The Image of the Romanians in the Travelling Impressions of 17th Century Scandinavians[1]

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1.The Account of the Travel in Wallachia. By Paul Strassburg, Secret Counsellor of the King of Sweden[2] And Messenger to the Sultan Murad the 4th

1632

In the fourth day of March we left Braşov[3], a remarkable fortified town neighboring the territory of Wallachia. Our aim was to go to Târgovişte, the capital in the old days. It was there where the Greek ruler and prince Leon[4] sent his government officials[5] in order to accompany us towards the capital Bucharest[6] that is the residence and the dwelling place of the voivodes now.

Not long time before reaching the city the voivode decided to come upon me with a great number of soldiers and even with the banners of Wallachia. However I hindered this for several reasons.

Still, after we arrived in front of this big and vast walled city there came to welcome us about a hundred of country's noblemen (which they call "boiari"[7]). These, armed with bows, chasing towards us in a stunning assault, as if to attack[8]

[1] The work is a translation in English after the Romanian versions from the volume *Călători străini despre Ţările Române*, vol. 5,volum îngrijit de Maria Holban, Bucureşti, Editura Ştiinţifică, 1973, p. 60−68, p. 439−454.

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[2] Gustav the 2nd Adolf (1611−1632).

[3] Kronstadt in German.

[4] King Leon, prince of Wallachia (1629−1632). He was not Greek, yet he was raised at Constantinople and he was speaking Greek.

[5] *Commisarios*.

[6] Bucureşti in Romanian.

[7] Boyars in English.

[8] Evidence of skill that is to be met also at the Cossacks of Timuş which came to his wedding festivities with the Romanian princess Ruxandra.

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and then dismounting, greeted us on the behalf of the prince Leon and accompanied us riding on horseback ahead of us, up to the dwelling place.

The same evening the above mentioned prince[9] sent his Great Court Marshal / Minister of Foreign Affairs[10] to invite us to have lunch the next day. And at the proper time the boyars and the coach came and we made our way towards the palace[11] without delay.

Walking with us we were accompanied by about 200 Dalmatian[12] soldiers who were better armed and dressed than those from Transylvania.

All the roads and the market places of the city were filled with expensive goods that have been offered for sale by Italian, Greek, Romanian, Turkish or Serbian merchants.

There was such a crowd and a thickness of people so that it seemed as the whole nation from Wallachia gathered up in that place. The courtiers[13] of the palace were even more numerous, the pompous ceremonies and the great luxury in the clothing of the people and in the ornaments of the horses.

The Royal Palace was shattered due to its oldness and to the repeated changes of the princes.

The prince was waiting for me at the door of the reception hall with his high fur cap on his head, greeting me according to the Turkish custom, bowing his head and keeping his hands to his bosom.

In a higher place there were arranged two chairs: the prince offered me the one on the left, the most honorable among the barbarians[14], still I did not consent to.

Beside the prince were sitting a few prominent Turks, as far I see arbitrators[15] / judges and advisers.

To the right were sitting the high officials of the country and of the Court, all of them adorned with sable overcoats / furs as if a holyday.

In their presence I handed over the epistle of His Majesty[16] together with good wishes in Italian and I asked to facilitate my journey through his country.

Translator of my oration was Brother Benedict from the Island of Crete, public speaker[17] of the Court. Apart from Turkish and Greek he was also acquainted with Italian, Latin and German and he spent seven years at Wittenberg studying theology.

He interpreted eloquently in Turkish and Greek what I said and vowed on the behalf of the prince and with his words that people who are experienced and versed in the language and in the customs will take me safe and sound up to the gates of Constantinople.

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[9] Strassburg uses the words *principe, vayvoda, palatinus* and *dominus* in order to designate the prince.

[10] *Aulae suae praefectum*. The Great Court Marshal of the Royal Council was the boyar Mano (16. 01. 1632 – 11. 08. 1632).

[11] Curtea Veche (The Old Court).

[12] *Dalmatae pretoriani*. They were probably from Ragusa (nowadays Dubrovnik in Croatia).

[13] *Aulae comitatus*, the ceremony staff of the Royal Court.

[14] Id est to the Turks.

[15] *Rerum arbitri*. They came to judge the quarrels / troubles between the Romanians and the Turks.

[16] Gustav the 2nd Adolf.

[17] *Concionator*, a word sometimes translated as preacher.

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After the talk ended and the negotiations took place the horns and the trumpets sounded noisily in order to start the lunch.

The right side of the table was offered to me and to my companions and the left side to the prince and to his Romanians.

In front of the prince were silver vessels, in the middle ceramics carefully elaborated and enameled and at the end wooden platters and wooden bowls.

The fares / the grubs were not removed all along the lunch // and for several hours in a row they keep on adding the dishes one on top of the other so that they rose little by little in a heap like a hillock.

The wines were very tasty and of high quality and while raising the glass repeatedly the conversation between guests became more and more friendly and unhampered.

Eventually when the prince raised a tumbler and proposed His Majesty` s health a few catapults and cannons were fired with such a noise that the shattered building was quaking and even the vessels on the table were striking against each other.

The high officials[18] and the boyars of Wallachia, each and every time they raised the glasses and proposed their prince` s health and prosperity, according to their duty, they also kneeled down by turns and this is how they drank off the glass, to their knees.

In such pleasures the orations and the drinks lasted until the night, when each one came back to his house.

The next day the prince intended to accompany me for my departure with all the consideration and with an escort made up of one thousand horsemen and six hundred infantrymen.

In order to increase the pomp a red color standard of an exceptional size was placed at the head of cortege. This was sent by sultan Murad to the prince. There were also other banners of Wallachia.

The trumpets and the drums rang out in the near woods and in the neighboring forest.

On both sides the high officials and the boyars of the country were advancing, riding on Asiatic horses and dressed up with splendid clothes.

Close to the prince there were the fiddlers and a chorus of musicians who were singing passionately a ballad[19] in Romanian language.

