies in the fact that Ianache Văcărescu wrote about his diplomatic experiences, describing the journeys in which he was involved, and offering details about the people he met. All these details are to be found in his text *The History of the Most Powerful Ottoman Emperors*, which long remained in manuscript.³ Although this purports to be a chronicle of the sultans and viziers who built the Ottoman Empire, in fact it proves to be an autobiographical journal, at least in its second part. As a model, he had the history written by Dimitrie Cantemir, *Historia incrementorum atque decrementorum Aulae Othomanicae* (1716) which he used and quoted.⁴

² E. Natalie Rothman, ‘Dragomans and “Turkish Literature”’: The Making of a Field of Inquiry’, in *Oriente Moderno* 93 (2013): 394.

³ The full title of the history is: ‘*Istorie a prea puternicilor împărați otomani. Adunată și alcătuită pă scurt de dumnealui Ianache Văcărescu dicheofilaz a bisericii cei mari a Răsăritului și spătar al Valahiei. Începându-se în vremea prea puternicului împărat sultan Abdul Hamid I la văleatul bijretu 1202 și mântuiroriiu 1788 în Nicopoli a Bulgariei. Și s-a săvârșit în zilele prea puternicului împărat sultan Selim III la văleat 1794 și 1208 în luna lui Șeval*’ (History of the most powerful Ottoman emperors, gathered and put together in brief by Mr. Ianache Văcărescu, *dikeofilax* of the great Church of the East and *spătar* of Wallachia. Begun in the time of the most powerful emperor Sultan Abdul Hamid I, the Year of the Hijra 1202 and of the Savior 1788, in Nicopolis in Bulgaria. And it was finished in the days of the most powerful emperor Sultan Selim III in the year 1794 and 1208 in the month of Shawwal.) For this study, I have used the most recent critical edition of the works of Ianache Văcărescu. See Ianache Văcărescu, *Istoria Othomanească*, edition by Gabriel Ștrempel (București, 2001).

⁴ Dimitrie Cantemir’s work was first printed in English translation as *History of the Growth and Decay of the Ottoman Empire*, London, 1734, then in French, *Histoire de l’Empire Othoman où se voyent les causes de son Aggrandissement et de sa Decadence par S.A.A. Demetrius Cantemir, Prince de*

While the scholarship on the South-Eastern Europe and the Ottoman Empire as seen through the prism of travel narratives is abundant,⁵ fewer studies have investigated the journeys of Ottoman subjects in the direction of “Europe.”⁶ The journal of Ianache Văcărescu is all the more important in that it so far it seems to be the only one of its kind. I would like to approach the text through the intermediary of the author, and to analyze his interaction with the “others,” “Germans” or “Europeans” as he calls them. How does he see “Europe,” and what does he retain from this “trans-imperial scholarly sociability”?⁷

LIFE AND FAMILY BACKGROUND

Ianache Văcărescu (1740–1797) came from an old Wallachian boyar family, whose existence is recorded already in the sixteenth century. His father, Ștefan Văcărescu, held an important office in the princely council, that of grand *vornic*.⁸ At the same time, he was a man with an interest in literary pursuits, which contributed very much to the education of his son. In a period in which education did not have much importance for political advancement, Ianache Văcărescu seems something of a *rara avis*. Boyars had access to important offices in the princely council according to their rank and the clientelary networks to which they belonged. To change this it took the intervention of the Phanariot prince Constantinos Mavrocordatos, who ordered that no boyar’s son

Moldavie, Paris, 1743, and German, *Geschichte des osmanischen Reichs nach seinem Anwachs und Abnehmen, beschrieben von Demetrie Kantemir*, Hamburg, 1745. For Dimitrie Cantemir see Ștefan Lemny, ‘Approches roumaines de l’histoire ottomane’, *Dix-huitième siècle* vol. 28 (1996), 23-36; See also Ștefan Lemny, *Les Cantemir: l’aventure européenne d’une famille princière au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 2009).

⁵ Wendy Bracewell and Alex Drace-Francis (eds.), *Under Eastern Eyes: A Comparative Introduction to East European Travel Writing on Europe* (Budapest, 2008).

⁶ Fatma Müge Göçek, *East Encounters West: France and the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1987); Robert Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality: The World of Evliya Celebi* (Leiden, 2006); Alex Drace-Francis, *The Traditions of Invention: Romanian Ethnic and Social Stereotypes in Historical Context* (Leiden: 2013), 135-158; Caspar Hillebrand, “An Overview of Their Historical Development and a Commented Researchers’ List”, in *Venturing Beyond Borders – Reflections on Genre, Function and Boundaries in Middle Eastern Travel Writing* eds. Bekim Agai, Olcay Akyıldız, Caspar Hillebrand (Würzburg, 2013), 53-76.

⁷ Natalie Rothman, “Dragomans,” 394.

⁸ Cornel Cârstoiu, *Ianache Văcărescu. Viața și opera* (București, 1974), 36–38. The post of Grand Vornic was equivalent to that of a minister of justice.

could hold office unless he went to school and learned Greek.⁹ It is probably that this was when Ianache Văcărescu, who was a child at the time, began his education, stimulated by the “Enlightenment” ideas of this Phanariot prince, who would think about himself to be an “enlightened person.” About the education of this important figure, much has been written and countless hypotheses have been put forward.¹⁰ We shall not go into detail here, but merely recall an episode that was to contribute to



Figure 1. Ștefan Văcărescu’s seal. BAR, Fond Documente Istorice, LXXX/41, 21 July 1758.

his later writings. In 1763, his father, Grand Vornic Ștefan Văcărescu, was poisoned by the Phanariot prince Constantinos Cehan Racovitza, while at his country house in Valea Orlei (Prahova county).¹¹ Ștefan’s son, Ianache Văcărescu, took refuge in Constantinople, seeking help lest he suffer the same fate. Through his marriage to Elena Rizo, Ianache had an important connection in the Ottoman Empire, in the person of his father-in-law Iacovaki Rizo, an office-holder and a diplomatic representative of the Prince at the Porte (*kapıkâhaya*) with important contacts in the world of the Phanar.¹² According to Ianache’s own account,¹³ his stay in Constantinople was a profitable one: for more than a year he studied Turkish in the company of the secretary of the Imperial divan, Halil Hamid, who was to become Vizier in 1783. The family archive, with its maps, books, treatises, grammars, and dictionaries testifies to Ianache’s linguistic ability. He had a good knowledge of Greek, Turkish, French, Italian, and German, and made use of these skills in his political and diplomatic ascent to become a key figure in negotiations

⁹ See the anaphora of 9 May 1746: V.A. Urechia, *Istoria Școalelor* (București, 1892), I, 14.

¹⁰ Cârstoriu, *Văcărescu*, 52–56; Văcărescu, *Istoria Othomanicească*, XIX–XXII.

¹¹ Alexandru Odobescu, *Opere II* (București, 1967), 53.

¹² Frequently mentioned in diplomatic correspondence, Iacovaki Rizo was a very influential figure, and part of a network that covered the European embassies in Constantinople. See Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor* (București, 1897), VII, 20, 134, 172, 269, 280, 291; *Ibidem* (București, 1899), IX/2, 113.

