

DOWRY CONTRACTS, WOMEN'S OBJECTS AND THE CIRCULATION OF GOODS IN MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY ROMANIAN FAMILIES. THE CASE OF OLTENIA*

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In a social and ethnic conglomerate such as the Ottoman Empire, the Romanian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia represent a somewhat distinctive case. They were autonomous territories (like the North African provinces of Tunis and Egypt), which kept their Orthodox faith, their laws of Byzantine inspiration and their customs, while still contributing through taxes and goods to the Empire's wellbeing. Their commercial ties were for a long period reduced to the Porte and the neighbouring powers Russia, Austria and Poland. It was a periphery that embraced the European economy when the Ottomans were trying to recover from military conflicts and riots. The suzerain power itself chose decentralisation as a form of government that was more appropriate to its pluralist society¹ and from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it also permitted economical privileges for some of the European powers such as France and Austria.² The region acquired an openness toward the West after the Napoleonic wars and the Congress of Vienna (1814–1815) when co-operation started between the European powers on various fronts including social matters (American colonies, slavery, corsairs, Danube navigation,

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¹ Suraiya N. Faroqhi, *Introduction*, in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. III, *The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839*, ed. by Suraiya Faroqhi, Cambridge, 2006, p. 17.

² On the capitulations' regime see Viorel Panaite, *Război, pace și comerț în Islam: țările române în dreptul otoman al popoarelor*, 2nd ed., Iași, 2013; idem, *Wallachia and Moldavia from the Ottoman Juridical and Political Viewpoint, 1774–1829*, in *Ottoman Rule and the Balkans, 1750–1860: Conflict, Transformation, Adaptation*, ed. by Antonis Anastasopoulos, Elias Kolovos, Rethymno, 2007, pp. 21–44; Andrei Oțetea, *Pătrunderea comerțului român în circuitul internațional (în perioada de trecere de la feudalism la capitalism)*, Bucharest, 1977, pp. 32–35 for the Austrian privileges in the Romanian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia in the eighteenth century. From the Austrian side, this is considered as an expansion which can also be connected to the occupation of the territory for shorter periods.

national movements, etc.).³ The port of Odessa became free for all commercial ships in 1817 (*porto-franco regime*)⁴ and provided Western goods to the Russian Empire's cities and even beyond its borders. And even though some years had passed since that moment, the Romanian writer Costache Negruzzi (1808–1868) mentions the impact this event had on the market and society of the Bessarabian city of Chişinău. For him it was still a pleasant and curious image to see the ladies all dressed up in “breezy and beautiful clothes, and the English and French fabrics rustling contemptuously when they pass by.”⁵ The experience in the Romanian lands was similar some years later when through the Treaty of Adrianople (1829) the Danube ports gained the same status.⁶ Travellers also wrote about the enthusiasm over imports of Western goods in the Romanian capitals (Bucharest and Iaşi), though in provincial cities things emerged more slowly and there was a gradual diffusion and cultural transition.⁷ This is the prosperity that the women of the Romanian elite allowed to be glimpsed on the streets of the city, a public image that they constructed taking into account the latest fashions but also their social status, rank and financial resources. Dowry chests brought to light inherited garments, “worn out” and adapted for a different use, together with the newest materials. However these goods were not the only things that women received, for

³ M. Jarrett, *The Congress of Vienna and Its Legacy: War and Great Power Diplomacy after Napoleon*, London, 2013; Brian E. Vick, *The Congress of Vienna. Power and Politics after Napoleon*, Cambridge, 2014, pp. 193–194; Beatrice de Graaf, Ido de Haan, Brian Vick, *Securing Europe after Napoleon. 1815 and the New European Security Culture*, Cambridge (forthcoming).

⁴ Anna Makolkin, *A History of Odessa, the Last Italian Black Sea Colony*, Lewiston, New York, 2004, especially chapter five; Evrydiki Sifneos, *Imperial Odessa: People, Spaces, Identities*, Leiden, 2017, pp. 25–26.

⁵ Costache Negruzzi, *Opere*, vol. I, *Păcatele tinereţilor*, ed. by Liviu Leonte, Bucharest, 1974, p. 27.

⁶ Constantin Buşe, *Comerţul exterior prin Galaţi sub regimul de port franc (1837–1883)*, Bucharest, 1976; Paul Cernovodeanu, Irina Gavrilă, *Comerţul britanic prin Galaţi şi Brăila între 1837–1852*, Bucharest, 1978 and the works of Emil Octavian Mocanu, especially *Portul Brăila de la regimul de porto franco la Primul Război Mondial*, Brăila, 2013; *On the Western Black Sea Coast and the Danube. Economic and Social Development in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Constantin Ardeleanu, Andreas Lyberatios, Corfu, 2016 and the results of the Black Sea Research Project <https://blacksea.gr/en>.

⁷ Alexandru Alexianu, *Mode şi veşminte din trecut: cinci secole de istorie costumară românească*, vol. 2, Bucharest, 1987, pp. 302–304; Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, *Modă şi societate urbană în România epocii urbane*, Bucharest, 2006; idem, *Changement des modes aux pays roumains: fin du XVIII^e – début du XIX^e siècles*, in “Revue roumaine d’histoire,” XLV, 2006, nos. 1–4, pp. 99–139; Angela Jianu, *Women, Fashion and Europeanisation in the Romanian Principalities*, in *Women in the Ottoman Balkans*, ed. by Amila Buturović, Irvin C. Schick, London, 2007, pp. 201–230; Angela Jianu, *Between East and West – Elite Fashions and Political Change in the Romanian Principalities, 1774–1850*, in *Berg Encyclopaedia of World Dress and Fashion*, ed. by Djurdja Bartlett, Pamela Smith, vol. 9, 2010, pp. 503–504; Constanţa Vintilă-Ghiţulescu, *From Işlic to Top Hat: Fashion and Luxury at the Gates of Orient*, Valladolid, 2011; eadem, *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. by Constanţa Vintilă-Ghiţulescu, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2011, pp. 104–128.

the dowry “is drawn into socially oriented behaviours that result in a mobility,”⁸ a mobility that attracts a “continual restructuring of the social field, catalyses political energies, breaks and modifies traditional solidarities.”⁹ Thus the dowry becomes one of the factors that contribute to the creation of matrimonial alliances, to the growth of the family patrimony and to the construction of economic appearances. The ladies who strolled on the boulevards of Romanian towns in clothes of the newest and most expensive materials were the beneficiaries of such dowry contracts and of such a transforming process.

SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

The dowry is closely linked to the status of women, and to their inheritance and property rights. It is rare to find a comparative overview of the European juridical models. Anglophone and Italian cases have often been taken as representative of the north and the south of the continent respectively, and it is only recently that a closer analysis has been undertaken within these spaces and across the continent as a whole, local juridical practices have been examined¹⁰ and research has been carried out that enables comparison with other spaces (Russian and Greek, for example).¹¹ This work has brought to light a greater degree of variety and adaptability, even within the already established models. In England, the principle of *coverture* led to a merging of the properties of the two spouses into a single patrimony and a limiting of the wife's possibilities of action, even if there were ways of negotiating with the rigidity of the law.¹² However the Anglophone space was not unitary in this respect, with Scottish law insisting more on the partnership of spouses and making a clear distinction between movable goods, held in common but under the wife's control, and immovable goods, which, though belonging to her, were administered by her husband.¹³ In imperial Russia, married women kept control of the properties

⁸ Violeta Barbu, *Ordo amoris. O istorie a instituției căsătoriei în Țara Românească a secolului al XVII-lea*, Bucharest, 2011, p. 206.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ See the contributions in *The Transmission of Well-Being. Gendered Marriage Strategies and Inheritance Systems in Europe (17th–20th Centuries)*, ed. by Margarida Durães, Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux, Bern, 2009; Anna Bellavitis, Beatrice Zucca Micheletto, *Introduction*, in *Gender, Law and Economic Well-Being in Europe from the Fifteenth to the Nineteenth Century. North Versus South?*, ed. by Anna Bellavitis, Beatrice Zucca Micheletto, Abingdon, 2018, pp. 1–27.

¹¹ Michelle LaMarche Marrese, *A Woman's Kingdom. Noblewomen and the Control of Property in Russia, 1700–1861*, Ithaca, London, 2002; Evdoxios Doxiadis, *The Shackles of Modernity: Women, Property, and the Transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Greek State (1750–1850)*, Cambridge, London, 2011.

¹² For the difference between norm and practice see especially Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England*, London, 1993; *Married Women and the Law: Coverture in England and the Common Law World*, ed. by Tim Stretton, Krista Kesselring, Montreal, 2013.

¹³ Deborah Simonton, *Community of Goods, Coverture and Capability in Britain. Scotland versus England*, in *Gender, Law and Economic Well-Being*, ed. by Anna Bellavitis, Beatrice Zucca Micheletto, pp. 36–37.

that they brought into the family, and in 1763 they were legally permitted to sell them without their husbands' agreement and to engage in transactions. However, this was a reform supported by the elite and for the elite,¹⁴ and the situation of ordinary women was quite different, their goods being held in common.¹⁵ Generally speaking, in Europe the dowry became a channel for the continuing enrichment of the family patrimony. In Italy it remained inalienable and in the absence of children it would return to its family of origin.¹⁶ Here too, however, there were differences between the north and the south of the country, to which were added the struggle to maintain a balance between the power of the state and that of the Church.¹⁷ The law of dowry thus brings into discussion the relation of the woman to her blood family, to her husband and his family, and to inheritance practices.¹⁸ The power of usufruct, enjoyed by the husband in the management of the dowry until it passed to the next generation, was a temporary one. In fact, this power was granted by and through the wife,¹⁹ the legislation being aimed at the economic strengthening of the family. In other spaces, such as the Pyrenees, it was not gender or the fact that it was the man who carried on the family name that counted, but the principle of primogeniture.²⁰ The importance of land and immovable properties, especially in agricultural societies, led to a channelling of the inheritance of these properties towards one of the children, thus avoiding a repeated division of the land, which would undermine the economic power of the family.

The civil code issued under Napoleon Bonaparte (1804) was introduced in France as a reaction to the legislative liberties granted following the Revolution of 1789 (for example rights for unmarried mothers and illegitimate children, equal inheritance rights for sons and daughters, and the forbidding of the disinheritance of children by their father), which, according to recent research, had destabilised family economy and harmony.²¹ The legislators sought to re-establish and reinforce a state of order, and while unmarried women had full rights, wives were in a position of legal dependence on their husbands. The spread and the influence of the

¹⁴ Michelle LaMarche Marrese, *A Woman's Kingdom*, pp. 2, 16.

¹⁵ Deborah Simonton, *Women in European Culture and Society. Gender, Skill and Identity from 1700*, Abingdon, 2011, pp. 162–163.

¹⁶ Ida Fazio, *Percorsi coniugali nell'Italia moderna*, in *Storia del matrimonio*, ed. by Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, Michela De Giorgio, Bari, 1996, p. 165.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 193–194.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 166–170.

¹⁹ Renata Ago, *Oltre la dote: i beni femminili*, in *Il lavoro delle donne*, ed. by Angela Groppi, Bari, 1996, pp. 167–170.

²⁰ Marie-Pierre Arrizabalaga, *Gender and Well-Being in the Pyrenean Stem Family System*, in *Gender and Well-Being in Europe. Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Bernard Harris, Lina Galvez, Helena Machado, Fordham, 2009, pp. 89–90.

²¹ Suzanne Dosen, *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France*, Berkeley, 2004; Marion Röwekamp, *Married Women's Property Rights in the Nineteenth Century in France and Spain. A North-South Case Study*, in *Gender, Law and Economic Well-Being*, ed. by Anna Bellavitis, Beatrice Zucca Micheletto, pp. 79–80.

French code is beyond doubt, but this did not mean that it was immediately adopted without adaptation to or to the detriment of local specificity. In the Pyrenees, a compromise was reached that took account of the old regime of primogeniture,²² while in Spain the code was adopted late and in a distorted manner, and in Greece the use of customary law was preferred until a civil code could be drawn up that combined Byzantine tradition and local specificity with the new modifications at the European level.²³ Conditions in Greece were favourable to the endowing of women and even their inclusion in inheritance, and in the Aegean islands the principle of primogeniture applied.²⁴ On the other hand, in Bulgaria it was rare for women to receive land as part of their dowry and even more rare for them to receive inheritance; in the western part of the country, in the absence of sons the preferred option was the cession of the goods to the community.²⁵ From Western Europe to the Balkans, we find a plurality of systems of inheritance and of their relations to the dowry and to women.²⁶ Even if women were in a subordinate position to men, what emerges is the importance of class, order of birth and economic situation as factors in the administration and interpretation of the law. Moreover, the custom of the land or local specificity sometimes took precedence in dealing with family problems.²⁷ It was the family as an economic and patrimonial unit that legislation and the community protected and favoured, not the individual.²⁸

An analysis of the situation in Romania seems both necessary and useful, even if somewhat similar studies for the Middle Ages and the eighteenth century have been carried out.²⁹ The present study analyses dowry contracts in Wallachia,

²² Marie-Pierre Arrizabalaga, *op. cit.*

²³ Evdoxios Doxiadis, *From Legal Diversity to Centralization. Marriage and Wealth in Nineteenth-Century Greece*, in *Gender, Law and Economic Well-Being*, ed. by Anna Bellavitis, Beatrice Zucca Micheletto, p. 97.