When I asked the prince, while we were riding on horsebacks, what was the figure of trooper he could still gather up, "There are ten thousand horsemen still and two thousand of pedestrians" he replied and not without sigh and moan, saying that in the days of prince Michal[20] there were fifty thousand men in arms.

Inquiring him afterwards about the national revenue he stated that almost three hundred thousand ducats[21] are treasured up out of the taxes / tithe on fish, salt, wax, honey, on the herd of cattle and on the flock of sheep, besides this moreover

[18] *Magnates*.
[19] *Patrius*.
[20] *Michael*: Michal the Brave (Romanian *Mihai Viteazul, Mihai Bravu*) was the Prince of Wallachia (1593-1601), of Transylvania (1599-1600), and of Moldavia (1600), the three Romanian principalities.
[21] *Aurei*.

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from the census / quit rent that is customary to be paid in cash and besides this moreover from the special imposts.

The plentiful gold and silver mines[22] are not worked intentionally so that be sure the Turks, prompted and drawn by the multitude of riches, should not take hold of the country entirely out of the Christian hands.

He was complaining bitterly about the malice and the cunning of his subjects and about the inclination of the souls to uprising and he was telling how he defeated not such a long time ago in a sanguinary battle[23] the most important of the insurgents on the very same road we were travelling close to Bucharest. He was indicating by his hand the battle place; the graves of the dead and the crosses he erected as a token of victory[24].

Some of the fugitive boyars had gone to Transylvania and when the prince claimed them back, the prince Rakoczy[25] did not feel like give them back, and for this reason many wrangles appeared between the two at the Sublime Porte.

For in Wallachia there is the custom, according to an old tradition, that all those who strive for princely dignity to be marked by the cutting of the right nostril, as a symbol of eternal stigmatization[26], and for this reason to become not entitled to acquire the princely dignity.

Considering these, Matei[27], the plotter of those uprisings[28] (who was at that time hidden in Transylvania, came to reign after Leon and now people say that he is supposed to have passed to the Poles[29]), wanted to purchase with a lot of money the protection of prince Rakoczy.

Then after we travelled for one hour the prince asked me by all means to make a halt for a little while in a beautiful valley until we were supposed to be brought the midday meal from the coach.

During this interval the prince started to bridle his horses in great haste for the recreation game with the spear and for the fastest horse races, to stretch the bow spring with an amazing vigor, to fire off the muskets and to shoot at a target.

The high officials and the boyars imitated this skill of their prince and in a very fine contest each one was showing his ability with the weapons. Noticing this the prince, so that to add another stimulus to each man's bravery, proved to be very

[22] This sort of mines did not exist in Wallachia.

[23] *Iusto praelio*. Leon Tomsa refers to the warfare he had with the insurgent boyars commanded by agha / police prefect Matei, the future Matei Basarab. The battle took place around Bucharest, "above the vineyards", to the south of the monastery of voivode Mihai (16/23 august 1631), about the rooms of the future Slobozia outskirts.

[24] Above the dead bodies a hillock was raised and the prince placed on February, 20th, 1632 a cross, known as The Cross of Voivode Leon, carrying a memorial inscription. The cross that was renovated in 1665 by Radu Leon is situated in the courtyard of the Slobozia church.

[25] György Rákóczi I, the prince of Transylvania (1630-1648).

[26] *Infamiae notam*.

[27] *Matheas* = agha / police prefect Matei from Brâncoveni (the future prince Matei Basarab) who in seven months time, on October 15/25, would repeat the attempt from the previous year, this time successfully, vanquishing the prince sent by the Turks, Radu Ilieş, at Plumbuita.

[28] This annotation from 1633 refers to mounting the throne of Matei Basarab on September, 1632.

[29] Unfounded hearsay.

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generous and gifted with his own hand a small sum of golden money to those who excelled the others in their skill or talent.

Among others a nobleman from our retinue hit the target aright as well; to this one, instead of the reward, the prince gifted ten cubits of fine silk woven material that was brought in haste from Bucharest.

And when midday heat started to scorch us the prince, observing this, ordered to be arranged above us, as a token of honor and goodwill, that huge banner of Wallachia in the guise of a pavilion, in order to hinder the sun rays. We spent such a long time watching the warlike games that our lunch turned into a solemn dinner. After this was finished the prince returned to his dwelling place with his guard and his court and the carts and the high officials accompanied us as far as the bank of the Danube.

I dare say that in all the Christian world there is no other land more fertile than the soil of Wallachia.

The pastures, everywhere fruitful and rich, feed numerous flocks and herds. In the woods and in the forests there are a great number of wild beasts and birds. Wool, flax, leathers for the inhabitants are in abundance. The salt mines are rich and no one can find their end. The Danube, "Hierasus" (!)[30] and the other rivers produce fish in a larger quantity than any other country from Europe. The inhabitants breed a renowned horse breed. The bees produce honey themselves. The country is rich in metal mines and the rivers have gold sand. The vineyards are easy to be tilled and the soil is ploughed with a bundle of thorns[31]. They trade in mutually[32] with the Transylvanians, the Poles, the Turks and the Serbians and keep their currency old and unchanged. To end, they enjoy a mild climate and have an extremely healthy air.

The Danube separates Wallachia from Bulgaria and it has the same breadth as the river Elba at Hamburg, yet with a much faster flow.

At the crossing point there are on each side of the banks of the Danube not very fortified strongholds: Giurgiu and Ruse[33]…

2.The Account of the Swedish Diplomatic Agent Iohann Mayer Concerning His Journey through Moldavia, May, 12th – 31st, 1651

… The journey back took place like this: on May 1st (Julian / old-style calendar) in the morning at 9 o` clock I went off from Bakhchisaray[34] out of the Tartar slavery in good health with the help of God. The khan[35] showed a high esteem to me according to the Tartar custom and sent his man-servant to accompany me for a stretch as far as on the other side of the hill…

[30] Most likely Ardesos = Argeş.