¹³ Văcărescu, *Istoria Othomanicească*, 219.

between the Phanariot princes, the Sublime Porte, the Russian Empire, and the Habsburg Empire.¹⁴

Ianache was, in fact, a link in a vast network of family and patronage relations, made up of diplomats, dragomans, princes, and diplomatic agents, which linked Istanbul, via Bucharest, with Vienna, and, in fact, with Europe. He was married three times, his fathers-in-law being dragomans and princes, holders of important offices at the court of the Sultan and the Patriarchate of Constantinople.¹⁵ He himself held high offices in the Wallachian state (grand *spătar*,¹⁶ grand treasurer, grand *ban*¹⁷), being all the time a main member of the princely council (*divan*).

CIRCULATION OF OBJECTS, CIRCULATION OF PEOPLE: ORIENTAL COFFEE VS. EUROPEAN COFFEE

Around 1780, the boyar elite was completely oriental: costume, behaviour, cuisine, and sociability were all strongly influenced by Constantinople and oriental fashions. The predominance of the oriental model is confirmed by travelers who arrived in the Romanian capitals. Fashion, imposed by the political regime, proves to be an indispensable form of subjection in the context of the Phanariot rule. At the same time, through its opulence and luxury, this oriental costume serves a process of self-fashioning.¹⁸ Ianache Văcărescu helps us to understand this process of construction of

¹⁴ In addition to this history of the Ottoman Empire, Ianache Văcărescu wrote the first grammar of the Romanian language, printed simultaneously in Râmnic and in Vienna (1787), compiled bilingual German–Romanian and Turkish–Romanian dictionaries, and wrote poetry.

¹⁵ After the death of his first wife (2 September 1780), Ianache was married a second time, on 26 December 1781, to Elena Caradja, the daughter of Iordaki Caradja, *tercuman* (interpreter) at the court of Constantinople. He was unlucky this time too, as Elena died seven months later, and he was married a third time in September 1782 to Ekaterina Caradja, the daughter of the Phanariote prince Nicholas Caradja. See Cârstoiu, *Văcărescu*, 72.

¹⁶ Literally sword-bearer, the high office-holder in charge of the armed forces and the police.

¹⁷ Governor of Oltenia, the foremost office in the princely council.

¹⁸ For the Romanian boyar class and the construction of an identity through luxury and fashion, see Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu, “Constructing a New Identity: Romanian Aristocrats between Oriental Heritage and Western Prestige (1780-1866),” in *From Traditional Attire to Modern Dress: Modes of Identification, Modes of Recognition in the Balkans (XVIth–XXth Centuries)* ed. Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu (Newcastle: 2011), 102-127. In recent research, the term ‘Ottomanization’ has been proposed to explain the rapid adoption of Ottoman costume by the Christian population on the borders of the Ottoman Empire. See Michał 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.

the self, which may be reconstituted both through the intermediary of his writings of an autobiographical character and, visually, with the help of his portraits.¹⁹

Our information about the daily life of holders of high office in the Phanariot period, about the organization of their mansions or their interior decoration and furniture, is relatively scanty, especially for the eighteenth century. Because of the wealth of details regarding material culture and luxury consumption that it offers, the Văcărescu family archive and library have become an essential source for a reconstruction of the way of life of a Phanariot high office-holder.



Figure 2. Anton Chladek, Ianache Văcărescu, Courtesy of MNAR, Bucharest.

Ianache Văcărescu's In Bucharest mansion was situated in the vicinity of the princely court and was organized according to the Ottoman model.²⁰ Here is a description of his house in Bucharest, made by Bishop Grigore of Argeș, who was invited to visit him shortly before the great festival of Easter, at the time when he occupied the office of Grand Spătar²¹:

“When I approached the main gate, suddenly I stopped; I saw a multitude of men armed with all sorts of weapons, *seimeni*, *slujitori*, arnauts, pandurs²²; various cries could be heard, at the same time trumpets, shawms, and drums resounding, a multitude of horses, a multitude of stallions neighing, *polcovnici*²³, horses with saddlecloths down to the ground, shining with gold and silver. I squeezed as best I could as far as the stair door; there I met others, armed with long spears and thick clubs, with muskets, pistols; [though] very scared, I stepped forward, seeing no one who would stop me; I arrived at the door of the great hall; there my sight was pierced by the light of the flames of braziers of burnished red

¹⁹ See his portraits painted by Anton Chladek.

²⁰ For the manner in which the house of a Turkish pasha was organized, see the interesting analysis made by Hedda Reindl-Kiel, “The Must-Haves of a Grand Vizier: Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Pasha’s Luxury Assets,” in *Sonderdruck aus: Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, eds. Michael Jursa, Markus Köhbach, Rüdiger Lohker, and Stephan Procházka (Wien, 2016), 179–221.

²¹ Literally sword-bearer, the high office-holder in charge of the armed forces and the police.

²² The terms denote soldiers of various categories.

²³ Army officers.

brass; a pleasant sound of violins, panpipes, tamburs, mixed with female voices, sweet and penetrating, charmed me and it seemed as if it bound my hands and feet in irons; I no longer know how all at once I found myself rapidly awakened and, at high speed, passing all that I have described, no sooner had I reached the main gate of the courtyard than I gave thanks to God, for I knew I had escaped from such temptations and was free.”²⁴

In this fortress worthy of a great pasha, Ienăchiță Văcărescu lived according to the Ottoman model that he knew so well. Clothes, furniture, and jewellery were brought by Greek merchants from all over the Ottoman Empire so that he might follow the example of the people he admired. Pashas, viziers, dragomans made up the network in which he had made a place for himself, the people with whom he spent time in exile or engaged in diplomatic negotiations. As such, his model was an ottoman one, and his mansion in Bucharest was decorated and populated with objects and characters that came close to the idea of an ottoman court.²⁵

His journeys, whether on diplomatic missions or simply seeking refuge in time of war, took him to Braşov, Vidin, Silistra, Nicopolis, Rhodes, Constantinople, and Vienna. People and objects would influence his lifestyle and his behaviour and would mould his thinking and his manners.

The Russo-Turkish War (1769–1774), in which he was one of the leading figures, took him on a mission and then into exile in Braşov. Here he met for the first time the young sovereign Joseph II. The meeting brought together two different social and political models, and the behavior of Văcărescu, the high office-holder, now in exile, was adapted and modeled to take account of the new context. Here is what he writes:

In this year, 1773, May, the Emperor of the Romans Joseph II, wishing to go to Galicia and Lodomeria, to the lands that he had then obtained, crossing the borders of Transylvania came to Braşov, where he stayed for three days and did us Romanian boyars who were guests there great honor, for as soon as he arrived at the mansion prepared for him, at once he sent the doctor of his

²⁴ A. Odobescu, *Opere*, II, 75-77,

²⁵ For the manner in which the house of a Turkish pasha was organized, see the interesting analysis made by Hedda Reindl-Kiel, ‘The Must-Haves of a Grand Vizier: Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Pasha’s Luxury Assets’, in Michael Jursa, Markus Köhbach, Rüdiger Lohlker, and Stephan Procházka (eds.), *Sonderdruck aus: Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, Wien, 2016, 179–221.