²⁴ Paul H. Stahl, *Household, Village and Village Confederation in Southeastern Europe. East European Monographs*, Boulder, 1986, pp. 153–159.

²⁵ Maria N. Todorova, *Balkan Family Structure and the European Pattern. Demographic Developments in Ottoman Bulgaria*, Budapest, New York, 2006.

²⁶ Nicole Arnaud-Duc, *Les contradictions du droit*, in *Histoire des femmes en Occident*, vol. IV, *Le XIX^e siècle*, ed. by Geneviève Fraisse, Michelle Perrot, Paris, 2002, pp. 132–133; Heide Wunder, Grethe Jacobsen, *Introduction*, in *East Meets West: A Gendered View of Legal Tradition*, ed. by Grethe Jacobsen, Heide Wunder, Kiel, 2015.

²⁷ Deborah Simonton, *Women in European Culture*, p. 163.

²⁸ Margarida Durães, Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux, Llorenç Ferrer Alòs, Jan Kok, *Introduction. Historicizing Well-Being from a Gender Perspective*, in *The Transmission of Well-Being*, ed. by Margarida Durães, Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux, pp. 41–42.

²⁹ Chronologically: Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu, *Zestrea între normă și practică. Țara Românească în secolul al XVII-lea*, in “Studii și materiale de istorie medie,” vol. XVIII, 2000 and XIX, 2001 (continued in *În șalvari și cu ișlic*); Violeta Barbu, *De la comunitatea patrimonială la comunitatea de destin: zestrea în Țara Românească în secolul al XVII-lea*, in *De la comunitate la societate. Studii de istoria familiei în Țara Românească*, ed. by Violeta Barbu, Florina Constantin, Constanța Ghițulescu, Andreea Iancu, Gheorghe Lazăr, Bucharest, 2007 (continued in *Ordo amoris*); Angela Jianu, *Women, Dowries, and Patrimonial Law in Old-Regime Romania (c. 1750–1830)*, in “Journal of Family History,” 34, 2009, no. 2, pp. 189–205.

taking as a case study the city of Craiova and the Oltenia region situated in the south-western part of today's Romania. My main source is a trove of seven registers found at the tribunal in Craiova containing 250 such documents.³⁰ Dowry contracts were not new and during the eighteenth century they had been registered in the ledgers of the metropolitan church,³¹ which oversaw a range of family matters at the time. In less than a century, political events brought about significant changes. The intermittent wars with the Russian and Austrian empires, the war of independence started by the Greeks and economic problems prompted the Porte to agree to some concessions in order to keep its power in the Balkans. The Treaty of Adrianople (1829) settled this, and Wallachia, which had supported the Greeks in 1821, now entered a Russian protectorate, under which its princes would be chosen from among the Romanian boyars and not the Phanariots of Constantinople as before. This was the beginning of Balkan nationalism and, at the same time, of the secularisation and institutional reformation of a space seeking to recover from the backwardness for which it was so blamed in the West. The Russian protectorate brought the first Romanian constitution, the Organic Regulation (1831), together with new institutions and a gradual secularisation. The old rules were reinterpreted and adapted to the new legislation meant first to assess the population and then to create an administrative infrastructure and a personnel network especially in the cities and towns. A special section of the law even stipulated the obligation of municipal courts to register dowry contracts,³² specifying movable and immovable assets, their price, and the agreement between the parties.³³ Thus, the state created its own legal system and the dowry contract endorsed by the court became a binding document which could be used to settle inheritance disputes.

Old habits, however, were difficult to change and people needed time to become accustomed to registering their official documents not in front of a priest but in a court of law. Thus, starting with the 1840s, it was customary to bring in dowry contracts for marriages concluded many years earlier. For example, Costița, “a poor orphan girl,” registered her dowry contract on 19 May 1850 with the mention that: “because she had her own dowry when she married in 1827 she now wanted to register the said dowry, given to her husband without any contract, with this dowry contract including only movable assets and hard cash, totalling six hundred and forty two *lei*, ten *parale*.”³⁴

³⁰ There are two more dowry contracts which are unfortunately not completely readable. Further dowry contracts for this time period will be added to the corpus as they are found and transcribed.

³¹ See Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu's qualitative analysis of dowry contracts in *În șalvari și cu ișlic. Biserică, sexualitate, căsătorie și divorț în Țara Românească a secolului al XVIII-lea*, Bucharest, 2004, where she mainly uses registers found in the manuscript section of the Romanian Academy Library.

³² *Regulamentele organice ale Valahiei și Moldovei*, vol. I, ed. by Paul Negulescu, George Alexianu, Bucharest, 1944, p. 122, art. 332.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 123, art. 335.

³⁴ Arhivele Naționale. Direcția Județeană Dolj (hereafter: DJAN Dolj), Tribunalul Dolj. Secția III, 7/1844, numbered, document no. 8.

However, we need a retrospective look to understand both how the dowry and inheritance system functioned and how the succession of goods within the family worked in the Romanian space. Part of Ottoman Wallachia and briefly under Austrian rule, Oltenia is a suitable microcosm to capture the reaction of the low-ranking boyars and of the wealthy bourgeois to these political changes. The focus on this area is not arbitrary: not only had it been under dispute for a long time, but it had also been at the crossroads of information and high culture exchange between the two empires. Starting with a quantitative analysis, I will highlight and interpret how norms are reflected in dowry contracts and the frequency and importance of certain goods. The statistical analysis will be complemented with information about the history of local families to better understand the subject and provide working patterns for a more thorough future investigation.³⁵

I. THE ROMANIAN DOWRY SYSTEM

I.1. THE DOWRY (SYSTEM) IN WALLACHIA, THE DOWRY (SYSTEM) IN OLTENIA

Recent Romanian historiography has dealt with the legal nature of the dowry system, its structure and its role in building a family heritage, but my interest is directed towards an economic perspective with an emphasis on properties and objects. However, a definition of the dowry system in the Romanian space and its contextualisation are necessary to understand the framework of this discussion. From the outset, it has to be said that the term includes both the endowment and the trousseau given to the woman on her wedding day, both of which are recorded in the contract.³⁶ *Îndreptarea Legii* [The Legal Guidebook] (1652), Romanian legislation of Byzantine inspiration, allows the woman to obtain through dowry both real estate (immovable property: land, houses, shops, vineyards, orchards) and movable property (goods: jewellery, clothes, tableware, furniture, etc.), all priced. The wife remains the owner of the property while the husband is its usufructuary administrator, who must, if necessary, allow the sale, exchange or transfer of property should the wife request it. In case of divorce, the husband must return any property received or pay for it; however, he can recover his investment if he has incurred any expenses repairing, maintaining or improving the property acquired through the dowry contract.³⁷ Although the woman was the beneficiary of all these actions, the dowry contract was, by law, a predominantly male legal process. The father or his substitute³⁸ was

³⁵ An inquiry using the same framework and type of sources is currently undertaken for another Romanian county.

³⁶ Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu, *În șalvari și cu ișlic*, pp. 135–170. The discussion continues in *Mariage et parenté à travers les actes dotaux roumains (1700–1865)*, în “Annales de démographie historique,” 2011, no. 1, pp. 141–160; Violeta Barbu, *De la comunitatea patrimonială*, pp. 73–78.

³⁷ *Îndreptarea Legii (1652)*, Bucharest, 1962, gl. 265, p. 266.

³⁸ When the father passes away, he is replaced by uncles, brothers or his widow. For orphan brides, there was the Charity Box, introduced by the state, and very poor servants worked for their dowry or were helped by boyars. Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu, *În șalvari și cu ișlic*, pp. 161–170.

the endower, a priest was until the nineteenth century the executor of the act, and it was the son-in-law who confirmed receipt of the dowry in front of male witnesses.

While necessary at that time in order to validate the contract, the presence of witnesses gradually became optional during the nineteenth century and after the adoption of the Civil Code (1865), witnesses were replaced by the public notary, who was better equipped to handle “the transfer of authority from the family circle (family, relatives, friends, neighbours) to a public institution.”³⁹ The corpus I use for my investigation shows the same trend: the dowry records registered at the Civil Court in Craiova between 1837 and 1849 show the co-existence of both witnesses and judicial approval, while the dowry contracts registered between 1855 and 1859 show as sufficient the “acknowledgment” of the institution at the end. In addition, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Metropolitan Antim Ivireanul (1640–1716) introduced a form showing how to draft the dowry contract, categorising the goods and streamlining the information in order to take into account the economic possibilities of each class.⁴⁰ Later, however, due to secularisation, this fell into disuse and dowry lists only mentioned the value of the property, starting with the most valuable items. Even so, my quantitative corpus reveals nuances which are worth mentioning. In general, the value of estates, houses, shops and other properties was not registered because their prices varied according to the political and economic context of the time. Where there are exceptions, they both reinforce the rule and emphasise the practice: even though the endowers knew the value of the property, they did not write it down for the future benefit of the one who received it.

It was also the endowers who determined the value of the given property, and if the daughter or son-in-law sold the property during their lifetime at a higher price than originally set, then the surplus returned to them. This is what Hristache Zamfir stipulated when he gave his daughter Elena in 1848 the houses in the St. Arhangel quarter of Craiova, together with the garden and their annexes: “[A]ll goods have been priced among us, six hundred Austrian *galbeni împărătești* [imperial gold coins], but for the [illegible word] of the parts will be sold at public auction and I will retain the surplus, but if the total sum is short, I will repay the rest.”⁴¹

It may be observed that in the majority of cases the signing of a dowry contract was on a different date from that of the transfer of the property. This allowed for more bargaining regarding the value of goods. The dowry protected women and continuously affected the lives of those involved in the transfer of property. The process was also closely linked to the succession system, which,

The prince, the trustee (*epitropul*) and even the priest could act as the father’s replacement. Violeta Barbu, *De la comunitatea patrimonială*, pp. 73–78.

³⁹ Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu, *În șalvari și cu ișlic*, p. 139; eadem, *Mariage et parenté*, p. 143.

⁴⁰ Antim Ivireanul, *Opere*, ed. by Gabriel Ștrempel, Bucharest, 1972, pp. 393–394. Sections on the form include: clothing, bedding, tableware, tools and jewellery, estates, animals and Gypsy slaves, each endower filling the form to the best of their abilities.

⁴¹ DJAN Dolj, 3/1837, dowry contract no. 29 from 24 April 1848.

starting with Caragea's Law (1818), excluded women from parental inheritance in order to prevent the dissolution of the family patrimony. It was however only a partial exclusion, because women could still inherit movable goods when they married but not the family estate, which could only be passed on down the male line of the family.⁴² Nonetheless, it should be mentioned that local custom and some legal codes allowed for equality between male and female inheritance even though the male side still remained "privileged."⁴³ It seems the indecision regarding the right of female inheritance was due to the clash of various judicial codes and practices.⁴⁴ Slavic influence does not guarantee the right to a dowry, if we are to take into account the Bulgarian case; as for the Russian situation, we see a slight, albeit later, improvement in that women of the nobility did get to inherit their share of their parents' wealth upon marriage.⁴⁵ In contrast, Roman and Byzantine legislation was more permissive, and it guaranteed the dowry system by allowing daughters to receive property, as was the case in the Romanian lands and in Greece.⁴⁶ Registering a dowry contract protected both the married woman and the third party involved, the heir and/or the creditors.⁴⁷ We see the husband or his family brought to court by lenders or when money or property went missing. In 1850, for instance, the state ledger recorded twenty public trials in Dolj County and Craiova, the area where I focus my analysis, moving from local to higher courts, in which the main legal dispute regarded protection against lenders and creditors.⁴⁸

⁴² Ovidiu Sachelarie, Nicolae Stoicescu, *Instituții feudale din țările române: dicționar*, Bucharest, 1988, pp. 521–522.