[31] *Spinarumque fasciculo terram arant*. The author makes confusion between the harrow and the plough.

[32] *Mutua commercia*.

[33] Romanian *Rusciuc*, Turkish *Ruscuk*, nowadays Ruse in Bulgaria.

[34] The residence of the khans of Crimea \ the capital of the Crimean Khanate.

[35] Islam Giray the 3rd (1644-1654).

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On May 12th, on a very hot day, I suffered a lot because of the mosquito and other small insects; I ate in the open fields late in the evening, I arrived at the Dniester in front of The White Citadel[36] around sunset and I spent the evening on a high hill. In order to let the boatmen from The White Citadel know of our arrival I fired a rifle shot and the janissaries unloaded their guns as well. I had placed a charge of powder as for six muskets therefore they boomed as though firing with cannon. After that I had to ask to light a fire so that my people would bring together right round it the tired horses that had scattered there and everywhere. As this night was still and windless we were overwhelmed by clouds of mosquito that would not let us sleep.

On the morning of May the 13th, about six o` clock, a big sailing boat came; we had all our work cut out with finding native people because they would not rely on my interpreter; they imagined that we were Cossacks, the way these invade the country, and I did not arrive at once to them, for to take care of the horse on that extreme heat I was riding leisurely far behind my interpreter. However the moment they saw me they started to laugh and welcomed me (for they crossed me the river on leaving too as well[37]). And they recounted me marvelling at how frightened the Turks were last night when they heard our reports: they stored up their bazaars and ran away in the fortress thinking the Cossacks from Don came with the four Turkish sailing vessels that were down by the Black Sea and these launched the attack against them. Since there, further down the town, there were many sand banks and rapids I saw myself compelled to follow this boatman as down on the river as the sea, a good mile journey; there was a large rapid that parted the Black Sea and the Dniester; \\ the horses passed on this rapid, but we had to go over swimming in two places, one of them about 60 paces long, the second more than 100 paces. I was traversed with my luggage directly by boat, a good mile journey. On that rapid there were a few Turks with the women they had bought and who were Christians. The women bathed and washed themselves in the Dniester. When the women came out of the water the Turks wrapped them up in beautiful bath sheets with many slips, helped them to wipe dry, caressed them with heart and soul then they walked away with them for a walk towards the sailing vessels and on the way everyone was kissing and fondling his women. They treated them decently and honourably, unlike the Tartars, who behave towards their subjects as if they were dogs, abusing and beating them brutally. For this reason the women hold captive by them, if they cannot regain their freedom, they are more pleased about being sold to the Turks, for there they are very well looked after as far as the clothing and the care is concerned. In the harbour, on the other side, there were four Turkish sailing vessels loaded with muscatel and with other sour wines[38], as well as with French and Turkish walnuts. One of these ships was from Anatolia, from Trebizond. The shipmaster or reis başî named Frangul Kyrikoszowic from Trebizond, who was a Greek[39], as all of his sailors were, \\ allowed me to come on board of his ship and to fill up my empty

[36] Romanian Cetatea Albă = nowadays Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi in Ukraine.
[37] Id est on December, 1650.
[38] Unlike the Greek wines, exceedingly sweet.
[39] His name is expressed in a Slavonic form. Most of the home trade of the Ottoman Empire was at the Greeks` disposal.

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barrels with wine at a price of 6 groschen an amount. The people were doing everything to gratify me aboard their ship: they treated me with the best muscatel, with oranges, with walnuts and with dried crusts and they showed very friendly; they were bright people and they wished for, among other things, God should goad some Christian prince to attack the Turks unhesitatingly; they had no doubt God would favour the Christians. They told me still that in Constantinople merely a tenth of the inhabitants are Turks, as the city is resided almost solely by Christians[40]. This shipmaster ordered to be written on the tablets of my man-servant for a keepsake and wishing for me the following Greek words: Ιησούς Χριστός Νικά [41]... He sent me with his boat to the seashore and he gave me companions who fired a salute out of a small iron canon; once by land I got rid of them with much difficulty for they brought with them a decanter with muscatel and they boozed all my people and pledged to visit me in town the second day. This night I spent under the open sky on the bank of the Dniester.

On <May> the 14th in the morning on my way to Dniester I bought a 9.7 kilos[42] carp with 9 groschen (?) from a fisherman. I could have acquired it with 4 groschen (?) if I had wanted to haggle; however I gave him how much he asked for since for all that I got much more than was worth. The same day in the afternoon I arrived safely at Akerman or The White Citadel and I took a room with my old landlord, a Greek. The moment I settled at the landlord the caimacan or the head of this place sent for my interpreter; I gave him one of my men to accompany him. When they arrived at the caimacan the latter asked him about me at once, showing his satisfaction for my coming; \\ he treated my men according to the Tartar custom, offering them slop to drink. In addition they had to empty the glass toasting him. On that extreme heat this drink suited them very well; otherwise they would have drunk wine willingly. He pledged share to me too, yet hardly anything followed until the evening when I was given six masses[43] of wine. The same evening the Turkish sailing vessels with wine arrived to town and at the same time <the Greek> from Trebizond came in town also. The shipmaster, Frangul, casted anchor right in front of my landlord; he asked about me at once and sent for a jug of the best muscatel and welcomed me with this. He was overwhelmed with joy, still with all decency and stayed with me at my table for a carp and a grilled sturgeon.