Imperial Majesty to us, where we were all gathered in my lodgings [...], and invited us to come the next day at ten o'clock for him to give us an audience.²⁶

The audience takes place as announced, providing Ianache with a good occasion to showcase his abilities by providing “dragoman service to the boyars in the Italian language.” A speaker of many foreign languages, but also highly proficient in the handling of the language of diplomacy, Ianache Văcărescu pushes himself into the proximity of the Emperor, who invites him to accompany him at the ball held in honor of the Wallachian boyars taking refuge in Brașov:

“Signor Văcărescu, I invite you and put you to the trouble of doing me this evening the service of an interpreter,” says the Emperor. Ianache’s answer is one befitting an experienced diplomat: “Bowing, I replied to him that this was the happiest night I had encountered in the world since I was born.” And he continues: “and so, taking him by the left arm, I was in this service and honor until an hour after midnight, allowing no boyar or lady to go without asking some question.”²⁷

His three days spent in the company of Emperor Joseph II, together with his several years of exile in Brașov (he would leave the city in September 1774) contributed to the remodeling of Ianache’s tastes and manners. On 16 July 1773, the boyar compiled a list of purchases that reflects the influence of objects and the new lifestyle on his conduct. He asks for a series of items of tableware to be procured direct from Vienna, among them: soup bowls, metal trays, dishes, spoons, forks, knives, jugs, cups,²⁸ sugar bowls, trays, plates, salt cellars, candlesticks, and candelabra, all of silver or porcelain. What give this list its significance are not the quantities involved, but the eye of the boyar, who has looked at length at the object, has been impressed, and now wishes to enroll in a trend, convinced of the validity and grandeur of the model to be followed.

²⁶ Văcărescu, *Istoria Othomanească*, 116.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, 117. The Emperor Joseph II noted (6 June 1773) this social encounter with the Romanian boyars who took refuge in Brașov: “Hernach giengen wir in die Gessellschaft zum General Eichholz so alle Boerinnen und Griechinnen eingeladen hatte. Er schinet ein alter wohlgedienter Mann zu seyn, der ziemlich gut informiret ist, von hiesigen Gegenden. Es wareb etlich und 20 Griechinnen, alle magnifique angelegt, und welche mitsammen theils spieleten, theils so sizeten, aber keine einzige konnte eine Sprache als griechischen und wallachisch. Ich redete mit den Herrn eine“. See *Călătoria împăratului Iosif al II-lea în Transilvania la 1773*, eds. Ileana Bozac and Teodor Pavel (Cluj, 2017), 629.

²⁸ The word he uses here is *căni*, denoting cups with handles and larger than the handleless Turkish *fincan*.

Nothing is left to chance, and “Europe” becomes the keyword. The metal trays must be large, slightly oval, with handles “as is usual there in Europe.” The boyar has not yet been as far as “there in Europe,” but only to Braşov, a city belonging to the Habsburg Empire at the time, where he has often been invited to dine in the houses of local notables. The objects induce another manner of serving dinner, another vision on sociability over coffee, another ceremony of aesthetic exhibition of cuisine. Thus we find very detailed requirements that imply certain gestures, a bodily self-control, certain manners, and a different type of behavior. For example, he asks that “the forks be with three prongs, that is, in the form of those of the English type.” The salt is no longer poured on the table, but in a silver salt cellar; the mustard gets a jug, and also a little spoon; the oil also has its jug, because “that is how the Europeans do it.” It would appear that, up till this date, the fork was absent from the tables of boyars in Wallachia and Moldavia.²⁹ Oriental influence, which became permanent and dominant with the establishment of the Phanariot regime, led to the loss of this object of civility to which Norbert Elias attributes a special significance in the propagation of good manners.³⁰

The same requirements are found with regard to the ritual of coffee-drinking. The boyar Ianache Văcărescu asks for “European cups and in no circumstances Turkish coffee-cups.” They should be accompanied by “a ‘proportion’ jug too for milk” and a sugar bowl from which the sugar will no longer be taken with the fingers but “as the Europeans do with tongs, who take the sugar and put it in the cup.”³¹

To understand these changes, let us consider the way in which coffee was served in a boyar salon, as experienced by the German doctor Andreas Wolf,³² around 1784:

²⁹ An analysis of dowry agreements and inventories for the period 1700–1800, finds forks present in the dowry agreements of the children of Prince Constantine Brâncoveanu (1688–1714), included in the item “12 pairs of knives, with their forks and spoons.” It cannot be said with certainty that forks were in regular use. The princely family could be an exception. After this date, however, the expression is simply: “12 pairs of silver knives with their spoons.” under the heading “Silverware.” The fork reappears in the context of the Russian military occupations of the nineteenth century. See Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu, *Patimă și desfătare. Despre lucrurile mărunte ale vieții cotidiene în societatea românească: 1750–1860* [Passion and Pleasure. On the Little Things of Everyday Life] (București, 2015), 140–147.

³⁰ Norbert Elias, *La civilisation des mœurs* (Paris, 1973), 180.

³¹ See the list in Mihai Caratașu, *Documentele Văcăreștilor* (București, 1975), 59–61.

³² Andreas Wolf was a Transylvanian Saxon, a doctor at the princely court of Moldavia. He came to Moldavia in 1780 and stayed at the court until 1783. In 1784 he was in Wallachia, returning to Moldavia in 1788–1790 and 1796–1797. He wrote *Beiträge zur einer statistisch-historischen Beschreibung des Fürstenthums Moldau* (Hermannstadt, 1805).

The master of the house claps his hands (this is a usual signal which replaces the bell used in our country), and, at once, the reception room is filled with servants. The housemaid, usually a Gypsy, brings on a silver tray a glass of fresh water, together with a pretty bowl, containing the so-called *dulceață*. This she hands over to the lady, who then serves each guest by hand. Because this is the first sign of the honors, regardless of the day or season, to refuse would signify a lack of good manners. The guest thus takes a good spoonful, and then drinks as much water after it as he desires. Meanwhile the coffee-bearer appears with his tray, on which sit the jug of coffee and the cups with their supports. The coffee is served unfiltered, and usually (prepared) without sugar, as I have seen among the Turks. The mistress of the house holds out in her hand a cup of coffee to each guest; in that moment the pipe-server approaches and offers to each in turn a pipe lit right then.³³

Coffee was an important ingredient, part of a ritual of socialization practiced both at the princely court and at the courts of the boyars. However, coffee was not offered alone, but, copying the Ottoman model, it was associated with *dulceață* (fruit conserve), sherbet, and the indispensable pipe.³⁴ Ianache Văcărescu was moving towards the Viennese model, which transformed only the coffee, by adding milk and sugar, but not the ritual of socialization.³⁵ For this “Viennese model,” he needed different objects, “European cups,” tongs, sugar bowls, and milk jugs, which he ordered with insistence from his Viennese supplier.³⁶

All this silverware was to be “suitable in weight, neither too heavy nor too light, but as is customary these days among the nobility in Europe.” And it should fit inside a trunk “lined with fabric inside and [covered] with leather and bound with thick iron wire.”³⁷ In the end, Brașov proved to be the stage on which the actors of the two great

³³ Wolf, *Beiträge*, Romanian translation in *Călători străini despre țările române*, eds. Maria Holban, Maria M. Alexandrescu-Dersca Bulgaru, Paul Cernovodeanu (București, 2001), vol. X/2, 1269.