⁴³ Under *Legiuirea Caragea* (1818), Bucharest, 1955, chapter III, p. 118, § 17 c), f) and g) the sons inherit the estate which gives the family name. See also p. 124, § 20. However, the editor of the critical edition of the law, Andrei Rădulescu, analysing the historical context, finds that the initial intention was to acknowledge the inheritance right of daughters "without a dowry. In the draft of the law there were even provisions made guaranteeing the dowry"; Andrei Rădulescu, *Pagini despre Legiuirea Caragea*, in *Pagini inedite din istoria dreptului vechi românesc*, Bucharest, 1981, p. 86; Ovidiu Sachelarie, Nicolae Stoicescu, *op. cit.*, p. 522 argue that the male privilege was predicated on the right of the male heir to buy back the goods granted to one of his sisters via the dowry, according to a custom coming from Transylvania.

⁴⁴ Georges Fotino, *Droit romain et droit oriental: phénomènes d'interpénétration. La représentation en matière de successions féminines dans l'ancien droit roumain*, in *În memoria lui Vasile Pârvan*, Bucarest, 1934, pp. 5–13.

⁴⁵ Maria N. Todorova, *op. cit.*, p. 120; Michelle LaMarche Marrese, *Gender and the Legal Order in Imperial Russia*, in *Russia*, vol. I, *Imperial Russia, 1689–1917*, ed. by Dominic Lieven, Cambridge, 2006, p. 326, who mentions the women's right, gained in Russia at the end of eighteenth century, to have "one-fourteenth, or 7 per cent, of their parents' immovable property, as well as one-eighth of their personal assets, after which their brothers received equal shares of the estate" (p. 327).

⁴⁶ N.J. Pantazopoulos, *Church and Law in the Balkan Peninsula during the Ottoman Rule*, Amsterdam, 1984, p. 52; Evodxios Doxiadis, *Kin and Marriage in Two Aegean Islands at the End of the Eighteenth Century*, in *Across the Religious Divide. Women, Property and Law in the Wider Mediterranean (ca. 1300–1800)*, ed. by Jutta Gisela Sperling, Shona Kelly Wray, Abingdon, 2010, p. 239.

⁴⁷ *Legiuirea Caragea* (1818), *Anexa III*, pp. 262, 263.

⁴⁸ "Buletin Oficial al Prințatului Țării Românești," 1850, nos. 1, 14, 21, 75, 85, 96, 104, pp. 2, 58, 82, 298, 339, 383, 415.

Differences between norms and practices with regard to dowry systems can only be outlined if we analyse an entire corpus of documents from a well-defined period of time. A likely contender for such an endeavour, the capital city of Wallachia, Bucharest, was a large city with a cosmopolitan population that is difficult to assess. In addition, Bucharest boasted an important social class, that of the boyars, who had all sorts of legal advantages and who put special emphasis on consumption and wealth transmission. However, the boyars were hesitant to register their wealth in courts of law and instead preferred to record it in family ledgers or in the registers of churches they had helped build and endowed; even in the case of divorce, which was previously settled by the archbishop of the metropolitan church, rank and wealth played a major role. As such, focusing my study on Bucharest would have been too much of a stretch, requiring the analysis of a vast number of documents too difficult to locate; instead, I have chosen to focus on Craiova and Oltenia. Not only was the province of Oltenia known as Little Wallachia, its elites provided the country with ruling princes such as Gheorghe Bibescu and Barbu Știrbei, and other dignitaries originated from here.

I.2. CRAIOVA AND ITS INHABITANTS

The city of Craiova was the second most important city of the Principality of Wallachia; throughout its history, it struggled to hold prominent political decision-making power and flourished from the fourteenth century on due to the old commercial routes towards Hungary and Vidin.⁴⁹ The eighteenth century brought a short but beneficial Habsburg dominion over the city and the entire region of Oltenia⁵⁰; following failed attempts to transform it into the capital of the principality, Craiova ultimately remained only a local political, economic and administrative centre. Local boyars came from old Romanian families⁵¹ and opposed as far as possible the influence of the Phanariots, remaining partially hostile to any matrimonial alliances with them.⁵² This so-called *pământeană* (native, indigenous) boyar class supported the revolution of Tudor Vladimirescu (1821) and the members of Eteria in the removal of the Greeks appointed by the Ottoman Porte. The city was also an

⁴⁹ Laurențiu Rădvan, *At Europe's Borders. Medieval Towns in the Romanian Principalities*, Leiden, 2010, p. 272.

⁵⁰ Șerban Papacostea, *Oltenia sub stăpânire austriacă (1718–1739)*, Bucharest, 1998.

⁵¹ The majority of these families can be traced back to the fifteenth–seventeenth centuries, their members belonging to the courts of Matei Basarab or Mihai Viteazul: for instance, the families Bengescu, Brăiloiu, Grădișteanu, Greceanu, Glogoveanu, Kretzulescu, Lecca, Obedeanu and Oteteleșanu; Octav Lecca, *Familiile boeresti române: istoric și genealogie*, Bucharest, 1899, pp. 68–70; 84–89; 73–76; 60–62; 263–265; 248–251; 300–305.

⁵² On the matrimonial alliances as a political strategy see Neagu Djuvara, *Les grands boiars ont-ils constitué dans les principautés roumaines une véritable oligarchie institutionnelle et héréditaire?*, in “Südost-Forschungen Sonderdruck Band,” XLXV, 1987, pp. 1–55; Paul Cernovodeanu, *Clanuri, familii, autorități, puteri (Țara Românească, secolele XV–XVII)*, in “Arhiva genealogică,” IV, 1994, nos. 1–2, pp. 77–86.

important and thriving commercial centre, which kept in continuous relations with Austrian Transylvania through commercial companies such as Hagi Pop, Stamu, Manicati, etc., with which merchants established here like Ioan Băluță⁵³ or Dimitrie Aman had connections. In a report following an 1852 journey from Trieste via Vienna to Constantinople, the theologian and traveller Francesco Nardi (1808–1877) writes that “goods travel to Bucharest by way of Craiova and Slatina.”⁵⁴ He compares the economic importance of the city to that of the ports of Brăila, Giurgiu and Galați and shows, like other travellers, the impact that this aspect had on the growth and welfare of the population and, especially, on urban development. Even earlier, another traveller mentions that “the boyars of all ranks resided in the capital and in the few towns, such as Craiova and Pitești, which, having become populated centres, could offer some comfort and safety of living.”⁵⁵ And this brings us to a feature that distinguishes the boyars from these areas among those of Wallachia in general. Regarding their habitat and their residences, it is worth mentioning the existence of *cule*, fortified defensive dwellings, starting especially from the eighteenth century, following frequent Turkish attacks from the south of the Danube. These were becoming more and more the attribute of low- and middle-ranking boyars and merchants, during a time when the highly-ranking boyars were moving their residence to Bucharest and Craiova for safety reasons. Gradually, during the nineteenth century, this type of dwelling became a high-status symbol among the elites of Oltenia, who chose it as a type of residence on their estates.⁵⁶ Such houses spread in neighbouring counties such as Mehedinți or Gorj, becoming a sort of network that incorporated the functions both of shelter in times of military conflict and comfort and prestige during peacetime. Furthermore, the city itself was described in 1837 in official publications as having around 12,000 inhabitants and being “regulated and important for trade and industry,” with schools, beautiful architecture and public gardens for boyars and city folk.⁵⁷

I.3. DOCUMENT ANALYSIS FOR OLTENIA

While they contain no information about peasants' dowry contracts, the records of the local tribunal of this wealthy city do hold many such contracts belonging

⁵³ Gheorghe Lazăr, *Mărturie pentru posteritate: testamentul negustorului Băluță din Craiova*, Brăila, 2010.

⁵⁴ *Călători străini despre țările române în secolul al XIX-lea*, n.s., vol. VI, (1852–1856), ed. by Daniela Bușă et al., Bucharest, 2010, p. 18.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, vol. V, (1847–1851), Bucharest, 2009, p. 70.

⁵⁶ The term derives from the Turkish *kule*, which means tower. Radu Crețeanu, Sarmiza Crețeanu, *Culele din România*, Bucharest, 1969, pp. 5–13; Iancu Atanasescu, Valeriu Grama, *Culele din Oltenia*, Craiova, 1974, p. 24. This type of dwelling is also found in Serbia, Albania, Macedonia and Bulgaria, but the Oltenia (Romanian) distinct architectural feature is the watchtower with poles, “a concession made to the demands of comfort and beauty”; Teohari Antonescu, *ibidem*, p. 11.

⁵⁷ *Almanahul statului din Prințipatul a toată Țara Românească pe anul 1837*, Buda, 1837, pp. 195–196.

preponderantly to a burgeoning social class, that of the bourgeoisie, of merchants and craftsmen. As mentioned before, as a supremely privileged class, boyars kept their dowry contracts privately and consequently there are only a handful of such contracts to be found in the court archives. Of the few contracts we have at hand, for example, many belong to families of low-ranking boyars who had lost much of their fortune or whose members, although wealthy, were involved in the local administration and were asked to implement the new legislation that was just beginning to come into force, namely the Organic Regulation. They are an example of the class to which they belonged, but their example was only followed later, towards the end of the century. They entered matrimonial alliances with foreigners, with other boyar families, or with what we might call liberal professionals or freelancers, such as magistrates and officers. The boyar lady Aristița Grădișteanu, for instance, married her daughter Fedonia to Raoul de Pontbriant, the descendent of an impoverished French family working as a teacher in Wallachia.⁵⁸ The daughter inherited an estate from her grandmother, which the son-in-law could sell only if “he buys another estate closer to Bucharest”;⁵⁹ in addition, she inherited a thousand *galbeni* (gold coins) and Gypsy slaves.⁵⁹ Similarly, when she married the Russian captain Ioan Vasilie Grugopov, Zinca Greceanu received from her mother and brothers a vineyard worth 1,200 *galbeni*, 1,000 *galbeni* in cash, jewellery worth 250 *galbeni* and clothing worth the same sum.⁶⁰ Constantin Lecca, a teacher in Craiova hailing from a merchant family in Transylvania, married Victoria Oteteleşanu in 1836. The dowry contract he received from his mother-in-law Catinca is substantial: half of the Loloesti estate, an empty lot to build a house in the Petru Bojii neighbourhood, money, livestock, clothing, jewellery, silverware, mirrors and furniture.⁶¹ The owner of a printing house and promoter of cultural life, Lecca went on to become a well-known painter, especially a portraitist of his family and of the Oltenian elite, before moving to Bucharest as a teacher.⁶² Thus, matrimonial alliances were not just a means of transmission of goods, but also showcased the formative role played in society by the networks of power behind those partnerships. Local boyars wanted to establish themselves as the elite, to acquire their own power, far from the overbearing influence of the capital, and, if possible, to hold higher administrative positions. Marrying a less well-off person was permitted only if the suitor was a foreigner of good reputation and respectable origin; if the suitor was Romanian, he had to be a good practitioner in a profession valuable to the group.⁶³

⁵⁸ Raul de Pontbriant (1811–1891) is the author of a Romanian-French dictionary (1862) and of a manual of French language (1867), his works being subsidised by the state.

⁵⁹ DJAN Dolj, Tribunalul Dolj. Secția III, 7/1844, dowry contract no. 13, of 12 September 1848, not numbered.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, dowry contract no. 33 of 5 January, not numbered.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, 2/1841, dowry contract no. 4, not numbered.

⁶² Barbu Theodorescu, *Constantin Lecca*, Bucharest, 1969, pp. 22–23.

⁶³ Giovanni Montroni, *Nobilul*, in *Omul secolului al XIX-lea*, ed. by Ute Frevort, H.-G. Haupt, Iași, 2002, p. 292, who makes an analysis of the Italian aristocracy and observes the same pattern for the urban provincial representatives.

These considerations, however, only apply to those boyars whose dowry contracts are kept in the court archives. The situation is radically different with regard to the other social classes, where a gender comparison (Table 1) surprisingly shows cases where the wife endowed the husband.

Table 1
Persons Receiving the Dowry as Shown in 250 Dowry Contracts

Person receiving the dowry	Number of cases	Percentage
Daughter	178	71%
Husband	36	14%
Sister	22	9%
Niece	5	2%
Orphan girl	5	2%
Maid	2	1%
Wife	1	0.5%
Unnamed lady (<i>jupâneasă</i>)	1	0.5%
TOTAL	250	100%

Source: DJAN Dolj, Tribunalul Dolj. Secția III, registers nos. 2/1837, 3/1837, 1/1838, 2/1841, 7/1844–1850, 4/1849, 1/1856–1859.