On May the 15th I had to stay here because the horse of my guardsman[44] grew ill. Today the caimacan sent me a sack of barley-corn for my horses. Some Greek Christians came to me as well, they ate and drank with me and they were very glad about my arrival for I was a Christian. In the afternoon two Crimean Tartars came and they told me about the Cossacks, how these with the help of the sultan[45] Murad chased away the Poles as far as across the Vistula and they beat them ferociously. Other people declared to me as well that the Poles seem to have agreed

[40] Inaccurate allegation.
[41] Jesus Christ, triumph.
[42] The author offers contradictory weight measures: 8 oca (1 oca = 1.272 kg in Moldavia) of 24 litre (1 litra = 1\4 of 1 oca in Moldavia, id est 0.318 kg).
[43] Mass = old German measure whose value varied here and there between 1.069 and 1.945 l.
[44] *Przystaven*. A member of the escort the Tartars offered on departure.
[45] The title of sultan is offered to the brothers of the khan of Crimea.

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with the Cossacks. A Greek merchant from Karasubazar[46], in Crimea, was saying that he was sent to Circassia[47] by the caimacan of the pasha from Silistra[48] to purchase for him two \\ young and very beautiful Circassian girls and that he might have returned recently and might have brought him two girls. For them he had to pay two hundred ducats each.

On the 16th of that month in the morning before sunrise I set out from The White Citadel. Not far from the town I met an old janissary from Crimea and three Moldavian[49] peasants. That janissary corroborated all that was told by the two Tartars I mentioned earlier, saying that all the Poles ran away across the Vistula and that Khmelnytsky[50] sent from Kamianets[51] a deputation to the Hungarian Palatine[52] offering him the Polish Crown. And Khmelnytsky wanted to keep in exchange the territory from Kamianets as far as Lviv and therefore all Ukraine and the Hungarian Palatine should have ruled over all the remainder but help him to ruin the Poles. On the contrary the Moldavian peasants were telling that at Kamianets might have broken down recently a great number of Cossacks and Tartars; that they had to abandon the camp and turn their back and at the same time many of the Poles and especially of the German hirelings were crushed. After the rout of the Cossacks an ox was sold at Kamianets with one thaler, such a great number of cattle and eatables they left behind – and they abandoned a few cannons as well. I met a Tartar too who came from Palanca[53] (a small Turkish town I had passed by) and was saying that at Kamianets might have not been any attack on the part of Cossacks and their people and that \\ the Tartars from Dobrudja[54] might still be found on this side of the Dniester, not far from Palanca; and some of them might be at Bender[55], a Turkish citadel nearby that I also saw from a hill during my journey, and they would not set out on their way until they get an order from the khan.

On the same evening, not long before our holt for the night, I shot down a pelican that I took a good grip of only with great bother although it had an injured wing. It is an odd but beautiful bird and much bigger than a swan, I brought it alive

[46] Karasu or Karasubazar, a town in Crimea, one of the residences of the khans. Nowadays Bilohirsk in Ukraine.

[47] Circassia (also known as Cherkessia in Russian) was a province in Caucasia. The Circassians or, the way they were named, the Cherkessians were considered the most beautiful people in the world. The beauty of the Circassian women was sung preferably by the Turkish poets.

[48] Sylystryski (nowadays Drastar in Bulgaria). Derviş Mehmed-pasha, the future great vizier.

[49] *Wallasche*. The author uses the term valah, according the Polish manner, in order to designate the Moldavians.

[50] *Chimiel*. Bohdan Zynoviy Mykhailovych Khmelnytsky, the hetman of the Cossacks (1648-1657).

[51] Nowadays Kamianets-Podilskyi in Ukraine.

[52] Gheorghe Rakoczy the 2nd, prince of Transylvania (1648-1660).

[53] Palanka, a village on the bank of the Dniester.

[54] Romanian Dobrogea nowadays, a region on the Black Sea coast. The author uses the name of Tartars from Dobrudja for the Tartars from Budjak / Budzhak (Romanian Buceag), the historical region of Bessarabia (nowadays Republic of Moldavia and south-west of Ukraine).

[55] Nowadays Tighina in the Republic of Moldavia (under *de facto* control of the unrecognized breakaway Autonomous Region of Trans-Dniester).

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with me. I spent the night at Olăneşti[56], a big and inhabited village and we were satisfied with adequate nourishment however we had nothing to drink but water unmixed with anything for I could not drink their millet beer[57].

On the 17th <of the month> at Ciubărciu[58] I bought at noon four carps of medium size that worth together as much as a big one and I had the midday meal in that place as well. I spent the night at Leonteva[59], a big Turkish village, yet in that place only Greek Christians[60] were living. My host had heard that we were coming from the Tartar khan and that Her Majesty the Queen of Sweden[61] was a Christian queen with a lot of power. He was sitting by the fireplace keeping his hands in his pockets and sighing out he was talking to himself saying in Moldavian with a loud voice: "Oh, Christians, what have you done that you humiliated yourself to such an extent before a pagan? And by this you make him be so arrogant and so conceited". I explained to him, through my interpreter, he should not imagine that this journey was made for the khan` s sake // for my all glorious queen does not submit to anybody but to God, the king of all kings, and that beside him she is not obliged to submit to any other Christian king, so much the less to such a pagan king.

On the 18th <of the month> in the same village, Leonteva, I celebrated the first day of Whitsuntide / Pentecost, in the afternoon Feriz aga himself came from The White Citadel (the one who keeps a watch upon the villages and the Tartars from The White Citadel); he welcomed me and he wanted to give me a few cavalry men[62] to accompany me as far as beyond the border lines since further on, at the bounds of Moldavia, the insecurity was reigning because the Tartars from Dobrudja might have killed 7 Moldavians three days earlier and might have taken with them a slave[63] (?) in the Turkish citadel Bender. One of my guardsmen had to leave with him at once and he was given aga` s waxen seal. With this I was to receive a few cavalry men in the neighbouring village Cârnăţeni[64]. I made the journey during the night towards that village Cârnăţeni. There the guardsman lost my confidence for he took the liberty to tickle his palm and permitted the peasants to destroy the seal of Feriga Aga. I told him to act the way he knows better and secure me a safe passing the way he was ordered both by the khan and by Feriz Aga. A little while before my arrival "Kenan Bassa", a boyar of the Prince of Moldavia had passed by that place, going through Bender towards Crimea to the khan and conveying him 5 Moldavian horses. He brought the news that the Cossacks were beyond Kamianets and that the Poles were retreating in haste. In the evening 6 Tartars from Dobrudja wearing red turbans on their head came from Bender in that village to see if there might be

[56] *Olesnest*, a village on the bank of the Dniester about 40 km from The White Citadel (Cetatea Albă).