³⁴ For the ottoman ritual around coffee see Dana Sajdi (ed.), *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee: Leisure and Lifestyle in the Eighteenth Century* (London: 2007).

³⁵ David Do Paço shows how coffee became part of a ritual of diplomatic meetings between Turks and Austrians in “Comment le café devient viennois. Métissage et cosmopolitisme urbain dans l’Europe du XVIIIe siècle,” in *Hypothèses 2011: Travaux de l’École doctorale d’histoire* (Paris, 2012), 351.

³⁶ Caratașu, *Documentele*, 59–61.

³⁷ *Ibid.* Also the list of 16 August 1774.

empires met, interacting through dialogue and socialization, exchanging ideas and above all cultural values. Significantly, Ianache provided the Emperor with information and with his vision of the Ottoman Empire and of the political situation in its peripheral regions. As a translator and interpreter, he mediated the differences between the two cultural environments.³⁸

IN *ȘALVAR* AND *IȘLIC* TO VIENNA

As was mentioned at the beginning of this study, the flight of the sons of the Wallachian prince Alexandros Ypsilantis to “the lands of Europe” triggered a diplomatic scandal.³⁹ As Ottoman subjects, Constantinos and Dimitrios could not cross the border except with the accord of the Sultan, which was almost impossible given that their father held the position of Prince of Wallachia. As a close adviser of Prince Alexander Ypsilantis, Ianache Văcărescu gives the following explanation for this infantile nocturnal desertion:

“I could not explain otherwise the flight of these two spoiled offspring, except that as well as Greek teachers and Turkish *hodjas*, they also had European teachers both of French and of Italian, men worthy of praise and adorned with much knowledge. And perhaps taking from geographical histories the urge to see the lands of Europe in feeling and in the means by which they are governed, and it not being possible for them to go either with imperial permission or with parental permission, driven by the urge to see and by the heat of their youth, they thought to go by this means. [...] They disappeared one night from the princely palaces.”⁴⁰

Alexander Ypsilantis went to considerable effort in the hope of bringing his sons home before the news reached Istanbul. An intense diplomatic correspondence took place with the court of Vienna, with a view to having the wayward sons extradited, while the

³⁸ I do not know whether Ianache Văcărescu was the recipient of a letter that arrived from Vienna on 15 November 1777. Written in German, the letter gives a detailed description of society events in the Habsburg capital (Biblioteca Academiei Romane, Fond Documente Istorice, CCC1/49).

³⁹ The event attracted such popular interest that the story was quickly versified and circulated in the alleys of market towns in the form of a poem. See *Cronici și povestiri românești versificate (sec. XVII–XVIII)*, ed. Dan Simonescu (București, 1967), 221–224.

⁴⁰ Văcărescu, *Istoria Othomanească*, 125.

young men's teacher, Ignatius Stephan Raicevich, was sent on their trail.⁴¹ As for the runaways themselves, Constantinos and Dimitrios Ypsilantis, aged nineteen and seventeen respectively, wrote to General Friedrich von Preiss and to Emperor Joseph II that their flight had been hastened by 'the bad treatment they suffered from their parents', that their lives and those of all Christians were always insecure in Turkey, that they wanted to learn, and Vienna was the most enlightened place in Europe, that they put themselves at the service of the Emperor, for whom they were prepared to lay down their lives.⁴² In an age in which travel was perceived as a means of education⁴³, especially in the case of young noblemen, the attitude of the Austrian authorities was somewhat encouraging. Neither General Preiss nor Chancellor Kaunitz nor even Emperor Joseph II seemed in any hurry to give orders for the young men to be sent back to Wallachia. Internuncio Peter Philipp Herbert von Rathkeal, the ambassador of the Habsburg Empire at the Porte, observed the indulgence shown by the authorities in Vienna in a note addressed to the Reis Effendi (the head of the Ottoman Imperial Chancery):

“Les deux fils de ce Prince, nommés Constantin et Démétrius, poussés par une envie démesurée de voyager et de voir le monde, se réfugièrent en Transylvanie au pas de Temes; d'où malgré toutes les peines que leur Père se donna pour les ramener, ils implorèrent par une très humble requête la clémence de S. M. I. pour obtenir un asyle, la liberté de leurs personnes, et la permission de voyager dans ses Etats. Le Prince fit parvenir en même temps aux pieds du Trône les instances les plus vives pour l'extradition des ses Enfants; mais l'humanité magnanime de mon très auguste Maître répugnant à violer les Droits de l'hospitalité, ordonna au commandant général de Transylvanie, de leur déclarer, qu'en qualité d'étrangers, qui n'avoient pas commis de crime, ils peuvent se transporter et séjourner où bon leur sembleront, et sans avoir craindre aucune espèce de violence. [...] Protégés par des lois aussi

⁴¹ Hurmuzaki, VII, 331. Ianache Văcărescu considered this secretary of the 'Frankish' language to be to blame for the flight of the *bezzades*. Relations between the two were quite tense, and Stefan Raicevich does not forgive him in his reports to the court in Vienna. Arriving in Vienna, Raicevich gave more attention to his own career insistently trying to convince Prince Kaunitz to have him appointed diplomatic agent in Wallachia.

⁴² Hurmuzaki, VII, 8 January 1782, pp. 339–340.

⁴³ For this trend, see Wendy Bracewell and Alex Drace-Francis eds., *Under Eastern Eyes: A Comparative Introduction to East European Travel Writing on Europe* (Budapest, 2008).

douces qu'équitables, leur retour à la maison paternelle ne peut être que volontaire, et l'ouvrage de leur repentir. ⁴⁴

Alexandros Ypsilantis went to considerable effort in the hope of bringing his sons home before the news reached Istanbul. An intense diplomatic correspondence took place with the court of Vienna, with a view to having the wayward sons extradited, while the young men's teacher, Ignatius Stephan Raicevich, was sent on their trail.⁴⁵ As for the runaways themselves, Constantinos and Dimitrios Ypsilantis, aged nineteen and seventeen respectively, wrote to Friedrich von Preiss, chief of the imperial army in Transylvania, and to Emperor Joseph II that their flight had been hastened by "the bad treatment they suffered from their parents," that their lives and those of all Christians were always insecure in Turkey, that they wanted to learn, and Vienna was the most enlightened place in Europe, that they put themselves at the service of the Emperor, for whom they were prepared to lay down their lives.⁴⁶ In an age in which travel was perceived as a means of education, especially in the case of young noblemen, the attitude of the Austrian authorities was somewhat encouraging. Neither General Preiss nor Chancellor Kaunitz nor even Emperor Joseph II seemed in any hurry to give orders for the young men to be sent back to Wallachia.⁴⁷

