

## DIPLOMATS, EMISSAIRES AND AGENTS – BEYOND DIPLOMACY

### THE COSMOPOLITAN WORLD OF THE LEVANTINE DRAGOMANS OF CONSTANTINOPLE (EIGHTEENTH – NINETEENTH CENTURIES)

PAUL CERNOVODEANU

In the eighteenth century, the continuing political struggle on the banks of the Bosphorus among the representatives of the Great European Powers, in the attempt to wrest additional privileges for their subjects and gain influence with the officials of the Porte acting in their interest in an Ottoman Empire plagued by corruption and inefficiency and incapable of reform or modernization, prompted the development of the diplomatic apparatus of the foreign embassies in Constantinople.

According to the Koran, in which the non-Moslem are deemed contemptible, the Ottomans – especially those in the higher circles of society – were not allowed to make direct contact with foreigners. Likewise, they were only allowed to speak Turkish, and could only approach the foreign officials through interpreters. After the fall of Constantinople under the Ottoman rule, the representatives of the Venetian-Genoese colonies established in the capital of the Ottoman Empire, in the districts of Pera and Galata, were able to preserve their ethnical and religious identity of Catholics by submitting to the sultans through capitulations and showing complete obedience toward the conquerors. They made a sort of a golden “ghetto” among the mass of Muslims and of Orthodox Greeks affiliated to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The interpreters or dragomans (from the Turkish term of *tercüman*), indispensable to the operation of foreign embassies on the banks of the Bosphorus, were recruited from this “colonial” aristocracy of Venetian-Genoese origin, as well as from Venetian-Levantine refugees from the Dalmatian coast, the Greek islands and Crete, after the fall of these territories into the hands of the Ottomans.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For the *dragoman* office, see especially Alexandre H. De Groot, *The Dragomans of the Embassies in Istanbul 1785-1834 in Dutch Ventures and Adventures in the Middle East* ed. by G. J. van Gelder and E. de Moor, Amsterdam, 1994, pp. 130-158; Liviu Missir de Lusignan, *Une aristocratie "inclassable": les drogmans (Réflexions sur nations et dynasties au sein le l'Empire Ottoman)* in Frédéric Hitzel, ed., *Istanbul et les langues orientales. Actes du colloque organisé par l'IFEA et l'INALCO à l'occasion du bicentenaire de l'École des Langues Orientales. Istanbul 29-31 mai 1995*, Paris/Istanbul, 1997, pp. 153-159; Nora Şeni, *Dynasties de drogmans et levantinisme à Istanbul* in *ibidem*, pp. 161-173; Mihai Dim. Sturdza, *Dictionnaire Historique et Généalogique des Grandes Familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople*, second edition, Paris, 1999, pp. 563-570; for the genealogies of dragomans by clans and families, see most recently Marie de Testa et Antoine Gautier, *Drogmans et diplomates européens auprès de la Porte Ottomane*, Istanbul, 2003, 469 pp.

These interpreters, who were required to have a knowledge of the Koran Law, of Turkish-Osman, Latin, Greek and other modern and oriental languages, so as to be able to communicate, verbally and in written, with official of the Porte, the staff of the various embassies, and the tradesmen and craftsmen of the Empire, were trained in special schools. The first such school was founded by the Venetians in the palace of the Venetian Bailo at Constantinople in 1551. Two other schools of interpreters followed, one in Constantinople, run by the Polish Kingdom in the seventeenth century, and another one at Smirna, founded by the Capuchins under the name of “*école des jeunes de langues*” and training dragomans for the staff of the French Embassy to the Porte.<sup>2</sup> The importance gained by the eastern question in the European politics of the late seventeenth - early eighteenth centuries prompted England to found a Greek Seminar at Oxford in 1690. For a short period, 1699-1705, this seminar became a college with a broader scope, which was also attributable to the proselyte efforts to convert the students to Protestantism. The project ended in failure, and the seminar, once the college had ceased to function, resumed its initial goals.<sup>3</sup> At the initiative of the King of France, Louis XIV, a school of oriental languages was founded in Paris in 1700, run by the Jesuits and aiming to provide the future interpreters with solid knowledge.<sup>4</sup> The example was followed by the Austrians, who in 1754, at the initiative of Empress Mary Theresa, opened an Academy of Oriental Languages, also run by the Jesuits<sup>5</sup>