In these situations, either the dowry was a gift from the bride's parents or the future bride had worked very hard to put it together. Whichever the case, one thing was certain: the bride belonged to the lower classes and her dowry represented her only power. When widows remarried, they might, if possible, want to emphasise the differences of gender and age within the couple. In fact, this is what Maria did on 23 May 1850 when she named her new husband owner of half of her store: "due to his youth (*junia*) because I am a widow and I had two husbands and upon my death I want him to inherit the other half of the store."⁶⁴ Many other women proceeded in a similar manner. In the rare case of a deceased father, the sons would join the mother to give the dowry to her daughter on behalf of the missing head of the family.

During this period, dowries tended to incorporate also premarital gifts (*darul dinaintea nunții*) from the future groom and his family, which were consequently protected in a court of law and passed down to future heirs. In fact, dowry contracts include at the end a number of conditions regarding the future status of certain properties, in the event of their being sold, exchanged or co-used, which proves the existence of a partial transfer. Sometimes the comments accompanying such conditions show how the endower perceives the law and how he wants the succession among his children to proceed. For instance, here is a father passing down his estate, with the daughter receiving: "the third part of the Coțofeni estate, the dowry of her mother, and after my passing half of all the land, and before that a third belongs to her brother Todorache and another third is my right as long as I

⁶⁴ DJAN Dolj, Tribunalul Dolj. Secția III, 7/1844, dowry contract no. 11, not numbered.

live as described here by the law, while my son-in-law as an only child will inherit his parents' whole fortune."⁶⁵

Dividing the estate in three parts does not mean a gender-equal succession because the family estate, which also bears the family name of Gigartu-Viișoara, was passed down to the son. The estate mentioned in the dowry contract was in fact passed down from the mother's side and the fact that the daughter receives fewer properties than her brother is conveniently compensated for by the well-off situation of her husband. Here, the father easily adjusted the dowry to the future social status of his daughter.⁶⁶

II. CIRCULATION OF GOODS

II. 1. TRANSFERRED PROPERTY, MOVABLE PROPERTY REAL ESTATE PROPERTY, TRANSFERRED WITHIN THE FAMILY

"[T]hey left with their dowry from the parental wealth."⁶⁷ So declares Tiță Protopopescu in the summer of 1844, when he gives his daughter Ioana as dowry on her marriage two pieces of land (one, he explicitly states, being for the construction of a house), twenty *rubiyes* for a necklace of gold coins, silver belt clasps, together with other movable goods, all valuable. Like all parents who came to the law court to register and authenticate a dowry contract, he was asked about his right of possession over the properties that he was giving. In the first place what mattered was the situation of the land and buildings, and only in the second place that of the movable goods. The father states that one of the places was bought and the other inherited, and his presentation of the situation of his family reveals part of the sources of inheritance in Wallachia: "[T]his [place] remained [to him] as inheritance from his parents and he has owned it for more than thirty years because he had no other siblings except some sisters and they left with their dowry [*i.e.* in place of an inheritance] from the parental wealth."⁶⁸

For the father, the dowry constitutes the girls' inheritance from the parental wealth. And he asks that it be the same for his son-in-law, especially as he has been correct and has given all the goods "now, at the wedding." If Ioana does not have children, then after her death the goods will return to her blood family; at the same time, having received her dowry, the daughter "should have no reason to seek anything more from the house of my heirs."⁶⁹ But is this an exceptional case? The problem of the connection between dowry and inheritance has long been debated in

⁶⁵ Ioan Gigurtu for his daughter Marsica (Maria), married to I. Broșteanu; DJAN Dolj, Tribunalul Dolj. Secția III, 7/1844, dowry contract no. 40.

⁶⁶ Anna Bellavitis, *Women, Family, and Property in Early Modern Venice*, in *Across the Religious Divide*, ed. by Jutta Gisela Sperling, Shona Kelly Wray, p. 177, who shows that the dowry should not be "proportional to family wealth or to the sons' inheritance."

⁶⁷ "au ieșit cu zestrea lor din averea părintească."

⁶⁸ DJAN Dolj, Tribunalul Dolj. Secția III, 7/1849, dowry contract no. 5 of 20 June 1844, not numbered.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*.

Romanian historiography, and Violeta Barbu's analysis of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century practice shows clearly that *înfrățirea* and substitution were possible responses under customary law.⁷⁰ Women started out as heiresses to paternal and parental wealth, but as the dowry became a practice in itself (the carrying out of a specific action, at the wedding), they no longer figured in the discussion of the division of what was left of the parental wealth. Thus by the middle of the seventeenth century, the dowry was their form of access to their inheritance,⁷¹ and in the following period the provisions for its juridical protection grew.⁷² Caragea's Law Code (1818), which excluded endowed daughters from the parental inheritance, did no more than confirm what was already happening. Endowed daughters had already received their share of the inheritance on marriage.⁷³ For the period of the Organic Regulation and the years leading up to it, it has already been shown how the valuation of the dowry and its being guaranteed against creditors served to protect it and were rights that women made use of. They were granted properties and, in the case of the present corpus, it is almost solely when these are included in the dowry contract that their history is recorded. The history was necessary to demonstrate their provenance and the right to grant them. It was on the basis of this information that the contract was authenticated. Thus we can see the existence of a plurality of situations: the properties might be part of the parental wealth (received as sole heir or together with brothers/sisters), from the father's wealth, from the mother's dowry or from the goods owned jointly by the couple. The majority of cases in which no explanatory details are given concern dowry contracts listing only movable good such as jewels or clothes, in which case there was little danger of litigation; in the rare cases where immovable properties come without such details it is stated that the documentary evidence has been lost and that the person in question is "in rightful possession" as confirmed by witnesses.

Table 2

Source of Origin / Previous Ownership of Properties Given in Dowry Contracts

Origin / previous ownership of the immovable goods	Number	% of total
Not stated	37	15%
Father's property (inherited, bought by him)	75	30%
Mother's property (dowry, inheritance)	46	18%
Parental patrimony (common goods <i>i.e. avere părintească</i>)	79	31%

⁷⁰ Violeta Barbu, *Familia și sistemele succesoriale în țara obiceiului. Substituția*, in eadem, *De bono coniugali. O istorie a familiei din Țara Românească în secolul al XVII-lea*, Bucharest, 2003, pp. 100–118, using 67 documents from *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, Seria B, *Țara Românească* collection for the period 1400–1653.

⁷¹ Eadem, *Ordo amoris*, p. 210.

⁷² *Ibidem*, pp. 214–215.

⁷³ See the works of G. Fotino on the matter, who argues that the Slavic influences were not so powerful in the Romanian Principalities; G. Fotino, *Curs de istoria dreptului românesc*, vol. I, Bucharest, 1940–1941, p. 507.

Received by the woman on her first marriage	11	4%
Donation (by other persons than her parents)	5	2%
TOTAL	253	100%

Source: DJAN Dolj, Tribunalul Dolj. Secția III, registers nos. 2/1837, 3/1837, 1/1838, 2/1841, 7/1844–1850, 4/1849, 1/1856–1859.

Thus, shops, houses or estates were inherited not only by sons, but also by daughters. Daughters might choose to pass given property down the female line. This is the case of the Chințescu *cula*, whose construction, started in 1818 by the low-ranking boyar Răducan Cioabă, was completed by his widow and her new husband in 1822. The property was inherited by their daughter, Stanca, who, in turn, passed it on to her daughter Maria when she married Dinu Bălțeanu. Their daughter Aritia then became next in line.⁷⁴ In 1845, in addition to an inn, Păuna Burlănoaia endowed her daughter Elenca with jewellery and clothing and “forty stânjeni⁷⁵ from our estate, endowed by my parents, in Mălăești, Dolj county [...], a vineyard which I own according to my dowry contract.”⁷⁶ Even if they administered and inherited the land or property received by their wives as dowry, the husbands also perceived it as property transmissible to daughters. Furthermore, in the case of considerable wealth, customarily dowries became the transitory channels through which property was transferred among women of the same family. Being placed in a position of financial superiority allowed women the privilege of choice. When he endowed his daughter Saftica with a large amount of property in 1850, Dincă Furtiță makes sure to mention both at the beginning and at the end of the dowry contract the role his mother-in-law had played in establishing the estate in Raznic, Dolj County. On land endowed to his wife, he had built a house and he now endowed his daughter with “two hundred stânjeni from the Raznicu estate, which I also received as dowry from her ladyship my mother-in-law Manda Amărasca, on which I built the brick houses and other annexes.”⁷⁷

Still alive at the time of her granddaughter’s marriage, the logothete’s wife Amărasca rises to the occasion by adding at the end of the document that she is also endowing part of the estate on which she lives (Cureaua Mărului), a property almost equal to that already given by the bride’s father. Basically, this is a property

⁷⁴ Radu Crețeanu, Sarmiza Crețeanu, *op. cit.*, p. 29; Iancu Atanasescu, Valeriu Grama, *op. cit.*, p. 98. At the same time, each new owner enlarged and beautified the house. These additions were removed during the communist period restoration of the house in 1966–1967 by a team led by Iancu Atanasescu. For more on Stanca’s relationship with her parents, especially after she eloped with the young Grecescu, see Nicoleta Roman, *Deznădăjduită muiere n’au fost ca mine. Femei, onoare și păcat în Valahia secolului al XIX-lea*, Bucharest, 2016, pp. 135–137.

⁷⁵ Unit of length used before the introduction of the metric system. It varied between 1.96 m and 2.23 m.

⁷⁶ DJAN Dolj, Tribunalul Dolj. Secția III, 3/1837, dowry contract no. 11; similarly, no. 20 from the same year.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, 1/1856, dowry contract no. 43 of 2 June 1850.

created and enlarged exclusively by women for women. In this situation, the contract is made without any claims, but there are cases when dowry contracts specifically state that the endower (an elderly relative, either a parent, an uncle or an aunt) lives on the estate and the property transfer will be complete only after their passing.

Another important feature that emerges from the analysis of the present corpus is that although these women receive properties, there is a tendency not to give them those that imply an active participation. They get estates (or parts of them, measured in *stânjeni*), vineyards, orchards and/or houses (or a place to build upon), but less often inns, shops, taverns or stores. This is to be expected if we consider the mentality of the time and the association between commerce and masculinity; despite all this, however, even the small percentage we do find represents a change, a reflection of a much more diversified reality. The law can be interpreted, and the transmission of goods takes into account the family and their economic situation.⁷⁸

In most cases, the husband undertook the management of such a property, but it had to be kept and transmitted as an inheritance and a family business. And this generally happened (as in the case of the parental home) only for sons; where women are included, this might show that the family business was also made through them. Half (12) of those who gave such properties that imply commercial activities were women, mothers who made this transfer in favour of their daughters.

Table 3
Type of Properties Given in Dowry Contracts

Type of immovable goods (property)	Number	Percentage
Land / estate	88	35%
Vineyards, orchards	72	28%
Houses	67	26%
Property with a commercial activity (inn / shop)	26	10%
Total	253	100%

Source: DJAN Dolj, Tribunalul Dolj. Secția III, registers nos. 2/1837, 3/1837, 1/1838, 2/1841, 7/1844–1850, 4/1849, 1/1856–1859.

II.2. MOVABLE GOODS: OLD AND NEW DOWRY ITEMS

From the beginning it should be pointed out that there is no correlation between quantity and money value. Clothes might be numerous, but in terms of price they do not represent very much in relation to the entire sum of the dowry. Among the most valuable items – apart from real estate – we find jewellery, means of transportation (including carriages from Vienna), silver and Gypsy slaves prior

⁷⁸ Angela Groppi, Agnès Fine, *Femmes, dot et patrimoine*, in “Clio. Femmes, genre, histoire,” 7, 1998, p. 3.

to the abolition of Gypsy slavery in February 1856 (Table 4).⁷⁹ In fact, it might be argued that in the case of the town dwellers of this region, the fewer the objects the more valuable the dowry.