[57] *Braha*.

[58] *Czuburc*, a village along the Dniester.

[59] *Lionty* (=Leonteva), a village on the bank of the Dniester.

[60] Id est of Orthodox/Eastern church./rite. In of the following sentence one realizes they are Moldavians.

[61] The notorious Queen Christina, the daughter of Gustav Adolf (1632-1654).

[62] *Caralassen*. Romanian "călăraşi".

[63] *Babendie*. In Turkish *bendie* means slave, bondsman.

[64] Kiernicienie, a village on the bank of the river Botna, affluent of the Dniester, district Căuşani, Republic of Moldavia.

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something to loot, they \\ were boasting there might be 6 thousand horsemen and they were saying that the pasha from Silistra might send another 6 thousand horsemen of their people still together with other Turkish units, in all more than 20 thousand horsemen in order to help Khmelnytsky. I requested they should be inquired why won` t they cross the Dniester at instance in order to go to Khmelnytsky. They replied they had no order from the khan. As soon as the six tartars went out of the village they turned to a high village through a flock of sheep, snatched up three sheep in full gallop with such rapidity in the extraction, the swinging and the pushing of the sheep and they set out at full speed that one marvelled at seeing it.

The peasants from the village, who were birds of this kind as well, had to laugh at their loss also.

On the 19th of the month my guardsmen came with a forged seal, maintaining that during the night the peasants might have sent somebody to Feriz aga and that they brought me this seal as a proof that the old one, that was sent to me by Feriz aga, had no authority and that they had to be exempt from the obligation to afford cavalry men. However I caught them all dealing in lies and I reprimanded the guardsmen through my interpreter for, as even some of the peasants confessed, the guardsmen had taken a lot of money from them. I scolded them awfully as some ill-intended scoundrels. They were listening without offence and were shaking how the dog is shaking off the hot beetroot potage. I had to resume my journey all by myself with them and as soon could be realized God was my guide for after I went out of the village if I had turned to right I would have come across the six thousand Tartars from Dobrudja I mentioned earlier, yet God showed me the way to left, through the dip between the hills and I had a safe passage. // Because there, on the hills, the people of the prince of Moldavia were on guard with the standards upright counter the Tartars. On that day I ate in the open field about ten. It was then when one of the horsemen from the hill came riding towards me and asked the interpreter where we were coming from. The same horseman told us that almost as far as Iaşi we will not find any people at all inside the villages for all the people ran away in the woods from the hills and live there fearing the Tartars. However they were commissioned by // the prince to watch over on the hills, here and there. In the evening, about ten o` clock we stopped in the field and spent the night there.

On the 20th of the month I passed by several Romanian villages as I was looking for food, yet I found neither people nor cattle inside any of them. At noon I ate in a cluster of bushes but prior to my arrival to this place my Moldavian grey hound[65] caught a big hare on a hill and brought it in his mouth to my man-servant. I had no bread anymore and instead of bread I had to order to boil some rice out of which I still had sufficiently and I ate it instead of bread. There was a brook in that place. My people caught a beautiful carp there while watering the horses and this is how God presented me with nourishment in the wasteland on that day, all of a sudden and by some miracle.

[65] *Mein Wallacher Wind* = Windhund.

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In the afternoon I met on the way four small units of Moldavian cavalrymen that were making their way towards the hills. Their centurion[66] or their lieutenant came riding to greet me and wishing me welcome in a friendly manner gave me two more horsemen to accompany me as far as the other watch post where they were to be replaced by others. Towards the evening came to greet me in the woods the supreme commander of the army of the prince, mister Ştefan, „high cavalry commander"[67], accompanied by 30 horsemen. He met me in a very friendly manner and invited me to his place <to spend> the night there. On the way he was complaining bitterly about the Tartars who brought about heavy losses to him, they set on fire three beautiful manors, together with 12 villages; he had to manage henceforth with great difficulty and rather poorly and shabbily and he could not build them again since people could not be sure they would enjoy them. After we descended from the woods to the open field, not far from his small manor, he ordered to pitch a beautiful Turkish tent and invited me perseveringly <to stay there> and he went to his manor. Soon afterwards he sent me through his captain of cavalrymen a ram, half of plump lamb, a tureen filled with fine white bread, a big bottle with very good mead, a big bottle with good Cotnari wine. In an hour he came to me himself accompanied by one of his colonels[68] and treated me very honourably and in a very friendly manner. Then he told me that the prince of Wallachia[69] might be at Floci[70] with 15 thousand people and that he might have vowed honourably to the prince of Moldavia[71] his sovereign that they stand against the Tartars and they would not attempt the slightest thing against him. And he also said that one cannot swear by the Tartars at all, even if they pledge themselves, for they never keep their promise. This is why the prince of Moldavia declared to him firmly that he` ll bet anything one likes that <he> savoured of in advance his losses and the losses of his subjects from the Tartars, which he estimates at several hundred of thousands of imperial thalers, and even more, and he does no doubt at all that God would help them, provided the Polish rulers should keep their promise and they should make a good beginning. He[72] was also saying that Khmelnytsky might have dispatched to the prince of Wallachia // and might have asked him to come to his assistance however he might have been given nothing but a very indefinite answer[73]. From there he might have gone immediately to the Hungarian Palatine where he still lingers and he is expected everyday. After this he said goodbye and hearing I wanted to leave in the early morning he wished me a good journey and provided me at hand two cavalrymen.

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[66] *Isbas*. Romanian *iuzbaşa*, a commanding officer of 100 soldiers in Moldavia during the Middle Ages.