Who were the students who attended these schools of interpreters and what was to be their mission? After acquiring a knowledge of Turkish-Osman and of Koran and European Law, these interpreters served as auxiliary staff of the foreign embassies, dragomans (dragoman of first rank, dragomans of second and third ranks), secretaries and, occasionally, owing to special merits, consuls or attachés d'affaires, and, only exceptionally, ambassadors, this exclusively in the case of the Austrians (internuncio). More often than not, in addition to the current tasks of keeping the correspondence and the relations with the Ottoman officials, as well as observing the specific etiquette of each embassy, these dragomans also undertook discreet and tacit espionage and surveillance missions, targeting not only the activities of the Porte's officials liable to raise the interest of their employers, but also the staff of the rival foreign embassies; the latter task was all the more possible to undertake given the mobility of these dragomans, who would switch from one embassy to another according to various circumstances – death, staff reduction, fall

<sup>2</sup> Andrei Pippidi, *Drogmans et enfants de langue: la France de Constantinople au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* in Fr. Hitzel, ed., *Istanbul et les langues orientales*, pp. 131-139.

<sup>3</sup> E.D. Tappe, *The Greeck College at Oxford, 1699-1705* in “*Oxoniensia*”, XIX (1954), pp. 92-111; idem, *Alumni of the College at Oxford* in “*Notes and Queries*”, March, 1955, pp. 110-114.

<sup>4</sup> Marie de Testa et Antoine Gautier, *Les drogmans au service de la France au Levant* in vol. *Drogmans et diplomates européens...*, pp. 17-39.

<sup>5</sup> Ernst Dieter Petritsch, *Die Wiener Turkologie vom 16 bis zum 18 Jahrhundert in Germano-Turcica zur Geschichte des türkisch-lernen in den deutschsprachigen Ländern*, Bamberg, 1987, pp. 25 et. sqq.; Marie de Testa et Antoine Gautier, *L'Académie Orientale de Vienne (1754-2002), une création de l'impératrice Marie Thérèse in Drogmans et diplomates européens...*, pp. 53-61.

into disgrace, etc. –, and the fact that the foreign diplomats recruited their staff from among the members of the same families of dragomans, representing restrictive clans. Especially to begin with the late eighteenth century, owing to the changes in European politics, one may notice spectacular changes of camps, with dragomans leaving the service of France or Venice and entering the service of Russia or Austria, and sometimes of Holland and the Italian monarchies – the Kingdom of Sardinia, the Kingdom of Naples, and, later on, of the two Sicilies. Fewer defections are seen among the dragomans working for the Embassy of Great Britain, who would nevertheless place themselves occasionally at the service of Russia and Austria, England's allies at the time of the wars against the French Revolution and Napoleon. It is worth noting that these dragomans always married into the same families, making it all the more an extended family business<sup>6</sup>. The negative features were not prevalent in all dragomans, some of whom turned out to be well-educated, genuinely talented and dedicated diplomats. One should note here the reputed Orientalists of the Testa family<sup>7</sup>, and a number of career diplomats of the Fonton family<sup>8</sup>, among whom a distinguished musician, Charles Fonton, (1725-1793), a graduate of “Louis le Grand” College<sup>9</sup>.

Starting with the second half of the seventeenth century, the dragomans employed by the foreign embassies were faced with an additional challenge, coming from the Ottomans. In order to counteract the monopolization of negotiations with the envoys of the foreign powers by these professional interpreters in the service of the diplomats of the European Powers residing at Constantinople, the Porte officials started recruiting among the Orthodox Greek community of Phanar interpreters whom they appointed grand dragomans to begin with 1661, when Panaghiotis Nikusios Mamonà (1661-1673) was given this office, in direct relation with the reis-efendis (exponents of the Turkish foreign policy), to enable their contact with the stranger residents<sup>10</sup>. The Ottomans were thus trying to

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<sup>6</sup> The Danish historian Alexandre H. de Groot also noted the mobility and adaptability of the dragomans in the service of the European powers gathered in opposite camps in the early nineteenth century, as a result of the Napoleonic wars: “Dragomans frequently moved from one protector to one or more different protectors in this period.” The dragomans had the ability, “Like other great families, to never put all their eggs in one basket but always changed or divided their allegiances and services, moving from one power to one or none different powers at one time in order to safeguard their dynastic and individual interests,” cf *Dragomans' Careers: Change of Status in Some families Connected with the British and Dutch Embassies at Istanbul 1785-1829* in vol. *Friends and Rivals in the East: Studies in Anglo-Dutch Relations in the Levant from the Seventeenth to the Early Nineteenth Century*, ed. Alastair Hamilton, Al. de Groot, Maurits van den Boogert, Leiden, 2000, pp. 231 and 237-238.