Table 4
Category of Dowry Items, Considered after Their Number and
Their Average Value

Category of items (movable and immovable) included in dowry contracts	Number of items	Percentage	The average value in Romanian lei per item (only if the sum is mentioned) ⁸⁰
Clothes	1995	27.2%	2003.33
Tableware	992	11.8%	104.11
Bed linen	941	12.5%	83
Kitchen accessories	624	8.6%	29.77
Jewels	618	8.4%	397.55
Accessories	475	6.2%	23.31
Objects for godparents and parents-in-law	455	5.9%	74.88
Furniture	321	4.0%	46.47
Carpets, rugs	302	4.0%	127.79
Money	281	3.0%	9834.64
Properties	253	0.2%	1916.67
Footwear	175	2.2%	16.35
Tools	96	1.2%	11.29
Hygiene supplies	93	1.2%	62.48
Patch of materials	46	0.8%	105.96
Animals	42	0.7%	150.51
Gypsy slaves	40	0.1%	911.5
Other	19	0.5%	79.07
Religious items	22	0.0%	10

⁷⁹ In Moldavia and especially in Wallachia, Gypsies were legally slaves (*robi*), living in family/kinship groups (*sălaș*). Legally unfree, they could be bought and sold, although they enjoyed limited customary rights to own and inherit property and testify in court. Starting from the eighteenth century, the status of *robi* gradually entered the political and intellectual debate. On this topic, see Viorel Achim, *The Roma in Romanian History*, Budapest, 2004; Florina Manuela Constantin, *Liens de parenté et liens sociaux chez les esclaves tsiganes de Valachie. Le sălaș au XVII^e siècle*, in *Couleurs de l'esclavage sur les deux rives de la Méditerranée (Moyen Âge – XX^e siècle)*, ed. by Roger Botte, Alessandro Stella, Paris, 2012, pp. 283–296; Bogdan Mateescu, *Mixed Marriages Involving Gypsy Slaves in Nineteenth Century Wallachia: State and Church Policies*, in *Intermarriage throughout History*, ed. by Luminița Dumănescu, Daniela Mârza, Marius Eppel, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2014, pp. 212–231; Nicoleta Roman, *Caught between Two Worlds: The Children from Gypsy and Romanian-Gypsy Families in Wallachia (1800–1860)*, in “Romanian Journal of Population Studies,” 8, 2014, no. 1, pp. 63–86.

⁸⁰ For the documents where the price was in *galbeni* (either Austrian or Turkish), we converted into Romanian *lei* using the conversion from that time. The exchange rate mentioned in the dowry contracts is 1 *galben* = 31.5 *lei*.

Transportation	12	0.1%	1030.67
Silver priced by drams	6	0.1%	261
(Indecipherable words)	70	1.4%	234.96

Source: DJAN Dolj, Tribunalul Dolj. Secția III, registers nos. 2/1837, 3/1837, 1/1838, 2/1841, 7/1844–1850, 4/1849, 1/1856–1859.

A feature of this corpus is the frequency of Austrian gold coins (*galbeni chesaro-crăiești*) when the items are priced, followed by the Romanian currency (*lei*) and Turkish gold coins (*galbeni turcești / constantinopolitani*). This raises questions about the regional economy, about the population's financial confidence and monetary oscillations. As in the case of other autonomous provinces, for political reasons, Wallachia was allowed to have its own currency⁸¹ without affecting the revenues of the Ottomans. In 1831 the Organic Regulation instituted the *leu* as an accounting unit, based on the Dutch *leeuwendaaler* (known in the Ottoman Empire as *esedi gurus*). By mid-nineteenth century, the empire was already experiencing financial distress due to unrest and wars. The measures taken to improve the situation implied financial centralisation, bureaucratic modernisation, and a debasement of silver coins. Finally, from 1843, new gold coins (*liras*), made with Western technology, were introduced, which weighed 7.216 grams, one Austrian florin being worth 0.11 *lira*.⁸² The Romanian population did not refer to these coins by the official name of florins / kroners or liras, but rather accepted the homogenous picture of similar gold coinage (and the single term *galbeni*) with different economic values. In the corpus, we find especially Austrian *galbeni* and rarely Turkish *galbeni*, I would argue that in this last case the reference is most likely also to Austrian coinage, showing that in this region there is no preference for the local currency (*lei* are mentioned on 81 occasions) or for that of the suzerain Ottoman state, but rather for that of a neighbouring foreign empire. In itself this is an acknowledgement of Austrian economic power and influence in the Balkan space.

The objects that are included in the dowry contracts do not always remain the same; transformations appear even here and the items and the categories to which they belong “convey and condense value.”⁸³ Thus we can trace a regional identity, a distinctiveness in use or interpretation as well as variations in the price and how this identity circumscribes itself within a larger, European space.

A) JEWELLERY, PRECIOUS METALS AND HABERDASHERY

If rings, brooches or pearls are a habit of luxury, another adornment to be mentioned here is the *salbă* (necklace made of valuable coins) or, equally important,

⁸¹ Sevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire*, Cambridge, 2000, pp. 88–89.

⁸² *Ibidem*, pp. 188–189, 195–196, 208–209; Edhem Eldem, *A History of the Ottoman Bank*, Istanbul, 1999, p. 21 mentions this action in connection with “the creation of a financial market open to banking activity.”

⁸³ Fred R. Myers, *Introduction*, in *The Empire of Things: Regimes of Value and Material Culture*, ed. by Fred R. Myers, Santa Fe, 2001, p. 1.

the *galbeni* given for making it. However, not all coins fitted the bill and Austrian royal *galbeni* were preferred both because of their value and because, if need be, their aesthetic function could easily be changed into practical exchange value as currency. The *salbă* was an adornment specific to the Balkans, being found in Serbia, Turkey, Greece and Bulgaria in a variety of models proudly worn at weddings of wealthy families. Throughout the Romanian space, young peasant women wore a less valuable *salbă* made out of lower-value coins (*creițari*, *bani*) at various festive moments in their villages. This was a way of imitating the elite and gaining status in the rural community. In their turn, boyars were influenced by the West to which they aspired and by the Orient, to which they belonged and where they travelled for political and economic purposes. However, this mobility and hierarchy of influences from the outside to the inside was not definitive. For instance, in the period leading to the 1848 revolution, together with the traditional garb, the *salbă* became an element used by the elite in a process of national identification.⁸⁴ Thus a synthesis was created between the simplicity of the folk costume and the luxury of the high-ranking boyar women, adorned with buckles, ermine fur and multilayered Austrian *galbeni* necklaces. This symbol of feminine identity sought both to resonate with the European romantic ideal of the nation and to determine an acceptance of the individual by all social milieux. The portraits made in this period by Carol Popp de Szathmari, C.D. Rosenthal and Mihail Lapaty are the proof. The *salbă*, *galbeni* and *pafta* (silver belt clasp) were taken from dowry contracts and dowry chests and reinterpreted as decorative elements of a national myth. After the 1860s, when Romania was recognised as a state, such a costume came to serve as a gift in the diplomatic milieu. Empress Eugenie (1826–1920) of France (1853–1870) received it and used it in a photographic session.⁸⁵ Thus, we may observe how an object can be both a “commodity” and a “treasure” in different social strata; and, furthermore, how it can prove the co-existence of multiple regimes of value.⁸⁶

Another important feature dating from the Organic Regulation period was the weighing of jewellery using the *dram* (plural *dramuri*) as a standard unit of weight (3.18 grams), which enhanced the appreciation given to metals. This practice also applied to silverware: pairs of belt clasps of “silver, sixty-six *dramuri*” with “another gilded pair, forty *dramuri*,”⁸⁷ “small silver bowl with teaspoons of one hundred and ten *dramuri*, with one *dram* costing sixty *parale*”⁸⁸ or “430 silver *dramuri* in spoons, trays and others”⁸⁹ and so on. Even though it is particularly characteristic of merchant families or of families with merchant ties, inventorying goods by weight and price is attributed to the practice started during the eighteenth century of marking objects

⁸⁴ Cătălina Mihalache, *Costumul “național” românesc: geneza unui simbol identitar*, în “Anuarul Institutului de Istorie ‘A.D. Xenopol’,” LIV, 2017, pp. 207–228.

⁸⁵ Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, *Modă și societate urbană*, p. 172.

⁸⁶ Fred R. Myers, *op. cit.*, pp. 6, 9.

⁸⁷ DJAN Dolj, Tribunalul Dolj, Secția III, 3/1837, dowry contract no. 23 of 7 February 1849.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, 1/1856, dowry contract no. 1 from 1850.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, dowry contract no. 11 of 12 February 1855.

and especially pieces made out of precious metal. Quality control was no longer performed by craftsmen's corporations but by individual states in various ways, with silverware for instance bearing one or more marks, depending on the region, as was the case in Russia.⁹⁰ There is no way of knowing whether all sets of silverware were completely marked, but sometimes their provenance is specifically indicated in the dowry contract, as in the case of the set Gheorghe Coțofenescu gave to his daughter Zinca, which is mentioned as having been "bought in Russia and weighing one thousand one hundred and twenty."⁹¹ It is therefore obvious that objects included in dowry contracts were not exclusively created locally or regionally, but were part of an intense cultural and consumer goods exchange between neighbouring empires which made certain luxury goods such as *paftale* (belt clasps) highly desirable items in any dowry contract. Another aspect worth mentioning is the more and more frequent presence of items of jewellery made from "French gold"; this is a reference to the gold marked in that country and not to a special type of gold. After the Napoleonic wars, France became once again an important actor in fashion and renewed its favoured relations with the Ottoman Empire, through which its goods reached Wallachia. In comparison, Britain started to take an interest in this market relatively late, and it was only at the end of the eighteenth century that it achieved a status that France already had.⁹²

B) DISHWARE AND SILVERWARE

According to an old bourgeois concept, the comfiture set attested to the hostess quality of the wife, the so-called mistress of the house in charge of hospitality. This attribute was not negligible because it contributed to the public image of the family and especially of the husband. Romanian custom (possibly found in the Balkans, too) required that guests should be greeted with water, lemonade, coffee and jam. I shall not present here the civilising effect the adoption of silverware had on the boyars because this has already been interpreted for the Romanian space.⁹³ The conclusion drawn shows that silver cutlery as "an object of

⁹⁰ *Mobilier și argintărie în Europa secolului XIX: catalog de expoziție*, Bucharest, 1999, pp. 20–23. For instance, this happened in Austria in 1784 and in France in 1797.

⁹¹ DJAN Dolj, Tribunalul Dolj. Secția III, 1/1838, dowry contract no. 2 from 1838.

⁹² Christine Laidlaw, *The British in the Levant. Trade and Perceptions of the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century*, London, New York, 2010, pp. 17–18; Constantin Ardeleanu, *Evoluția intereselor economice și politice britanice la gurile Dunării (1829–1914)*, Brăila, 2008, pp. 35–38. For the Romanian situation see Paul Cernovodeanu, *England's Trade Policy in the Levant and Her Exchange of Goods with the Romanian Countries under the Latter Stuarts*, transl. by M. Lăzărescu, Bucharest, 1972, followed by *Relațiile comerciale româno-engleze în contextul politicii orientale a Marii Britanii (1803–1878)*, Cluj-Napoca, 1986. The English diplomatic reports were published by Paul Cernovodeanu, *Rapoarte consulare și diplomatice engleze privind Principatele Dunărene (1800–1812)*, Brăila, 2007.

⁹³ Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu, *Patimă și desfătare. Despre lucrurile mărunte ale vieții cotidiene în societatea românească (1750–1830)*, Bucharest, 2015, pp. 123–170. For references to

prestige, came in late and with difficulty”⁹⁴ and was only used occasionally, though the proliferation of imitations made out of less expensive metals such as tin shows that cutlery entered everyday use.⁹⁵ In a city such as Craiova, where the inhabitants enjoyed prosperity and considered the urban space where they lived to be another capital city,⁹⁶ the adoption of silverware happened much faster than might have been expected. Most dowry lists include silverware sets, small ones for the married couple and/or larger ones, with silver cutlery, plates and bowls for six or twelve people. Extremely expensive crystal bowls are also present. Cheap comfiture trays were made from common material and those valued at around 50–63 *lei* were imported. In some cases, we know they originated in Leipzig; in other cases foreign provenance may be guessed at from the price. Porcelain, another exotic element, is rarely mentioned and only appears later on.

C) CLOTHING, FOOTWEAR AND TEXTILES

Romanian peasant blouses (sg. *ie*, pl. *ii*), dresses and calico skirts formed the basis of a wardrobe. These items of clothing were cheap and affordable, usually homemade (*de casă*) or bought on the local market. Expensive textiles were muslin, silk, and satin together with combinations between these materials and lace. As a peculiarity, there are a significant number of cases when, in addition to ready-made clothes, women bought materials which were later used to tailor “new dresses.” As for fur, we might expect to find a whole variety of furs during the period under examination, but in fact only the most common rabbit and fox furs were used. The term *nafea*, which designates the fur on the fox’s belly, is often associated with long garments, a reminder of the Oriental *giubele* (long overcoats) that boyars wore at the beginning of that century. The *cațaveică* (from the Ukrainian *kakavejka*), originating in the rural areas, is another item of clothing which incorporates fur. It was a rustic fur-lined medium-length long-sleeved women’s coat, typical of the South-East European region, made out of ordinary cloth, or velvet in the most expensive version. The *malotea* (also called *scurteică*, occasionally fur-lined), a more stylised version, with furred collar and cuffs, is frequently

silverware and especially the use of forks, see pp. 140–147, 149–154. Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu shows that individuals ate with their hands at the beginning of the eighteenth century and that only boyars, following the example of Ruling Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu adopted spoons, two-pronged forks for large pieces of meat and three-pronged forks for regular dishes. Eastern and Western etiquette were different from each another (p. 145) and the Russian occupation brought about the imposition of Western good manners. For the way in which the French and Western influence was felt at the level of Romanian society via the Russian presence see Pompiliu Eliade, *Influența franceză asupra spiritului public în România: originile. Studiu asupra stării societății românești în vremea domniilor fanariote*, Bucharest, 2006.