[67] *Serdar wielky*. Might be Ştefan Serdarul (Stephen the Cavalry Commander) who would be killed two years later, in 1653, by Vasile Lupu, the prince of Moldavia (1634 -1653).

[68] Romanian *polcovnic* during late Middle Ages.

[69] *Der Muldansche Hospodar.* Muldansche = Muntenian / Wallachian (Romanian *muntean*, belonging to Muntenia / Greater Wallachia, the larger province of Wallachia).

[70] *Falzin*, the City of Floci, a market town that has disappeared sometime in the 18th century.

[71] *Der Wallachschen Hopsodaren*, according to the Polish manner to name Moldavia – Wallachia.

[72] Id est the Cavalry Commander, the collocutor of the author.

[73] *Sehr strumpfe Antwort*.

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On the 21st of the month the best of my draughthorses grew ill and my pelican that my manservant had put on the water during the night thinking it would hearten up in the water perished because many leeches[74] got into its body through its wound.

I went towards Lăpuşna. This small town was completely burned down by the Tartars. I spent the night in the open field, on the banks of the Prut[75] and I was so badly bitten by the mosquito that my hands and my face looked as if I had smallpox; the same happened to my people as well.

On the day of 22nd at twelve o` clock I crossed the Prut and I arrived at Ţuţora, this is where I ate. From here my herald Osman aga went on to Iaşi[76] with the letter of the khan for the prince of the country. In the evening at 8 o` clock I arrived to Iaşi. The prince was not at home but he came in an hour. His marshal of the royal household, the high seneschal Andronachi[77] secured through his steward[78] even prior to my arrival that I should be satisfied with all sorts of victuals that were brought to the place for my housing. Here lasts the news that the Poles might have chased from Kamianets the Cossacks and the Tartars so that the Cossacks had to leave in the lurch all the spoils they had taken in the surroundings of Kamianets, at Zwaniec and at Paniowcze, and they had to turn their back.

On the 23rd of the month at Iaşi my horses rested and were very well fed. Mister Kotnarsky[79], the secretary of the prince came to me today and welcomed me on the behalf of his prince. He imparted me the same news from Poland and mentioned me a Tartar noble called Charasz which might have passed away in battles. The Tartar high messenger, named Mustafa Celebi[80], arrived before noon. He was coming back from Warsaw, in Poland and heading towards Crimea. That same day "the wachtmeister" of the prince, a German who came here from Constantinople 3–4 years ago, paid me a visit. This told me… etc…[81].

On the 24th, in the morning at 10 o` clock the prince sent to me the high equerry or hofmaister, marshal of the royal household Nacul[82] and the secretary Kotnarsky to take me to him in a <royal> coach. He met me in the friendliest manner and he asked me how did I appreciate \\ the Tartar politics and relating to

[74] *Viel bluttmalen* (*Blutegel* means leech).

[75] The river Prut is nowadays the frontier between Romania and the Republic of Moldavia for 681 km.

[76] Iaşi is a city and municipality in Moldavia, in north-eastern Romania. The city was the capital of the Principality of Moldavia from 1564 to 1859, the United Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia between 1859–1862 and Romania between 1916–1918.

[77] *Andronaky Wielky Postelnik*.

[78] *Schaffer*.

[79] Gheorghe Kotnarsky (or Kutnarsky, in Latinized from Kotnarius) the secretary of Moldavian prince Vasile Lupu, interpreter for Latin and Poland.

[80] Mustafa Cilibi Bej or simply Mustafa Bej. In the winter of 1650 he had been sent by Islam Giray the 3rd to the queen of Sweden with letters; on his journey back to Crimea he was accompanied by Mayer. Mustafa Bej was sent afterwards to Poland with the mission to negotiate the peace. Now he was coming back from Warsaw without reaching any agreement.

[81] He refers to the rumour that the old Byzantine religious pictures might have reappeared miraculously on the walls of Hagia Sophia from underneath the Turkish whitewashing.

[82] Nakul. Former chief magistrate of the district Suceava. High equerry 18 February 1651-14 April 1652. He was sent in 1653 as a messenger to the Cossacks.

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this he agreed I should be accompanied by his people as far as the Polish frontier, and this not as a consequence of the khan` s letter but as an honour to the all glorious queen of Sweden, my merciful ruler. He advised me not to make my way towards Kamianets, but towards Sniatyn through Pokuttya since that is the safest way. Then he asked me to wish on his behalf to her majesty the queen a long life and plenty of good fortune with her rule, <and> to me he wished a safe journey. After that he ordered to his secretary to set up everything so that I could cross there and everywhere safely. And soon he sent ahead to Cotnari an important boyar of the court called Gavrilaş "Skules" and to me he sent a horseman to ride in front of me and show me the way. Today, towards evening, I sent my interpreter to the Tartar high messenger, Mustafa Bej, to ask him which is, to his mind, the safest way towards Poland and what does he advise me: should I go through Khotyn[83] to Kamianets or through Sniatyn in Pokuttya? He offered me at once the best counsel: for both the Cossacks and the Poles have a lot of army and the Cossacks can reach as far as Kamianets and as for the question which of the routes he holds safer, the one through Khotyn or through Sniatyn and Pokuttya towards Poland he added as well that the Poles might have got assistance a few thousand Swedish soldiers and that these might have overcome recently the Cossacks and the Tartars at Kamianets.

The oldest manservant of prince Wisniowiecki[84], <named> Zlotnicky, came to me also and brought me the news that the king of Poland[85] might have concluded, through his commissioners, at Lübeck, a treaty with her majesty the queen of Sweden, whereby he was abjuring for good and all to his claims for Livonia and was willing to live in peace and eternal friendship henceforth and was asking still for the assistance of her majesty the queen of Sweden against the Tartars, since the beginnings the enemies of the whole Christendom, who broke the peace actually and keep on with the war.