<sup>7</sup> Marie de Testa et Antoine Gauthier, *Deux grandes dynasties de drogman: les Fonton et les Testa in Drogmans et diplomates européens...*, pp. 130-131, 133, 135-137, 140-143 and a selective family tree pp. 144-147.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 129-130, 134-135, 139-140.

<sup>9</sup> Anne-Marie Touzard, *Un drogman musicien: coup d'oeil sur la vie et les oeuvres de Charles Fonton* in Fr. Hitzel, ed., *Istanbul et les langues orientales...*, pp. 197-214.

<sup>10</sup> M.D. Sturza, *Dictionnaire Historique et Généalogique*, p. 312.

undermine the monopole held by the Catholic Levantine dragomans of the foreign embassies by playing against them the Orthodox Phanariots, who not only held the office of grand dragomans of the Porte – an illustrative example being Alexander Mavrocordat Exaporiton (1673-1683, 1685-1699), who in 1699-1702 became the secret secretary of the sultan<sup>11</sup>, but, starting with the eighteenth century, were also appointed dragomans of the Ottoman fleet in the service of the grand kapudanı pashas (admirals)<sup>12</sup>, and even princes of the Danubian Principalities. The maneuver of the Porte aiming to play down the role of the Levantine was not completely successful, and this due to the Ottoman bureaucracy. The reis-efendis or *Reis ül-kütâb* – entrusted by the sultans and the grand vezirs with the external affairs of the Empire – headed a series of departments (*kalem*) including the chancellery for secret issues (*amedî-kalemi*). Fifteen scribes (or *kiatibi*) worked there, some in contact with the Phanariot grand dragomans, to whom they were sending the instructions given by the reis-efendis under obligation of making them known to the dragomans of the foreign embassies when appropriate<sup>13</sup>. However, some of the *kiatibii* of the secret chancellery would occasionally send the instructions directly to the abovementioned dragomans, who were thus informed about the decisions of the reis-efendi through two separate channels: indirectly, through the Phanariot grand dragomans of the Porte, and directly, through the *kiatibii*. This enabled the dragomans to select and filter the information deemed useful, and even oppose at times the actions of the Phanariot grand dragomans, especially as corruption was at its highest in the eighteenth century in all the structures of the Ottoman Empire and anything could be sold or bought. With time, the rivalry between the Levantine and the Phanariot dragomans lessened, and in the nineteenth century, with the changes brought about in Europe by the Napoleonic wars and their impact on the eastern question and with the decline of the Ottoman power, some collaboration between the two factions could be noted.

As already mentioned, the dragomans of the foreign embassies of Constantinople were recruited among the descendants of the colonial Veneto-Genoese aristocracy of Pera and Galata, among immigrants from the Adriatic coast and the Greek archipelago, of Catholic rite, and, to begin with the nineteenth century, among French and Austrian representatives assimilated to this diplomatic elite, which, as already mentioned, functioned as a rather restrictive circle<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> See Nestor Camariano, *Alexandre Mavrocordat, le grand drogman. Son activité diplomatique 1673-1709*, Thessaloniki, 1970, p. 13-104 and Paul Cernovodeanu, *Alexandru Mavrocordat Exaporitul 1641-1709* in "Diplomați iluștri", vol. IV, București, 1983, pp. 5-64.

<sup>12</sup> Basyle Sfyroeras, *I dragománu tu stolu. O desmóss ká i fores tu*, Atena, 1965.

<sup>13</sup> Recep Ahiskali, *Osmanlı Devlet Teşkilâtında Reisülküttablık (XVIII. yüzyıl)*, Istanbul, 2001, *passim* (transl. from Turkish by my colleague, Dr. Adrian Tertecel).

<sup>14</sup> The members of this genuine "clan" of Istanbul would never marry outside their families, and the remarkable *Dicționar istoric și genealogic al marilor familii din Grecia, Albania și Constantinopol* published by my colleague Mihail Sturdza (two editions in Paris, 1984 and 1999) makes an accurate description of their genealogies, fully illustrating the phenomenon, pp. 571-662.