⁹⁴ Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu, *Patimă și desfătare*, p. 142.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 146.

⁹⁶ Neagu Djuvara, *Între Orient și Occident: țările române la începutul epocii moderne (1800–1848)*, Bucharest, 2005, p. 201.

mentioned in the dowry contracts studied. Such clothing items, of local origin, were used by the elite as indoor clothes.⁹⁷ During the 1840s and 1850s, the overcoat is also mentioned, albeit rarely. With regard to textiles in Craiova, although we may observe a growing fusion between rural products and those coming from the capital, we cannot point towards profound Westernisation yet. Most likely, in smaller provincial towns, common materials, homemade or locally crafted, outnumbered imported textiles.

Of course, there are also novelties: the already mentioned overcoats, the English calico, the dressing gown, which was worn more and more often from the end of the 1840s. Materials and cloths such as *madipolon*, *percal*, *tradidan* or *dimicoton*, which could hardly be found on the Romanian market at the beginning of the century, were now accessible, cheap and commonly-used, having lost the status of luxury items.

In terms of shoes, we may distinguish three types: made of velvet, of carpet material and of *brunel*, with *ștrimfi* (socks). The *brunel* shoes, a consequence of contacts with the Austrian Empire, were made out of dark wool cloth; the name comes from the German *brunelle* and is associated with the socks of the same origin. *Cipici* (cloth shoes) and *papuci* (house slippers) are also worth mentioning.

The wedding dress, with the much-sought after veil, was a relatively new item. Before Queen Victoria's lavish wedding, which took place on 10 February 1840, the wedding dress could be made out of almost any material and could be almost any colour (although white was preponderantly preferred)⁹⁸; but the publicity that accompanied this event allowed the model gradually to spread and finally to be imposed as a unique gown, different from any other dress. The moment of the wedding had the same meaning for all women and, regardless of social class, the dress had to reflect the very best and the very latest in fashion at that time.⁹⁹ In the document corpus I am working with, gowns bearing the specific name of wedding dress ("for the bride") appear only nine times and, only once, as if by chance, is a wedding dress mentioned before 1840.¹⁰⁰ As far as the material of the dress was concerned, silk was preponderantly used and in 1842 one endower even opted for creating a wedding set comprising the dress itself accompanied by a bonnet; as for the colour, this was either not mentioned or was an evanescent pastel.¹⁰¹ Wedding rings, as items accompanying the bride's wedding set, are only

⁹⁷ Ion Ghica, *Opere*, vol. I, ed. by Ion Roman, Bucharest, 1967, p. 128.

⁹⁸ *From Queen to Empress. Victorian Dress, 1837–1877, An Exhibition at the Costume Institute. December 15, 1988 – April 16, 1989*, ed. by Caroline Goldthorpe, New York, 1988, pp. 61–62 shows that women could marry even in a travel dress.

⁹⁹ Madeleine Ginsburg, *Women's Dress before 1900, Four Hundred Years of Fashion*, ed. by Nathalie Rothstein, London, 1984, p. 37.

¹⁰⁰ Mentioned for 1839, 1842, 1844, 1847 (2 cases), 1849, 1850.

¹⁰¹ This coincides with the analysis of other types of sources: Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, *People Who Loved Style, Chic Fashion, Memorable Times*, in *Clothes Make the Man. Six Centuries of Clothing History. Garments, Costumes, Uniforms, Accessories. Exhibition Catalogue*, Bucharest, 2014, p. 21.

mentioned two times, both after 1850, but separately from the wedding dress.¹⁰² Thus, it can be said that the diffusion and acceptance of the wedding dress model was still in flux, especially since the Romanian countries were in the sphere of influence of France rather than that of England.

D) FROM AN EXOTIC TO A COMMON ITEM IN A DOWRY CONTRACT

Here we may distinguish three categories: the flat iron, umbrellas and watches, and furniture. While ironing was customary in the Balkans, the frequency of the flat iron itself increases during the 1850s, especially that with “two tongues.” Similarly, parasols are found in almost all dowry lists from the period, each priced according to the value of the material from which it was made. Although they had a rapid circulation in mid-eighteenth-century Western societies like England,¹⁰³ pocket watches remained luxury items for the Romanian bourgeois milieu of Craiova, mirroring to an extent the situation in the Ottoman Empire. Those listed are rather expensive, one made out of *madem* (alloy) being priced around 50–90 *lei*, compared to the less expensive table clocks costing around 22 *lei* and 20 *parale*. For Western societies, some of the accessories (parasols, gloves, fans and vanity set) might be seen as “middle-class adjustments to aristocratic style.”¹⁰⁴ Although I accept this idea, in the Romanian case it applies only to the first two categories as their number is quite high in my corpus. When it comes to furniture, various items start to appear in documents during the late 1850s. On 12 February 1855, Maria *sin* Popa Barbul, without apparently belonging to a merchant or low-ranking boyar family, endowed her daughter not only with money, jewellery, silverware, dishware and clothing, but also with: a round table, a corner table, a cypress chest, a large vanity mirror with two rows of sills, a walnut mirror with three rows, five chairs with damask upholstery and two clocks. These are among the most expensive objects listed in the document, which mentions no real estate property. However, one single object is present on all dowry lists: the so-called dowry chest, where garments and bedding sheets were kept. Almost always, the box is “padlocked, from Braşov,” but there are also instances where it was made in Leipzig or where we can assume (in the absence of any indication) that it was made in Oltenia. The small coffer and the trunk are novelties and should be considered more as objects which represent the West than as imports from the neighbouring empire. The first one indicates the intimacy of private papers and precious jewels while the second leads us to the

¹⁰² DJAN Dolj, Tribunalul Dolj, Secția III, 1/1856, dowry contract no. 13 from 4 August 1853 and 4/1849, dowry contract no. 9, date unspecified.

¹⁰³ Jan de Vries, *The Industrious Revolution*, Cambridge, 2008; John Styles, *The Dress of the People. Everyday Fashion in 18th Century England*, New Haven, 2007, pp. 97–107, associated with work and factory for the urban population; Avner Wishnitzer, *Reading Clocks, alla Turca. Time and Society in the Late Ottoman Empire*, Chicago, 2015, p. 7 argues that by the eighteenth century watches were already used in the Ottoman world, but the Muslims incorporated them to “the inner logic of their temporal culture.”

¹⁰⁴ Ariel Beaujot, *Victorian Fashion Accessories*, London, New York, 2012, p. 5.

image of a voyage. The dowry contracts show specialisation in the function of these objects: the chest (*ladă*) is for the dowry items, while the coffer (*sipet*) and the trunk (*cufăr*) are not used for such storage.

III. MEETING THE INDIVIDUAL TRADE, WOMEN AND DOWRY. CASE STUDY: THE AMAN FAMILY

In (pre)modern Craiova, the name Aman stands out as that of a family who gradually gained status and prestige, becoming known for trading in the border areas and recognised for their promotion of art. With the generous and interested support of local princes, during the mid-eighteenth century, several families of Macedo-Romanian and Greek merchants settled in the Romanian principalities and Transylvania, started businesses, and formed commercial companies.¹⁰⁵ Among these many families,¹⁰⁶ the most important are Petrovici-Armis, Meitani, Hagi Moscu, Solacolu, Paapa, Dimitriu, Pherekyde, Burno and Dimo. For instance, brother Dimitrie and Mihai Dimo started businesses in Craiova, Sibiu and Vienna.¹⁰⁷ For as yet unknown reasons, Dimitrie gradually gave up the name Dimo, adopted the name Aman instead, and started doing business with the state. Thus he became the main provider of butter to Vidin and of wool to the Tatars in Bugeac, while shipping his own products to Europe via Orşova on the Danube and Turnu Roşu at the entry into Transylvania through the valley of the Olt.¹⁰⁸ Over time, he diversified his commercial portfolio by taking over the monasteries' wine tax, sheep farms throughout the province, and the management of customs in Oltenia.¹⁰⁹ By working

¹⁰⁵ Olga Cicanci, *Companiile greceşti din Transilvania şi comerţul european în anii 1636–1746*, Bucharest, 1981; Olga Katsiardi-Hering, *Commerce and Merchants in Southeastern Europe, 17th–18th Centuries: "MicroDistricts" and Regions*, in "Études balkaniques," LI, 2015, no. 1, pp. 19–35; eadem, *Greek Merchant Colonies in Central and South-Eastern Europe in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, in *Merchant Colonies in the Early Modern Period*, ed. by Viktor N. Zakharov, Gelina Harlaftis, Olga Katsiardi-Hering, Abingdon, 2016, pp. 127–140; Mária Pakucs, *Between "Faithful Subjects" and "Pernicious Nation": Greek Merchants in the Principality of Transylvania in the Seventeenth Century*, in "Hungarian Historical Review," 6, 2017, no. 1, pp. 111–137.

¹⁰⁶ On merchants and their families in Wallachia see especially the works of Gheorghe Lazăr, *Les marchands en Valachie (XVII^e–XVIII^e siècles)*, Bucharest, 2006; idem, *La route vers la haute société. Les marchands et leur stratégies matrimoniales (Valachie, XVII^e–XVIII^e siècles)*, in *Social Behaviour and Family Strategies in the Balkans (16th–20th Centuries)*, ed. by Ionela Băluţă, Constanţa Vintilă-Ghiţulescu, Mihai Răzvan Ungureanu, Bucharest, 2008, pp. 39–57; idem, *De la boutique à la terre. Les marchands grecs et leurs stratégies d'insertion sociale (Valachie, XVII^e siècle)*, in "Studii şi materiale de istorie medie," XXVI, 2008, pp. 51–67, who also published a corpus of documents for this social category, *Documente privitoare la negustorii din Ţara Românească*, 2 vols., Iaşi, 2013–2014, and followed in his other studies the history of several merchant families such as Pepano, Hagi Ianuş, Papazoglu, Dimitriu etc.

¹⁰⁷ Another brother, who died in 1829, seems to have been a revenue officer.

¹⁰⁸ Anastase N. Hâciu, *Aromânii: comerţ, industrie, arte, expansiune, civilizaţie*, Focşani, 1936, p. 479.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem*; Nicolae Iorga, *Corespondenţa lui Dimitrie Aman, negustor din Craiova (1794–1834)*, Bucharest, 1913, pp. 12, 28, 31–32, 39–40.

directly with the state, Dimitrie Aman came to control trade in the border areas and established for himself a large power network. From a strictly economic point of view, Dimitrie strategically changed his family name in order to distinguish himself commercially from his brother and other related merchant families.¹¹⁰ However, even though he tried to make a new name for himself, Dimitrie did not stop collaborating with his brother and relatives; he merely did so in a less visible way.

Living in a conflict zone, constantly disputed during the Russian-Austrian-Turkish wars, ravaged by foreign powers as well as by plague, was no small feat. It was individuals who suffered as their families were broken apart and their communities struggled to preserve their unity and way of life. The Amans and other Greek families from south of the Danube were not exempted from the difficulties of Oltenian life. Married to Zamfira, who bore him Constantin (1801–1837), Dimitrie only enjoyed family life for about twelve years, as his wife died in 1813 when their son was still young. Furthermore, for almost half of his married life, Dimitrie had to witness the Russian-Turkish war, an event all family members were worried about from its inception in 1806 until its end in 1812, just a year before the death of his wife. Here is how his uncle Mihail described the war from Vienna in 1807: “the English in Constantinople coming through the Dardanelles; they frighten the city so that peace between the Turk and the Russian can never be achieved.”¹¹¹ The impact of the war on the Aman brothers’ commerce was clear and Western Europe did not look too safe for their business either.¹¹² In 1813, at the time of his wife’s death, Dimitrie was a merchant well-known among his peers, but who still had much to do to make his mark. Together with his brother Mihail, Dimitrie was creating his own commercial network, with he himself working in Ottoman Wallachia and his brother trading in Transylvania and Austrian Vienna. This seems to have been the moment when he decided to focus on doing business with the state and, together with two other Greek merchants, started “delivering butter in Vidin.”¹¹³ For his son Constantin, however, Dimitrie envisioned a liberal and more bourgeois profession. He sent him to study medicine in Vienna, but the son had no such “inclination.”¹¹⁴ The question of marrying again was raised from the beginning and even his brother encouraged him not to stay a widower for too long: “do not get bitter and do not suffer, but do your human duty, that is, make sure you marry again and do not leave your little home without care, because you yourself are well used to having a wife: for this find a good soul and marry her.”¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Alexandru-Constantin V. Perietzianu, *Despre familiile unor neguțători veniți de la sud de Dunăre în a doua jumătate a secolului al 18-lea și în prima jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea, ce s-au așezat în România*, vol. I, Bucharest, 1985, p. 17. Perietzianu mentions that the Pherekyde, Aman and Dimo families have a common origin.