On the 25th of the month: I left early from Iaşi, I ate in the open field near by a // ravaged village. Here 150 Cossack carts loaded with salt passed beside me; <they were going> from the Moldavian salt-mines[86] to Umova[87], in Ukraine. In the evening I arrived at Cotnari and I was very well met and treated by my guard Gavrilaş "Skules" Dvornicul[88]; yet he could not stay with me that evening since the Orthodox fasting of Saint Peter began and he had pledged to celebrate the Shrovetide together with a few boyars and friends who were living there. The small town Cotnari was left unharmed by the Cossacks and the Tartars because it did not defend itself (yet it was not able to hit back anyway), but it ransomed itself with a sum of money and a few casks of wine. There are just wooden houses, yet some of them are, in their own way, roomy and made fine enough; it is situated amidst the

[83] Romanian Hotin, the town was part of the Principality of Moldavia (1359–1812), nowadays in north-western Ukraine.

[84] *Des Fursten Wisniowiecken ältester Diener*. Most likely Yaremia (Ieremia) Wisniowiecki, the grandson of the Moldavian prince Ieremia Movilă (*Jeremi Mohyła* in Polish, 1595-1606), who carried on a fierce fight against the Cossacks of Khmelnytsky.

[85] John Casimir the 2nd (1648-1668).

[86] *Wallachschen Saltzbergen*.

[87] *Umanowa*.

[88] *Vornic* = Minister of Internal Affairs and Minister of Justice in Moldavia during Middle Ages.

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vineyards that stretch round about for half a mile distance. The vine turned up very fine at that time, a man` s height and even higher. The occupation and the living of the people of Cotnari are based on wine solely.

26 of the month. I ate in the village "Kurenia"[89]. This day I had a difficult journey because it rained hard all night long, the earth was soft and heavy it was sticking in heaps to the wheels and was going beneath the horseshoes so that the horses were moving with great difficulty and this is why I arrived rather late at Botoşani, a sacked small town and I spent the night here.

On the 27th I had launch in the small town Dorohoi. I remember now // the words the prince told us concerning the khan. That is to say that he, the prince, wrote to the khan: "The Turkish emperor demands the customary tribute from me whereas you not only that you set on fire my country and carried out of the country 200,000 big and small cattle and horses, but you also took <into slavery> a few thousands[90] of my subjects; I ask you therefore, in order to prove your harmlessness, as you maintained in a letter, to send back to me my poor subjects in no time so that I can restore again the country razed to the earth and so that I can send to the Turkish emperor the customary tribute[91]". And this is how eight days prior to my arrival in Crimea the khan set free 300 people yet these ones are all disfigured, lame, blind or they are quite small boys and girls, inapt people who are not able to work. He kept the best people, in the prime of life, robust and healthy; these crippled and feeble people who came back just four days before my arrival, I found them again in this small town. Here it was an old Moldavian, skilful warrior, who had been in the service of the company of the head of // Kamianets with an effective force of 117 horsemen and who took part in the seizure of the Paniowcza stronghold. This one told me how things happened there, that is to say: how the Cossacks came and letting behind Paniowcza they went to the fortress Zwaniec which they pillaged and set on fire; after that they made their way towards Paniowcza and they went on with the same game in the villages situated much further away. At that time the head of Kamianets launched his company to attack[92] yet he himself together with a few comrades[93] and together with the townspeople stayed inside the stronghold. The soldiers (?) sent to attack[94] rushed upon the Cossacks indeed, however after many of them were knocked down and the head saw this he entrusted his comrade with the command of the stronghold and he run away to Kamianets accompanied by a manservant; most of the other soldiers who fought with the adversary were cut off, the standard bearer took with him the pair of colours and ran away at full speed <all the way> to Kamianets; he was hunt after by a great many of Cossacks, yet he could not be captured and he[95] was considering that if the Cossacks had seized the colours they would have set out at once against Kamianets and they would have taken hold

[89] *Kurenia*, unidentified. It might be a misreading for Hârlău, whereby the route of the author should have passed.
[90] Etzliche 1000.
[91] *Den gewölichen Dan*.
[92] *Seine Companie ausscommendiret*.
[93] *Towarsziszen*, denomination for the Polish noblemen who fought as volunteers.
[94] *Sothanes (?) auskommendiertes Volk*.
[95] The Moldavian who is recounting the battle.

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of the city. After that the Cossacks set upon the small town Paniowcza, they pillaged it and set in on fire. We had to spend the night here[96].

On the 28th <of the month> I ate near the Molnița brook in a waterside. At 3 o` clock I arrived at Chernivtsi, a small town, here I was also well met and fed by the head.

On the 29th. The head of Chernivtsi together with mister the Minister of internal affairs[97] with two small units of cavalrymen that included together three hundred people saw me off as far as the Polish frontier. About half way the Minister of internal affairs bid me farewell and recommended me mister the head who had to accompany me with his two small units of cavalrymen. From that place I sent somebody with my passport to mister the vice-head <of Sniatyn>. Afterwards I kept on talking for a quarter of an hour (?)[98] to the head of Chernivtsi who bid me farewell and left with his horsemen on the way that goes at the foot of the small town to their border towards Hungary and Transylvania. When I arrived in the small town the vice-head of Sniatyn, Siebrydowsky with 20 horsemen stood in my way; he welcomed me; he led me into town to a good host and in the evening he treated me to his place in the stronghold.

On the 30th of the month. On this day mister the head got the news that N. N., a Polish captain[99] seized the letters of the khan and of Khmelnytsky which they were writing to one another, also a manservant of the <Moldavian> prince with letters who was carrying 6000 ducats that Khmelnytsky was to get; the letters he // sent them to the king, yet he brought the couriers to Kamianets and kept the money.