The preference shown by dragomans for one embassy or another varied not only in relation with the effective needs of these embassies or the available vacancies, but also in relation with the origin and affinities of each individual. Thus, the interests of the embassies of Venice and of Poland in the eighteenth century and, in subsidiary, those of Ragusa, were represented by members of the Chabert (of French origin, from Marseille, but raised to nobility by the Poles), Chirico (of Ragusan origin), Franchini (Venetians of Cyprus), Navoni (of Genoese origin) and Pini (allegedly of Florentine origin) families. After the dissolution of the states of Poland and Venice, the dragomans of the Chabert family served the embassies of Great Britain, Russia and Austria; those of the Chirico family, especially the embassy of Russia and, in subsidiary, the embassy of the Kingdom of Sardinia; those of the Dané family, of unknown origin, the embassy of Great Britain; those of the Fonton family (from the Dauphiné) the Bourbon France and, subsequently, Russia; those of the Fornetty family (of Genoese origin, emigrated to France), France alone; those of the Franchini family (Venetians from Cyprus), France again; those of the Navoni family, the embassy of the Kingdom of the two Sicilies; those of the Pini family, Russia; those of the Pisani family (from Chios), the English embassy, and also the Russian embassy, having descendants in this latter country; those of the (Genoese) Testa family were given the rank of barons in Holland and in Austria and served the embassies of these two countries, with descendants in France as well; and, last but not least, those of the Timoni family (Genoese) serving Austria<sup>15</sup>. The most prominent families, which were practically “dynasties” of dragomans raised to nobility and having descendants in the countries they had served, included the Fonton family, with 14 dragomans in the service of France and 4 notable ones in the service of Russia<sup>16</sup>; the Pisani family, with 6 dragomans in the service of Great Britain<sup>17</sup>; the Testa family, with 7 dragomans, 3 plenipotentiary ministers, and even an internuncio of Austria<sup>18</sup>; and, the Timoni family, with 4 dragomans also in the service of Austria, and one in the service of the embassy of Sweden<sup>19</sup>. There were other Austrian families also counting internuncios among their members, such as Herbert von Ratkheal or Stürmer, raised to nobility by the Court in Vienna, and closely related to the Pisani or Testa families, or of Saxon origin, such as the Hübsch family, receiving in 1782 the title of barons von Grosstahl, serving the embassies of Poland and Denmark, and even becoming the diplomatic representatives of the Danish Kingdom to

<sup>15</sup> Alexandre H. de Groot, *Dragomans' Careers*, in *Friends and rivals in the East...*, pp. 234-237; Marie de Testa et Antoine Gauthier, *Quelques dynasties de drogman in Dragomans et diplomates européens...*, pp. 149-197.

<sup>16</sup> M.D. Sturdza, *Dictionnaire...*, pp. 573-574; Marie de Testa et Antoine Gauthier, *op. cit.*, pp. 163-171.

<sup>17</sup> M. D. Sturdza, *op. cit.*, pp. 587-589; Al. De Groot, *op. cit.*, pp. 235.

<sup>18</sup> M.D. Sturdza, *op. cit.*, pp. 592-595; Marie de Testa et A. Gauthier, *op. cit.*, pp. 187-190.

<sup>19</sup> M.D. Sturdza, *op. cit.*, pp. 597; Marie de Testa et A. Gauthier, *Une grande famille latine de l'Empire ottoman: Les Timoni, médecins, drogman et hommes d'Église in Dragomans et diplomates européens*, pp. 235-255.

Constantinople, who often married into the Fonton, Franchini, Navoni, Pisani and Testa<sup>20</sup> families. Several descendants of the Hübsch family, who emigrated to Russia, married into the Știrbei and Ralli-Arbore Romanian families<sup>21</sup>.