¹¹¹ Nicolae Iorga, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

¹¹² *Ibidem*, p. 172.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 22–23, Constantin’s letter of 12 November 1816.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 173, letter of 23 September 1813.

The perspective on the role that the woman had to have in the Aman family is clear: she had to remain strictly private. In line with the unwritten edicts of the times, the spheres of action were clearly separated: the man dealt with everything relating to public space and family representation, while the woman took care of the house and children. But, as in the case of other merchant families, the two spheres intertwined; gender roles did not remain static but overlapped and alternated in various moments.¹¹⁶

Dimitrie Aman decided to marry Despina Paris,¹¹⁷ a woman from the same Greek community to which he belonged. The merchant then became a *serdar*, a middle-ranking boyar,¹¹⁸ and had five children by his new wife, three sons (Gheorghe, Alexandru and Theodor) and two daughters (Lucsandra and Sevastița). Although posterity selectively remembers the names of the last two sons, Alexandru as a magistrate and philanthropist and Theodor as a painter and academician, both men of culture, their personalities are not of interest here. For the purposes of the current case study, we will focus on the women of the Aman family and on their positions concerning the dowry system with regard to judicial aspects and to the transmitted goods. We can better see this dynamic at work after 1833, the year when Despina Aman became a widow and was forced to administer the patrimony her husband had left behind.

The 1838 census registers the Aman household in the blue section of Craiova¹¹⁹ number 851 as having 12 Gypsy slaves, 4 horses, 2 oxen, 6 pigs, 2 vineyards and orchards. Still young, the thirty-five-year old widow lived in the house with her children¹²⁰ and, according to her contemporaries, was “superiorly cultivated,” and had a good knowledge of legislation and of common law.¹²¹ Trying to recover some debts in order to restore the family patrimony, Despina Aman called several of the local boyars to court, where she represented herself or sought legal representation by a lawyer. Among the many trials she started, the one that best showcases

¹¹⁶ For South-Eastern Europe see Evguenia Davidova, *Balkan Transitions to Modernity and Nation-States: Through the Eyes of Three Generations of Merchants (1780s–1890s)*, Leiden, 2013, pp. 101–128; Nicoleta Roman, *Women in Merchant Families, Women in Trade in Mid-19th Century Romanian Countries*, in *Women, Consumption, and the Circulation of Ideas in South-Eastern Europe, 17th–19th Centuries*, ed. by Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu, Leiden, 2017, pp. 169–199, who both argue for a discreet presence of women on the economic market.

¹¹⁷ Despina, known after her marriage by the nickname Pepica (Pipi/Pepi), also appears in the documents as Didica or Didina. This reflects the manner in which she presented herself in front of the others and the degree of closeness between the individuals (in the case of diminutives).

¹¹⁸ The *serdar* was a boyar of the third class, eighth rank in the Romanian hierarchy. *Arhondologiile Țării Românești de la 1837*, ed. by Dan Cernovodeanu, Irina Gavrilă, Brăila, 2002, p. 5. In this period, the Organic Regulation (1831) established three classes and nine ranks for the boyars. *Regulamentul organic, Anexe*, lit. A, B, C, D.

¹¹⁹ Wallachian cities were divided into sections named colours (*vopseli*): green, blue, red, black, yellow.

¹²⁰ Direcția Arhivelor Naționale Istorice Centrale, Catagrafii. According to the ages mentioned in the census: Sevastița (18 years), Alexandru (16 ani), Gheorghe (14 years), Ruxandra (12 years) and Theodor (8 years).

¹²¹ C.I. Istrati, *Theodor Aman. Biografie*, Bucharest, 1904, p. 8.

her legal knowledge was against Iancu Lahovari, the chairman of the Vâlcea County Tribunal. In 1835, shortly after her husband died, she requested a hold on Lahovari's assets for not having paid a decade-old debt to Aman; moreover, her claim took into account the income from his estates, his mill, inn and houses, as well as his wages and the "horse carriage from Vienna with two dark horses." That is, she claimed everything that had a price. In his defence, the boyar Lahovari said he could not afford the hold as claimed by the widow because the estates and the vineyard were his wife's dowry, while the inn had already been leased "to pay for his children's expenses." Under these circumstances, the claim was revised because Despina Aman understood that a dowry was guaranteed as part of a family patrimony on which no hold could be imposed. Lahovari in turn showed the judges which assets and how much of his income were part of his wife's dowry, what properties were mortgaged and the assets the hold could be put on. He estimated that his total net worth of 30,000 *lei* would allow him to pay the 8,000 *lei* debt and still have enough money left, but according to Despina's estimations his debt to her late husband including interest was the equivalent of about 17,586 *lei*. The dispute was finally settled in court and Lahovari had to pay up his debt.

This case is relevant because it demonstrates two important aspects regarding the dowry system: 1. the dowry was a means of creating and enlarging the family patrimony which was protected by law against any damage or harmful claim, and 2. irrespective of gender, this provision was collectively understood and respected in a court of law. Women thus had the power to pass their dowries down, manage them, and recover them if they were squandered by their husbands, but they could under no circumstances raise any claims regarding any dowry in the patrimony of another family, even if needed to repay a debt. That Despina Aman fully understood this to be the case is further proven by the fact that, immediately after the trial with Lahovari, she started drafting her daughters' dowry contracts. The first document was registered on 15 May 1840 – Sevastița marries Ioan (Iancu) Socolescu –, and the second on 17 March 1847 – Ruxandra marries *pitar*¹²² Gheorghe Urdăreanu. For both contracts, Despina Aman obtained the seal of approval of the tribunal, together with the signed confirmation of both sons-in-law that the goods had been received.

The two dowry contracts are similar to others belonging to the same social class in that they contained a short inventory of the transmitted goods, with an emphasis on their value and not their quantity. The properties are inspected by the tribunal to see that they are not mortgaged, under litigation or in a state of degradation that may not be acceptable to the sons-in-law. Despina Aman provides all the documentation needed, including the property deeds, showing the estates had been purchased by *serdar* Dimitrie Aman between 1806 and 1818. This is further proof that the widow "as a mother and legal guardian owns the estates and according to common law she is allowed to pass them down to her daughters via dowry contracts."¹²³

¹²² The *pitar* was a boyar of third class, ninth rank in the Romanian hierarchy. *Arhondologiile Țării Românești*, ed. by Dan Cernovodeanu, Irina Gavrilă, p. 6.

¹²³ DJAN Dolj, Tribunalul Dolj. Secția III, 3/1837, dowry contract no. 18, f. 23v.

Even though it was considered immovable property, which could only be inherited, an estate passed down via a dowry contract could nevertheless be replaced by another estate of similar value, in which case that property became inalienable. The transaction which allowed this replacement was called *antipricon* and was fully recognised by law.¹²⁴ Despina Aman herself helped her son-in-law Ioan Socolescu with an affidavit registered in court in 1843 allowing Socolescu to replace the Zănoaga estate, acquired through his wife's dowry, with an estate in Valea Seacă.

Both daughters married representatives of the future bourgeoisie, and obtained a significant patrimony, including immovable properties, almost on a par with the wealth brought into the marriages by their husbands. The mother only retained some of the income and kept ownership over some real estate because she still needed to care for her youngest son, Theodor, with whom she shared the house in Craiova before he left to study first in Bucharest and then in Paris.¹²⁵ One feature that we may observe in the Aman case is that women did receive properties and that dowries were seen as advanced shares of inheritance. Two other characteristics, featured mainly in merchants' dowry contracts from that period, concern the valuation of the goods not in *lei* but in Austrian *galbeni* (at a corresponding exchange rate) and the exclusive mention of items necessary to a merchant's business. The wardrobe is not listed in detail, being valued as less than one fourth of the total dowry. For boyars and merchants, real estate property, such as land and houses, and movable property, such as jewellery, silverware and Gypsy slaves, were very important, with these last having a higher value according to their skills (tailors, chefs, masons, etc.). Clothes, bedding and everyday dishware were an insignificant addition. In contrast, for workers, servants or peasants each of these items had an important role in the household.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of dowry contracts in Craiova provides us with several insights regarding both family economic strategies and the transfer of wealth along the female line. The corpus shows that women were seen as a channel of transmission for properties and movable goods into their new families. When noted, the information shows that immovable goods (estates, houses, shops, etc.) came from various sources: parental wealth, the mother's own dowry, the father's properties and so on. The analysis does not show a clear pattern of gender exclusion, but it argues for the existence of a variety of family situations, with parents often considering this process as a way to give their daughters their share of inheritance. In general, the dowry was a mix of these movable and immovable goods, with sums of money also being present.

¹²⁴ Legiuirea Caragea, which is used from 1818 until 1864, when the Civil Code was issued.

¹²⁵ Theodor received the parents' home in Craiova. Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, *Mărturii noi privitoare la Theodor Aman*, in "Studii și cercetări de istoria artei," 40, 1993, pp. 85, 91.

At the top of the social ladder, the elite was inclined to trade quantity for value, transferring fewer but far more valuable items. Investments were made in land, houses, money and jewellery, and occasionally instead of clothes the bride received a lump sum that she could spend as she wished on her wardrobe. The lower classes, on the other hand, pursued a different strategy, providing a great number of modest objects, intended for everyday use.

The practice took into consideration the accelerating pace and unstable nature of fashion, with relatively few garments and accessories (such as shawls) retaining their importance from one generation to the next. There was also a co-existence of Ottoman objects and fabrics with Western products, but at the same time the evidence of dowry contracts shows that local models still predominated until the middle of the nineteenth century. This is somewhat to be expected due to the continuous conflicts and turmoil in the region, which affected commerce and the circulation of objects. People in the provinces (such as those of Oltenia) did not immediately embrace the new models radiating from the capital (Bucharest), and the tangled history of the region likely extended the process by hampering commercial exchange. Only in the second half of the century did westernised material culture predominate among the elite and gradually spread to the other social strata. Since the only European powers which had an influential presence in the Balkans were the Ottomans, Austrians and Russians, it is no wonder that they should have been among the common providers or intermediaries. The period we have worked upon is one in which empires were still in the phase of creating their own infrastructure to reach the periphery. Thus, the trends in consumer culture converging upon the region continued to be filtered through Ottoman, Austrian, and Russian models until “a plurality of expansions” of Western commercial and political powers integrated it into the wider circuit of global flows.¹²⁶ Furthermore, where the territory was autonomous (as in our case), there was also a locally adapted use of legislation which made the inheritance pattern different from that of other Ottoman provinces such as Bulgaria.

APPENDIX

1

Dowry contract made by Despina Aman for her daughter, Sevastița, on 15 May 1840

No. 18.¹²⁷ 1840, May 15. The tribunal authentication for the contract through which *serdăreasa* Didica Aman endows her daughter, Sevastița.

¹²⁶ Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla, *The Spanish Empire, Globalization, and Cross-Cultural Consumption in a World Context, c. 1400 – c. 1750*, in *Global Goods and the Spanish Empire, 1492–1824. Circulation, Resistance and Diversity*, ed. by Bethany Aram, Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla, Basingstoke, 2014, pp. 278–279.

¹²⁷ The number of the dowry contract in the register.

In the name of the Holy Trinity, (I make) the dowry contract for my daughter Sevasti(ța), as the share she is entitled to from the parental patrimony and it is given at her marriage with Mr Ioan Socolescu, as is shown below.