In English by Lucian Bâgiu
October, 2009,
Trondheim, Norway

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Abstract

Paul Strassburg (1595 – 1654) was born at Nurnberg in 1595, two years after his father, a jurist, settled in the town arriving from Saxony. He acquired an academic degree at Altdorf. For three years he studied Italian and Latin in Italy. While in Prague he joined the protestant uprising in Bohemia, since he was a Calvinist, and he fought at The Battle of White Mountain[100] thus becoming a captain. In 1624 he makes a first trip to Transylvania as diplomatic agent / secret agent trying to persuade the prince of Transylvania Gabriel

[96] Id est in Dorohoi, where the author had arrived on May, 27th.
[97] Dwornic. Romanian *vornic* in Middle Ages.
[98] *Ein ½ viertelluhr*.
[99] *Rittmesiter*.
[100] *Bila hora* in Czech, on 8 November 1620.

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Bethlen[101] to become a member of the Hague Alliance of the Protestant countries: England, Holland, Denmark and thus to fight against the Habsburg Empire. The prince asked for too much money and nothing was settled. Four years later Paul Strassburg is commissioned with a new mission to Transylvania, on behalf of King Gustav Adolf of Sweden, who was now brother-in-law with the prince of Transylvania, as Gabriel Bethlen married to Catherina of Brandenburg. In 1628 Paul Strassburg becomes a princely adviser of the Swedish Court and a diplomat and is sent to ask for the assistance of Transylvania against Poland. He spends a year at the Transylvanian Court without any favorable results. He returns to Sweden in January 1630, shortly before the prince Gabriel Bethlen passed away. A new prince is elected in Transylvania, György Rákóczi[102], and thus Paul Strassburg is commissioned with a third mission, having in mind, among other things, to convince the prince to collaborate with Sweden in Germany. On January and February 1632 he is once again in Transylvania where is instructed with a mission to the Ottoman Empire. Now he has to convince both the Turks and the Romanians to fight against the Austrian Emperor.

Paul Strassburg passed through Wallachia[103] in the spring of 1632, age 36. During his passing he placed at the prince `s disposal a painter of the mission` s retinue. The voivode Leon Tomşa thanks him for this in a letter from March, 12th, 1632. From April to July Paul Strassburg is in Constantinople. He is shown a high esteem but he does not succeed to lure the Turks into battle for they were hold back in a war with the Persians. The next years his secret diplomatic missions take him to Venice then Switzerland trying to convince the "Graubunden" to join their forces with the Swedes against the Austrians. While in Frankfurt he writes the account about his first state visit to Constantinople, where is included also the section referring to his passing through Wallachia.

His next missions take him to France, Denmark and Holland where he settles down for good as he gets married to the daughter of the Swedish Minister to Hague. He passes away in 1654, age 59. The archive of Strassburg for the years 1626−1646 is preserved at Uppsala University. Part of his correspondence was published in 1701 by Mieg at Frankfurt am Main, including his journal that has the title *Pauli Strassburgi, Sueciae Regis quondam consiliarii secretioris aulici et ad Amurathem IV Legati, relation de Byzantino Itinere ac negotiis in Ottomannica aula peractis, nec non de statu ac facie Orientalis Imperii, qualis erat circa Ann. MDCXXXIII*. A Romanian scholar from Transylvania, Timotei Cipariu, copied the section referring to Wallachia and published it in Blaj, in 1867, annexing a Romanian translation to the Latin text.

Strassburg` s account comprises details concerning the fruitfulness, the revenue and the armed forces of Wallachia, some of them reproduced according to the direct information of the prince Leon Tomşa. At the same time he depicts his reception at the princely court in Bucharest.

Iohann Mayer (?− after 1651). An emissary of the Queen Christina of Sweden to the khan of the Tartars Islam Giray the 3rd, Iohann Mayer made a journey through Moldavia during May 1651. He was sent to accompany the Tartar messenger who had brought to the

[101] Hungarian *Bethlen Gabor*, prince of Transylvania (1613−1629).

[102] Hungarian *György Rákóczi*, prince of Transylvania (1630-1648).

[103] Romanian: *Ţara Românească* or *Valahia*, archaic: *Ţeara Rumânească*, It is situated north of the Danube and south of the Southern Carpathians. Wallachia is sometimes referred to as *Muntenia* (Greater Wallachia), through identification with the larger of its two traditional sections; the smaller being *Oltenia* (Lesser Wallachia). Wallachia was founded as a principality in the early 14th century by Basarab I, after a rebellion against Charles I of Hungary. In 1415, Wallachia accepted the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire; this lasted until the 19th century, albeit with brief periods of Russian occupation between 1768 and 1854. In 1859, Wallachia united with Moldavia (the other Danubian Principality), to form the state of Romania.

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queen the letter of the khan that contained proposals of common operation against Poland and he was to hand over to the khan the answer of the queen as well. He passed through The White Citadel for the first time in December 1650 on his way towards Crimea. Now, in the summer of the next year, he was coming back on the same route and was finding again the same boatmen he had used six months earlier, on leaving. One cannot be aware of any other details of his winter journey towards Crimea, no other details about his itinerary through Moldavia he is most likely to have used to make his way to the khan` s court. His journey diary is preceded with the words: These are those that happened and occurred during my journey to Bakhchisaray and during the period I spent there, yet just the passage concerning his travel back was kept. He left Bakhchisaray, the capital of the khan, on May 1st, accompanied by a troop of janissaries and some Tartar guardsmen; on May 12th he arrived at The White Citadel, where he stayed for two days, then he resumed his journey through Iaşi, Cotnari, Botoşni, Dorohoi and Chernivtsi[104] and on May 31st he was on Polish ground at Sniatyn[105]. The original of Mayer` s account is written in German and is found at The Royal Archives from Stockholm. It was first published by N. J. Molkaniewsky in Kiev in 1908; it was reproduced with a foreword in German by the Romanian scholar Gh. I. Constantin in 1940 and first translated in Romanian and published in 1973.

[104] Romanian Cernăuți, nowadays Cernivți in north-west of Ukraine.
[105] Nowadays in north-west of Ukraine.

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