Afraid that he might lose his head, Alexandros Ypsilantis sent a new mission on the tracks of his sons, this time a much more impressive one, consisting of Metropolitan Grigorie of Wallachia, Bishop Filaret of Râmnic, grand ban Dumitrache Ghica, and grand *spătar* Ianache Văcărescu, almost half of the princely council, in the hope that they could "urge the enlightened young gentlemen to come back."⁴⁸ For the boyars of Wallachia, the flight of the Ypsilantis boys could only be interpreted as "a criminal flight" that "compromised their father for ever" and destroyed "the tranquility and safety of our country." So writes Ianache Văcărescu in his letter to General Preiss, asking the latter to stop the young men in Transylvania.⁴⁹ We are thus faced with two different systems of thought: Joseph II and his diplomatic representatives speak of "individual will" and personal liberty, while Ianache Văcărescu speaks of "submission and fidelity towards the Porte" and total obedience to their father.

⁴⁴ Hurmuzaki, VII, 8 February 1782, 341–342.

⁴⁵ Hurmuzaki, VII, 331.

⁴⁶ Hurmuzaki, VII, 8 January 1782, 339–340.

⁴⁷ Hurmuzaki, VII, 8 February 1782.

⁴⁸ Văcărescu, *Istoria Othomanească*, 127.

⁴⁹ Hurmuzaki, VII, 13 February 1782, Cronstat, 345.

Although it was a hard winter, and the confidential adviser was about to get married, he set out, leaving his bride to wait for him:

“The debt I owed Prince Ypsilantis for the love in which he held me made me leave my house and children without a protector, and my second wife, Eleni Caragea, the daughter of the *tercūman* Iordache Caragea, unwed, for the same day I set out for Vienna, she had arrived from Constantinople, through the Prince’s intervention, in the princely court.”⁵⁰

The court of Vienna became the grand stage on which the Wallachian office-holder played the role of wealthy boyar, polyglot diplomat, and elegant gentleman.⁵¹ He attracted the gaze of those around because he was a “Turk,”⁵² or defined as such by himself, but above all because he was a “foreigner” of startling opulence.

Prince Kaunitz introduced him into the Viennese atmosphere:

“He took me by the hand and went out into the assembly room, where were gathered all the ambassadors of the courts and the most brilliant ladies in Vienna. I made the acquaintance of them all, and they greeted me with affection and with honor... Prince Kaunitz found the occasion to praise the sable furs in which I was dressed (for the Europeans habitually speak casually of these things, and to people they have met for the first time). And at that assembly the ladies undid my sash, to see my shawl.”⁵³

Lahore shawl, sable furs, diamond ring, silk *anteri*⁵⁴ and brocaded *fermene*,⁵⁵ khanjar inlaid with precious stones, *sahitiyan* leather slippers: everything gave off an air of extravagance. The Wallachian official on a diplomatic mission was the living image of

⁵⁰ His first wife, Elena Rizo had died a year before, and his mother, Ecaterina Done, who had taken charge of the raising of his three minor children, had just died (Văcărescu, *Istoria Othomanicească*, 127).

⁵¹ Ianache arrived in Vienna on 25 January 1782.

⁵² On the use of the denomination “Turk” see Palmira Brummett, “You Say ‘Classical’, I Say ‘Imperial’, Let’s Call the Whole Thing Off: Empire, Individual, and Encounter in Travel Narratives of the Ottoman Empire,” *The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, XLIV (2014): 21-44.

⁵³ Văcărescu, *Istoria Othomanicească*, 129–130. See also the correspondence between chancellor Kaunitz and Ianache Văcărescu before this moment in Andrei Pippidi, *Documente privind locul romanilor în Sud-Estul Europei* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2018), 264-267.

⁵⁴ A long robe.

⁵⁵ A short embroidered jacket, worn over the *anteri*.

what a “Turk” ought to be. As he could handle words well, Ianache Văcărescu quickly became the star attraction of the salons, enjoying the company of Chancellor Kaunitz, Grand Duke Paul of Russia, French ambassador Louis August Le Tonnelier de Breteuil, Vice-chancellor Philipp von Cobenzl, the Spanish ambassador, and Archduke Maximilian. The boyar entered into the logic of Viennese protocol, paying visits of courtesy and congratulation:

“I went to all the ambassadors to greet them with notes and when I returned to my lodgings to dine all the ambassadors came to me to greet me with notes.”⁵⁶

Expensive furs were very important for the maintenance of prestige. Their very high price turned them into luxury objects, often forbidden by means of sumptuary laws,⁵⁷ and at the same time important gifts in diplomatic relations.⁵⁸ Prince Kaunitz insists on knowing the price of the sable furs that decorate Ianache’s *cüppe*,⁵⁹ and then asks him to offer advice on the pricing of some gifts:

“He said to me: ‘Let me show you a sable fur that the Crown Prince of Russia gave me and I pray you tell me its price.’ He brought the fur and put it on the billiard table.”

The situation seems difficult given that the Wallachian official wears furs much more expensive and more beautiful than those received by his Viennese host, so he saves himself by means of the rhetoric of diplomacy:

“I answered him that neither by sunlight nor at night can sable furs be priced properly. This fur, however, taking into account the place from which it was given and the place to which it was given,

⁵⁶ Văcărescu, *Istoria Othomanicească*, 131.

⁵⁷ On the sumptuary laws see Donald Quataert, “Clothing Laws, the State and Society in the Ottoman Empire, 1720-1829,” *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 29 (1997): 403-425.

⁵⁸ Hedda Reindl-Kiel, “Luxury, Power Strategies and the Question of Corruption: Gifting in the Ottoman Elite (16th-18th Centuries),” in *Şehrâyîn. Die Welt der Osmanen, die Osmanen in der Welt, Wahrnehmungen, Begegnungen und Abgrenzungen/ Illuminating the Ottoman World. Perceptions, Encounters and Boundaries. Festschrift Hans Georg Majer*, Yavuz Köse, ed. (Wiesbaden, 2012), 107-120.

⁵⁹ A long felt coat, often lined and trimmed with fur.

is priceless. And I, even if I had seen it by day, do not have the skill to price it.”⁶⁰

And he again becomes a “Turk” when he enters the palace of Emperor Joseph II, which he describes in lavish detail, impressed as he is by “the pavilion with marble pillars supported on the backs of lions,” by “the curtains that hang from the baldachin worked with gold,” by “the folded draperies with metallic thread,” by the pearls decorating them, by the guards, the swords, the multitude of rooms, of cabinets, etc. It is a meeting of two different worlds: Joseph II, the adept of ceremony made as simple as possible,⁶¹ and Ianache Văcărescu, the adept of Ottoman diplomatic protocol:

“As I went in through the door, I saw the Kaiser in the middle of the room, on his feet and without a hat, and taking two steps forward I knelt down in the Turkish manner, and after putting my head on the ground, when I wanted to raise it, I found myself with the Kaiser’s hand on my head; he said to me that he did not require this ceremony and I should rise, and when I wanted to kiss his hand, he pulled it away.”