No.	Lei	[The description of the received item]
1		the estates called Strâmba and Zănoaga from the south of Romanați [county], <i>plasa</i> ¹²⁸ Câmpul with all the deeds and the property map
2		an arable place in Dealu Sasului on the princely estate, which was previously a vineyard with all its deeds
3		three Gypsy souls [slaves] that is two boys and a girl
4	60000	That is sixty thousand <i>lei</i> , from which forty thousand were already given, and the remaining twenty thousand <i>lei</i> to be given within ten years without interest
5	7800	That is seven thousand eight hundred <i>lei</i> one pair of diamond earrings
6	2800	That is two thousand eight hundred <i>lei</i> in three hundred and eighty-four pearls (in a necklace) and a diamond ring
7	1000	That is one thousand <i>lei</i> for a good shawl
8	500	That is five hundred <i>lei</i> in a brooch with eight diamond stones
10	600	That is six hundred <i>lei</i> in a sable fur coat
11	300	That is three hundred <i>lei</i> in two silver candlesticks
12	290	That is two hundred ninety <i>lei</i> in a silver [indecipherable word]
13	7500	That is seven thousand five hundred <i>lei</i> , wardrobe and bedding

The Commercial Tribunal of Craiova

Following the request made by *serdăreasa* Didina Aman, signed on the recto of this contract and received at no. 1835 with the request to authenticate this contract by which she endows Sevastița her daughter on her marriage to Iancu Socolescu, there presented themselves in the courtroom of the tribunal the endower represented by the lawyer Ghiță Ioan with his status as lawyer authenticated this same year by the authorities of this city under no. 1227 together with Iancu Socolescu the son-in-law. And the dowry contract being read aloud, the endower stated that she is content with it, and likewise the son-in-law stated that he is content and that he has received all that is shown in the contract apart from twenty thousand *lei* which it remains for him to receive as is specified in the contract. Then documents of her ownership over the properties and the Gypsies that are given as dowry being requested from the endower, she showed that these were the wealth of her husband the late *serdar* Dimitrie Aman, who had them in ownership through purchase, the following documents being presented as proof:

For the estate of Strâmba and Zănoaga in the south of Romanați, of which [?] which was authenticated in the year 1818 October 28 by the honoured Divan of Craiova and from its contents the judges were satisfied that the late *serdar* Aman had bought through the Sultan's princely auction.

For the arable place were presented two deeds, one dated 1806 September 12 and the other of the year 1810 signed by Andrei from Florești, from the contents of which it was noted that the late *serdar* had also bought the vineyards that in these deeds are shown to be on the Hill of Sasau, the princely estate, the endower saying that these vineyards make up the aforementioned place that is given as dowry.

For three Gypsy souls was presented a deed of the year 1806 May 5, signed by *serdar* Alecu Bengescu and in its contents that the late *serdar* Aman sold four Gypsy souls

¹²⁸ Administrative subdivision of a county.

of [undecipherable word] namely Pană the coachman, Rada his wife, Anița and Dincă their sons, the endower saying that these three Gypsy souls that are given as dowry are among those shown to be bought by this deed, whom she states and the son-in-law has confirmed that he had also received in ownership. After the presentation of these documents, the tribunal being satisfied of the endower's ownership of the properties that are given as dowry, and next to know whether they are not subject to some circumstances of sequestration or mortgage. To this end, on the one hand, the honoured tribunal of Romanați was invited to provide information for the estate of Zănoaga as one that lies within the bounds of that county, and on the other hand, for the others the records were sought that are within this tribunal. And both from the aforementioned honoured tribunal came the answer by report no. 4024 of the 14th of the present month for the estate of Zănoaga that there it is not subject to any such circumstance, and also those here again likewise were not found to be subject.

Consequently, because after the enquiries that are shown above into this dowry contract no legal impediment was known. Thus the tribunal on this basis and according to art. 336 of the Organic Regulation authenticates it and duly enters it in the register.

President A[lexandru] Samurçaș, C. Rătescu, Constandin Dimitriu

1843, September 22

Clerk, Iancu Anghelovici

[Later annotation] Because the dowry estate that is entered in this contract, namely Zănoaga, has been replaced by *antipricon* with a portion of the estate of Valea Seacă through the fulfilling of all the formalities. As this is proven by the act of *antipricon* duly entered in the register, at no. 27, from which the honoured Department of Justice was also informed by the report of [undecipherable] deed, the year 1848, no. 174. Thus for information have signed here.

President A[lexandru] Samurçaș, C. Lăiceanu, I. Hagiad

Source: DJAN Dolj, Tribunalul Dolj, 2/1841, fols. 21v–22, copy.

2

The gift offered before the wedding by Ioan Socolescu to his wife, Sevastița Aman, on 20 May 1840

19. 1840, May 20. In name of the Lord I write all that I give as a gift before the wedding to my wife, Sevastița.

No. Lei

1 12600 In four hundred *galbeni* as 31 (lei) and 20 (paras)

2 2800 A gold bracelet with a single great diamond stone and other small diamond stones around it of two thousand eight hundred *lei*

3 1200 A gold necklace priced at one thousand two hundred *lei*

4 1800 Other small items valued at one thousand eight hundred *lei*

18400 That is (a total) of eighteen thousand four hundred *lei*, the gifts before

the wedding

Ioan I. Socolescu

Source: DJAN Dolj, Tribunalul Dolj, 2/1841, fol. 22, copy.

3

Dowry contract made by Despina Aman for her daughter, Lucsandra¹²⁹, on 17 March 1847

No. 18. 1847, March 17. Contract that shows the movable and immovable goods that I give as dowry to my daughter, Lița, who marries the *pitar* Gheorghe Urdăreanu. Also, all those that might suffer destruction, objects and prices as clearly shown below.

- 1iu Income from the land of Cornățelu estate, from Mehedinți country, seven thousand *lei* each year, which money my son-in-law will receive from me, as long as I live, and after my death, the estate will be divided into four parts and my son-in-law will get out of two one, of his choosing, that is, either a quarter of the land as his brotherly share or four thousand Austrian *galbeni* from my heirs'
- 2 A brick-built inn which I have in the city of Craiova on the road to Bucharest with all the land enclosed and the vineyard that is on the land, together with other additional buildings, stable and shed. [undecipherable words] for which I empower my son-in-law to sell them. And the money, the price he will receive on this inn will count as dowry
- 3 A [set of] silverware valued at one hundred and fifty Austrian *galbeni*, or four thousand seven hundred and twenty-five lei
- 4 strings of pearls as a necklace with a gold fastening and a diamond stone in the middle, valued at one hundred *galbeni*
- 5 a pair of diamond earrings valued at one hundred Austrian *galbeni*
- 6 a ring with a big emerald stone valued at thirty Austrian *galbeni*
- 7 a shawl valued at sixty Austrian *galbeni*
- 8 a pair of gold and turquoise earrings valued at ten Austrian *galbeni*
- 9 a gold and turquoise brooch valued at five Austrian *galbeni*
- 10 a pendant medallion with two gold and turquoise portraits valued at fifteen *galbeni*
- 11 a Gypsy called Ilie, ladies' dressmaker
- 12 wardrobe and bedding [valued at] one hundred and fifty Austrian *galbeni*

That is everything comes to twelve [dowry] items, for which on the basis of this contract we give under my signature, [and] my son-in-law will be free to incur any expense until the term we agreed verbally, and I have signed myself.

The wife of late *serdar*, Pipi Aman

Everything included in this contract I have received in full, precisely.

Gheorghe Urdăreanu

I also give to my wife, Lița, a gift before the wedding, ten thousand *lei*. No. 10,000

Gheorghe Urdăreanu

The Commercial Tribunal of Craiova

Serdăreasă Pipi Aman, endowing her daughter Luța with the items shown in this contract when she marries *pitar* Gheorghe Urdăreanu. She has asked by the request received at no. 33 that according to the legislation this contract be authenticated.

In consequence (undecipherable word) of the request she presented herself in the courtroom of the tribunal represented by the lawyer her son-in-law Iancu Socolescu with his status as

¹²⁹ Lucsandra appears in the documents as Lița, Luța or Luxița.

lawyer authenticated on 9 January of the present year, under no. 17, by the honoured administration of this city together with the son-in-law in person. And the records of this contract being read aloud, the aforementioned lawyer stated that the contract was happily made by his client, and that his client had given all the items that are listed in the contract. And the son-in-law said that he had received them. And that with the same happiness the gift has been given before the marriage that is listed in the contract. After this, documents of her ownership over the properties and the Gypsy that are given as dowry were requested from the endower. And she showed that the estate and the inn together with the vineyard were bought by her husband, the parent of the endowed, and the Gypsy is from the race of Gypsies that her husband, the parent of the endowed, obtained by purchase, presenting as evidence for this the following documents:

The year 1815, 30 September. Document of *clucer*¹³⁰ Ioan Vlădăianu authenticated on 1 October of that year and by the honoured Divan of Craiova by which it is proved that the estate of Corlăţeni was bought at auction by *serdar* Dimitrie Aman the parent of the endowed.

The year 1819, March 29. Deed undersigned by Floarea, wife of Ioniţă, and authenticated by the honoured Department of Four, from here, from which it has been noted that a vineyard on the Bucharest road with all its contents and on which the inn is also built was bought from the abovementioned [Floarea] by the same aforementioned *serdar* Aman.

The year 1818, April 16. Deed signed by Dimitrie Faroene [probable reading] by which he sells to *pitar* Aman some Gypsies in whose family it is said that the Gypsy that he is giving as dowry can be seen.

Thus, because both from these documents and from various investigations that have been made and that are shown in the notifications received at nos. 247, 376 and 660 it is proven that the estate that is entered in the contract and the inn and the Gypsy are the rightful properties of the parent of the endowed, obtained by purchase, and that the endower as a mother and guardian owns them and is free according to the law to give them as dowry. Which properties both by the confirmation that is given by the honoured tribunal of Mehedinţi for the Corlăţelu estate in its county, and after the search that has been made through the registers of this tribunal, have not been found to be subject to any circumstance of mortgage or sequestration and consequently regarding the authentication of this contract no impediment has been found.

Therefore, on these bases and according to the dispositions provided for by article 226 of the Organic Regulation the tribunal authenticates this contract to take effect, duly entering it in the register.

1848, March 31

President, *clucer* A[lexandru] Samurcaş Şt. Romăneanu *pitar* V. Pavlovici I. Hagiad
Clerk, *pitar* Iancu Anghelovici

The inn with all its contents that is entered in this contract being sold by auction at the h[onoured] commercial tribunal of Craiova for the price of ten thousand *lei*, which price of ten thousand *lei* I have received in full, I testify to this here for it to be known regarding this inn the stated price and for confirmation I sign. G. Urdăreanu

1852, August 12

¹³⁰ The *clucer* was a boyar of second class, sixth rank in the Romanian hierarchy. *Arhondologiile Țării Românești*, ed. by Dan Cernovodeanu, Irina Gavrilă, p. 5.

The Commercial Tribunal of Craiova

The brick-built inn with all its contents which is in this town and in this contract, entered as being given as dowry, has been sold by auction¹³¹ at the request of *pitar* Ghiță Urdăreanu, for the price of ten thousand *lei*, no. 10,000, which price *pitar* Ghiță Urdăreanu has rightly received from *parucic*¹³² Scarlat Parescu the buyer. As he himself gives confirmation in writing above.

1852 August 12

President, Șt. Romăneanu [indecipherable signature] V. Pavlovici Teodor G. Preda

This contract is authenticated and received. *Pitar* G. Urdăreanu

I have received the contract. G. Urdăreanu

Source: DJAN Dolj, Tribunalul Dolj. Secția III, 3/1837–1849, fols. 22v–23v, copy.

DOWRY CONTRACTS, WOMEN'S OBJECTS AND THE CIRCULATION
OF GOODS IN MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY ROMANIAN
FAMILIES. THE CASE OF OLTENIA

Abstract

The paper aims to investigate the nexus between family life, consumption, and socio-cultural changes in nineteenth-century Wallachia through the lens of dowry contracts. It also investigates the link between dowry and inheritance in an urban milieu and the type of goods and properties a woman could obtain at the moment of her marriage. By analysing a corpus of 250 dowry contracts registered in the Wallachian city of Craiova between 1831 and 1856, the study examines a gradual shift in the material culture of the province at the watershed marking the transition from Ottoman-style models, that had characterised the province throughout the early modern period, to the newly-emergent consumer culture influenced by the penetration of Western European commodities. Engaging in a quantitative analysis of the dowries, as well as their legal framework and social impact, the study depicts a complex process of cultural change associated with the Europeanization of tastes in the peripheral society of South-Eastern Europe.

Keywords: South-Eastern Europe; Ottoman Empire; Wallachia, women history; dowry; inheritance; commodities; movable and immovable goods

¹³¹ For the auction see "Monitorul oficial," July–August 1852.

¹³² Military rank (Russian *porucik*), similar to lieutenant.