Ottoman protocol, as staged by Ianache Văcărescu, suddenly becomes insignificant and rather embarrassing when Joseph II withdraws the hand that was about to be kissed.⁶²

In Wallachia, the boyars followed Ottoman protocol, kissing the Prince’s hand and/or the hems of his coat as a form of respect and of recognition of hierarchies.⁶³ Meanwhile Joseph II forbade kneeling by an imperial decree (1787), considering that it was “not a fitting form of behaviour from one human being to another and should be reserved for God alone.”⁶⁴ Kneeling and kissing of hands were part of a cultural code

⁶⁰ Văcărescu, *Istoria Othomanească*, 130. For Kaunitz’s behavior see Franz A. J. Szabo, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism 1753–1780* (Cambridge, 1994), 20–35.

⁶¹ Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, *Les vieux habits de l’empereur. Une histoire culturelle des institutions du Saint-Empire à l’époque moderne* (Paris, 2008), 312. For Joseph II and court ceremonial, see also Derek Beales, *Joseph II: Against the World, 1780–1790* (Cambridge, 2013).

⁶² In the meantime, events had taken a new turn in Wallachia. Alexandros Ypsilantis had given up the throne and had named Ianache Văcărescu as *kaymakam* (Văcărescu, *Istoria Othomanească*, 135).

⁶³ In Wallachia, “the custom of kissing the prince’s hand as a sign of subjection” would be abolished only on 21 July 1834, by a princely decree sent to all departments (Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale, Fond Achiziții Noi, MMMXXXIX/1, hereafter AN; AN/Vâlcea, Fond Prefectura Județului Vâlcea, 35/1834; AN/Buzău, Fond Subocărnuirea Plaiului despre Buzău, 53/1834).

⁶⁴ T.C.W Blanning, *Joseph II* (London, 2013), 64; On diplomatic ritual see also: Christine Vogel, *The Cofan and the Sword. Dress and Diplomacy in Ottoman-French Relations Around 1700*, in,

put into practice in the Ottoman Empire⁶⁵ and respected strictly on its peripheries, at the borders between rival empires.

The audience lasted more than two hours. Joseph II argues the case for individual free will, imperial hospitality, political asylum granted to young men who want to study, freedom to travel, stressing that the young princes may be advised to return home, but under no circumstances forced to do so. The Wallachian office-holder, an Ottoman subject, asks for no more and no less than their expulsion by force, emphasizing that his whole career depends on the success of this diplomatic mission:

“Besides the effort that to my great honor and praise I have made to come, I will lose what little reputation (*ypolipsis*) and standing⁶⁶ I have in all the principality of Wallachia, where to the sorrow I feel on account of these happenings is added that of being incapable of carrying [my mission] to a conclusion and unable to obtain justice even from the very justice itself that you are, your Imperial Majesty.”⁶⁷

Impressed by the rhetoric of the Wallachian boyar, but also as a consequence of the information with which he has been provided,⁶⁸ given that he is known to have had a “mania for gathering detailed information about all manner of social phenomena,”⁶⁹ Emperor Joseph II promises that he will not receive the Ypsilantis princes into his service: “I promise you upon my imperial word that neither in my lands nor in my service will I keep them, and I will certainly return them to Turkey, only that I must first bring them here, to ensure that they have a pleasant stay, without cares.”⁷⁰ In other words, the good manners specific to diplomatic ceremonial must be respected to the end, and the right to hospitality remains a principle that cannot be stepped over.

Fashioning the Self in Transcultural Settings: The Uses and Significance of Dress in Self-Narratives, Claudia Ulbrich and Richard Wittmann, eds. (Würzburg, 2015), 25-45.

⁶⁵ For the Ottoman protocol of hand-kissing, see Palmira Brummett, “A Kiss is Just a Kiss: Rituals of Submission Along the East–West Divide,” in *Cultural Encounters Between East and West, 1453–1699*, Matthew Birchwood and Matthew Dimmock, eds. (Cambridge, 2005), 107–131.

⁶⁶ The word used here by Ianache Văcărescu is *ypolipsis*. See below for a discussion of this word.

⁶⁷ Văcărescu, *Istoria Othomanicească*, 136.

⁶⁸ Ianache Văcărescu writes: “He asked me many questions, about Tzarigrad [Constantinople], about Wallachia, about customs and other things” (Ibidem, 136).

⁶⁹ Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge, 2016), 55.

⁷⁰ Văcărescu, *Istoria Othomanicească*, 136.

BEING A BOYAR: LUXURY, CIVILITY, PRESTIGE

Travelling across empires, entering into contact with different forms of civilization, dealing skillfully with languages and people, Ianache Văcărescu is a key figure for the understanding of peripheries. Wallachia and Moldavia were “contact zones,” to borrow the term used by Mary Louise Pratt,⁷¹ where, for more than a century, three great empires, Ottoman, Habsburg, and Russian, had met. The meetings between the three cultures are reflected in memorialistic writings, which try to define identity and alterity in relation to the other.⁷² The local elite is the bearer of this “cultural mix.” Although common features often unite the narrators and their characters, these seem to get lost when the test of civility is set out as an inexorable criterion. In many cases, the writers of travel narratives do not understand the way of being of these boyars, even if it fascinates or intrigues them, and thus they categorize them as “barbarian.” Even those who have spent many years among them, occupying official positions, are repelled and criticize certain customs or behaviors, which are always entered in the balance of alterity. Consuls, ambassadors, diplomats, missionaries, or simple travelers are the guests of the courts and mansions of the boyars, which they then describe in their eager quest for *turqueries*.⁷³ Good manners as a form of social distinction and self-fashioning were very much in vogue in Central and Northern Europe. For the Wallachian boyars, the model of good behavior was inspired by the manners and conduct displayed by the Phanariot princes at the princely court. The manners and conduct of the Phanariot princes were adapted according to the context and the guests: “Greek,” “Turkish,” “oriental” in the company of Ottoman envoys and Wallachian office-holders, “French” in the company of “Western travelers.”

In his book devoted to the Ottoman Empire, Ianache Văcărescu often uses the term *ypolipsis* (and never *politie*), to describe the behaviour of others and to speak about himself. Even his readings were diverse and in various languages,⁷⁴ when it came to good

⁷¹ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York, 1992), 4.

⁷² For this topic see Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, 1994); Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford, 1997).

⁷³ See Alexandros Bevilacqua and Helen Pfeifer, “Turquerie: Culture in Motion, 1650–1750,” *Past and Present*, 221 (2013): 75–118.

⁷⁴ Often he borrowed Greek, Italian, French, Turkish, or German terms to cover senses for which there were no words in Romanian.

manners, and above all conduct, although he had read *Il giovane istruito*,⁷⁵ he preferred the Greek word *ypolipsis*. The significance of the term *ypolipsis* was connected to the place one occupied in society, to the social classifications made by others, to the way one was seen by others, to a certain status displayed and promoted. For Văcărescu, *ypolipsis* represents a public recognition of his learning and wisdom. The individual with *ypolipsis* is the one who shows himself, by his accumulation of knowledge and learning, to have wisdom. True learning is that which brings wisdom, and together they lead to respect, prestige, fame. And prestige is recognized by measures capable of ensuring “the well-being of all.”⁷⁶ This *ypolipsis* may be quickly lost if the individual does not strive always to retain people’s respect. This is what he is speaking of when he seeks help of Emperor Joseph II to recover the sons of Prince Ypsilantis, and the term is clothed in the same sense when he uses it to characterize others. Consider what he says about Alexandros Mavrocordatos, the Dragoman of the Porte, whom he describes as “a man of a subtle and lively spirit,” with immortal *ypolipsis*, obtained by virtue of “service worthy of notice to the Empire”⁷⁷; or Selim Pasha, *Kapıcıbaşa* of Nicopolis, who is “learned and wise.”⁷⁸ Ianache Văcărescu presents himself as the foremost boyar of Wallachia, a man of great *ypolipsis*, worthy to be Prince.⁷⁹ Those around him, “Greeks” or “Turks” like himself, describe him in the same terms. “You will undoubtedly have heard of the wealthy Văcărescu, the Croesus of the boyars,” says Iordache Condilo admiringly,⁸⁰ while Prince Alexandros Mourouzis, elevating him to the office of Grand Ban, recognizes him as “the foremost noble boyar [...] capable and with good *ypolipsis*.”⁸¹ Mourouzis held this opinion in spite of the fact that the prince had every reason to hate the “worthy” and “faithful” boyar, given the rumors that Văcărescu was

⁷⁵ The reference is to the work of the Italian author Geminiano Gaetti, *Il giovane istruito ne’dogmi catolici: nella verita della religione cristiana e sua morale. Con i principi della geografia, della storia, della fillosofia e astronomia e colla spiegazione della teologia de pagani*, Venice, 1749. Serdar Anton Manuil would later make a Greek translation, which was published in Venice in 1794, with a dedication to *Spătar* Ianache Văcărescu (Cârstoiu, *Văcărescu*, 227). See especially the second part, which includes advice on conduct: “Saggio de’principali doveri d’un maestro destinato all’educazione della gioventù.”

⁷⁶ Văcărescu, *Istoria Othomanicească*, 94.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, 77–78.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, 149.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, 134–136.

⁸⁰ Iordache Condilo was the brother-in-law of the Phanariote prince Nicholas Mavrogenis (1786–1790) and a diplomatic agent, a character in the novel *Anastasius* by Thomas Hope. See, Thomas Hope, *Anastasius* (London, 1819). Rom. Trans. Anastasie, “Memoriile unui grec în secolul al XVIII-lea,” in V. A. Urechia, *Istoria românilor* (București, 1891), III, 465.

⁸¹ See the document of 30 April 1795 in Urechia, *Istoria*, V, 306–307.

Princess Zoe Mourouzis lover, for which reason the Voivode heard the populace singing daily under his window of their illicit and “fiery passion.”⁸²

The inventories made after the boyar’s death give an accurate account of his jewellery, clothes of expensive fabrics, furs, khanjars, headwear, and all the ornaments necessary to adorn the body ‘that is seen’.⁸³ The high office-holder Ianache Văcărescu gave particular attention to the body that was seen, to appearances, and to the education of the mind. At a certain point in his memoirs, he wonders which it is better for one to have, “a jar of good fortune or a drop of intelligence,” and he answers: “A splash of intelligence I want, rather than good fortune.”⁸⁴ And so he would all his life, educating his mind with diverse reading and writing and taking care of his body. Nevertheless the education of the mind and the care of the body did not turn him into a “*giovano istruito*” such as the ambassadors, princes, and chancellors—in a word, the “Europeans”—considered themselves to be. Consider the following eye-witness account by the Swiss Franz Joseph Sulzer,⁸⁵ one of the secretaries of the princely court in the time of Alexandros Ypsilantis and an Austrian agent in Wallachia, who knew the elite at the princely court at close quarters. Invited to a ball held at the princely court in 1778, he describes the atmosphere as follows:

⁸² Here the popular song: ‘Ienăchiță Văcărescu/ Sits in the gate at Dudescu’s/ With a diamond smoking pipe,/ Dressed in a cloak of red,/ With an anteri of atlas,/ His lady is dying of sorrow. With a khanjar of Khorasan,/ The Princess passes in her carriage/ In her gilded carriage/ With its cabin burnished bright,/ Escorted by footmen,/ Drawn by four stallions./ She passes often and keeps looking at him,/ For with fire she loves him still!/ Ienăchiță makes a verse for her/ For the Princess pleases him greatly;/ A verse with fiery passion / And he flatters her with praise./ The boyar thus like a fir tree / Is not in Tsarigrad. He and the Princess would make a good match / If the Vodă should die’ (Alexandru Piru, *Poezii Văcărești* (București, 1966, 48).

⁸³ The wealth of the Wallachian office-holder was the cause of a trial between his last wife, Ekaterina Caradja, and her stepchildren. As a consequence of the trial, every object in the Văcărescu house was inventoried and evaluated. Thus we find: ‘ten diamond rings’, ‘one ruby ring’, ‘two emerald rings’, ‘one sapphire ring’, ‘one rose diamond ring’, ‘two khanjars, one with a diamond, the other with gold’, ‘one pair of *paftas* [large metal belt clasps] with diamonds’, ‘four gold tobacco boxes’, ‘one gold tobacco box with diamonds’, ‘one diamond necklace’, ‘one pearl necklace’, ‘one small aigrette with diamonds’, ‘one pair of earrings with diamonds’, ‘seven pieces of jewellery’, ‘one pair of earrings with rubies and diamonds’, ‘one pair of earrings with precious stones’, ‘two pairs of earrings with emeralds’, ‘twelve strings of pearls’, ‘one silver bird’, ‘two silver clocks’, ‘two gold clocks’, ‘one silver harness’, ‘one gold belt with gold suns’, together with various furs, silver tableware, headwear, chess sets, books in Greek, Turkish, and French, a silver statue, etc. (M. Caratașu, *Documentele*, 75–83, 296–298).

⁸⁴ Văcărescu, *Istoria Othomanicească*, 118.

⁸⁵ Franz Joseph Sulzer, *Geschichte des transalpinischen Daciens, das ist der Walachey, Moldau und Bessarabiens. Im Zusammenhange mit der Geschichte des übrigen Daciens als ein Versuch einer allgemeinen dacischen Geschichte mit kritischer Freyheit entworfen* (Wien, Gräffer), 1781.

At the table of the Prince of Wallachia, the Grand Ban of Craiova [Dudescu] wanted to honor the name day of the Prince, which was celebrated then, with an unusual toast. Perhaps he had drunk too much. He stood up as the foremost boyar in the land, according to custom, together with the Metropolitan, and the whole table stood up after them; he uttered his toast, tasted a little from the great toasting cup, and poured the rest of the cup in the face of the Grand Vornic, so that the wine flowed over his beard and over his fur, down to the ground.

For Sulzer, with his Jesuit education and experience of the discipline of an Austrian infantry regiment, the toast is nothing but “the playful fancy of a drunkard,” attempting to show the Prince that he is “as viel besser als der gross Vornik mit ihrer Hocheit.”⁸⁶ The unusual toast was, however, a local custom, which is also recorded elsewhere. For example in the collection *Îndreptări moralicești tinerilor foarte folositoare* (Very Useful Moral Directions for the Young People), Dimitrie Țichindeal note and condemns such behavior: “abandon the foolish and vulgar custom that some observe towards their friends and their beloved wife, that the wine that they cannot drink from the glass they pour on the clothes of those who cannot drink it. This is great foolishness and vulgarity.”⁸⁷ At another ball, also at the princely court, Sulzer is scandalized by the sight of elegant ladies eating with their fingers from a common dish, happily soaking the bread with their “delicate fingers” in thick sauces or tearing “a piece from a lamb,” eagerly devouring the food “without forks.”⁸⁸ Nor does he have a better opinion about our own protagonist: among the exiles in Brașov in 1774, Sulzer is witness to a truly revolting scene: “At the official ball of the commandant of Brașov, the Grand Vistier [i.e. Ianache Văcărescu] got so drunk that he threw up in the ballroom all that he had consumed.”⁸⁹ Sulzer notes the excesses of this boyar class, whom he does not like much and among whom he did not manage to integrate himself, although he spent more than eleven years in Wallachia.

⁸⁶ Sulzer, *Geschichte*, rom. trans in *Călători străini*, X/1, 473.

⁸⁷ Dimitrie Țichindeal, *Îndreptări moralicești tinerilor foarte folositoare* (Buda, 1813), 62. Dimitrie Țichindeal (1775–1818) was a Romanian teacher and priest from the Banat who translated or wrote many manuals of savoir-vivre.

⁸⁸ Sulzer, *Geschichte*, rom. trans in *Călători străini*, X/1, 472.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*. See also the episodes analyzed by Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, “Semiotics of Behavior in Early Modern Diplomacy: Polish Embassies in Istanbul and Bahçesaray,” *Journal of Early Modern History*, vii, 3–4 (2003): 245–256.

All the same, it must be observed that the term *ypolipsis* does not completely correspond to the term *politie* (civility) as it was expressed in Romanian at the time.⁹⁰ Civility includes a “code of refined manners, the practices of polite behavior”.⁹¹ From Erasmus onwards, via Antoine de Courtin, Jean-Batiste La Salle and L-M. Herriquetz, practices were constructed that regulated the behavior of the individual in society: “legitimate behaviors” necessary for common life and the promotion of decency. All these treatises were directed principally at the education of children, and their use in schools was recommended, as civility was incorporated among the Christian virtues.⁹² A “virtue of society,” civility has the role of making the connections between people pleasant.⁹³ *Politie* (civility) and *ypolipsis* are expressed by the same references to honor, prestige, consideration, but without covering the same meaning. Ianache Văcărescu is mainly interested in *social distinction*, inscribing himself in a *logic of prestige*, by working on appearances.⁹⁴ Vestimentary opulence and “subtle spirit” (brilliant and educated intelligence) provide him with the consideration and self esteem that are indispensable for dominating the political stage.

FAR FROM VIENNA

While waiting for his sons, who had wandered off to discover Europe, Alexandros Ypsilantis resigned his mandate for fear of losing his head. As the boys did not stop in Vienna, but made a short trip through Italy before embarking for Constantinople, there was nothing their father could do but pay the massive debts they had left behind them.⁹⁵

As for Ianache Văcărescu, he remained faithful to the Ottoman Empire, but not to the new Phanariote prince, Nicholas Mavrogenis (1786–1790). Indeed he despised Prince Mavrogenis both for his lack of education and for the fact that he did not belong

⁹⁰ *Politie* comes from *polis* and adds the modern sense of “polite.”

⁹¹ Roger Chartier, *Lecturi și cititori în Franța Vechiului Regim* (București, 1997), 57–59.

⁹² *Ibidem*, 79.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, 81.

⁹⁴ Norbert Elias, *La société de cour* (Paris, 1985), 115.

⁹⁵ Emperor Joseph II scrupulously respected the promise he had made to the Wallachian office-holder. The young Constantine and Dimitrios Ypsilantis were well received at the court of Vienna, but they were urged to return home. See all the diplomatic correspondences in this aspect in Hurmuzaki, VII, 333–334, 361–363, 377–378, 441–442, ; IX, 124. See also Paul Cernovodeanu ‘Fuga fiilor lui Alexandru Ipsilanti din Țara Românească, reflectată în rapoartele diplomatice britanice’, in *Fașetele istoriei. Existențe, Identități, Dinamici*, ed. T. Teoteoi, B. Murgescu, Ș. Solcan (București, 2000), 683–698.

to the Phanariote elite, but was a mere ship's captain—in other words, “a man foolish in his being, his thinking, and his feeling.”⁹⁶ As he still believed in the supremacy of the Sublime Porte, he refused to follow the Prince in taking the side of the Austrian–Russian alliance in the war of 1787–1790, and ended up going into exile, first in Nicopolis and then on Rhodes. It was in Nicopolis, in 1788, that he began work on what would become his *History of the Most Powerful Ottoman Emperors*.

The memoirs of the Wallachian office-holder contain important information about the role of mediator that he assumed in various social, political, religious, and linguistic contexts.⁹⁷ Writing about the Ottoman Empire, serving the Ottoman Empire,⁹⁸ Ianache Văcărescu was one of those “trans-imperial subjects” who participated in the production and dissemination of a literature about the Ottomans in Europe. It is true that his book was produced in a different geographical context to that analyzed by Natalie Rothman,⁹⁹ but the knowledge accumulated by Ianache Văcărescu came from his interactions with scholars from the three empires on the borders of Wallachia. His book responds to an already existing curiosity about all that came out of the Ottoman Empire. In gathering information and putting it into circulation, integrating himself in the diplomatic sociability of the Ottoman Empire, Ianache was behaving as an important actor in the transgression of cultural and linguistic borders, contributing to the field of knowledge about Turks and Ottomans.

⁹⁶ Văcărescu, *Istoria Othomanicească*, 142.

⁹⁷ See the chronicle of events in Wallachia narrated by another boyar, one close to Ianache Văcărescu, the *ban* Mihai Cantacuzino, who in 1778, after several attempts by his brother Părvu Cantacuzino to become Prince, chose to leave for Russia: Mihai ban Cantacuzino *Genealogia Cantacuzinilor*, ed. Nicolae Iorga, (București, 1902).

⁹⁸ In his view, accepting the mission of bringing back the sons of Ypsilantis is “a service rendered to the [Ottoman] Empire” (Văcărescu, *Istoria Othomanicească*, 127).

⁹⁹ See Natalie Rothman, *Brokering Empire. Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca, 2012).