It is worth mentioning that Elisabeta Teresa Hübsch (1792-1823), the daughter of Friedrich Hübsch, resident minister of Saxon and Poland to Constantinople, and of Ecaterina Timoni, was first married to Giorgio de Chirico, consul of Ragusa to the Porte, and subsequently, in 1779, to Martin von Summerer, of German extraction<sup>22</sup>. The son borne to the first husband, Luca de Chirico (or Kiriko) (1765-1830), was State Councilor and Consul of Russia to Wallachia (1795-1817)<sup>23</sup>, while the son borne to the second husband, Franz Summerer (who Anglicized his name to Francis), was the first consular representative of Great Britain to the Principalities, with residence in Bucharest in 1803-1807<sup>24</sup>. He became subsequently dragoman of the Kingdom of Sardinia to the Porte and married Aloysia (1782-1851), the daughter of Bartolomeo or Berto Pisani, dragoman of Great Britain at Constantinople. Their son, Anton von Summerer, dragoman of Austria at the Porte, married Elibeth Timoni<sup>25</sup>. This is the mystery of the origins of Francis (alias Franz) Summerer, brother on the maternal line to the Consul of Russia, Luca de Kiriko, who, although consular representative of Great Britain to Bucharest, was a Catholic, did not speak English, and always drew up his reports in French and Italian. Together with his brother on maternal line, Chirico, Summerers offered protection to the Catholic clergy in Wallachia and Bulgaria, and often interceded on behalf of this clergy to the influential Danubian ayani with whom he was on friendly terms<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> M.D. Sturdza, *op. cit.*, pp. 581, 589, 597; Al. de Groot, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

<sup>21</sup> A.M.F. Gritzner, *Hübsch de Grossthal. Notes généalogiques et historiques*, Bordeaux, c. 1930, 131+XV+XXI pp. apud; M. D. Sturdza, *op. cit.*, p. 581.

<sup>22</sup> M. D. Sturdza, *op. cit.*, p. 581.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 576. For his activity as a consul in Wallachia, see E. de Hurmuzaki, *Documente privind istoria României*, new series, *Rapoarte consulare ruse (1770-1796)*, vol. I, București, 1962 and *Rapoarte diplomatice ruse (1797-1806)*, vol. IV, București, 1974.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Cernovodeanu, *Înființarea consulatului englez în Țările Române (1803) și activitatea sa până la 1807* in „Revista română de studii internaționale”, V (1971), no. 1 (11), pp. 139-162.

<sup>25</sup> M.D. Sturdza, *op. cit.*, pp. 589 and 597.

<sup>26</sup> As indicated by Francisc Pall *Les consuls des Puissances étrangères et le clergé catholique en Valachie au début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle (avec des documents inédits)* in “Mélanges de l'École Roumaine en France”, XV, 1939-1940, Bucarest, pp. 146-179 and docs 1-15, pp. 215-239, who made a research at the Archives of the Vatican. Summerers gave considerable support to the activity of the bishop of Nicopolis, Paolo-Dovanlia, at that time in Bucharest, in the correspondence with the papal nuncio to Vienna, Severoli, and Cardinal Borgia, the prefect of the Holy Congregation of Rome. Under the protection of Summerers, Dovanlia was sent over to Brașov during the unrest of the summer of 1802, from where he returned in a carriage drawn by 6 horses, provided by the English consul. In 1803, he secured from the Turkish *ayan* Ismail Tersenikoglu protection for missionaries Antonio Giordani and Fortunato Ercolani. Last but not least, together with Kiriko and the representative of Austria, in the absence of the Catholic representative of France, he arranged with great pomp the funeral of Bishop Dovanlia, who died in Bucharest on 6 July 1804. He offered considerable support to the Catholic clergy and community of Bucharest, after the great fire of 29 August/9 September 1804.

As to the aforementioned Catholic representatives of Russia, one should note that they also played an active part in the life of the Danubian Principalities. Sofia Hübsch (1793-1875), the daughter of Baron Anton Friedrich, the Minister of Denmark to the Porte and of Ecaterina Timoni, became the spouse of Matei Levević Minciaki (1768-1852), consul of Russia to Bucharest (1823-1835)<sup>27</sup>. Last but not least, the two brothers Andrei and Pavel Pisani, the sons of Nicolai Pisani, dragoman of Russia at the Porte, were consuls of Russia to Moldavia in 1818-1824 and 1829, while Alexander Pini, the son of the dragoman of Russia in Constantinople, Francis Pini, was also consul of Russia to Wallachia in 1817-1822. Similarly, two representatives of the Timoni family were consuls of Austria to the Danubian Principalities: Ludwig, the son of Michel Angelo Timoni and of Catherine de Chirico, held office in Moldavia in 1793-1804, and Franz von Timoni in Wallachia, in the time of the Organic Regulations<sup>28</sup>.

One may generally conclude that the majority of the diplomatic representatives of the Great Powers to the Principalities were recruited from among the dragoman families of Constantinople and were only replaced by natives of those countries during the autochthonous reigns, and especially in the time of the Organic Regulations.

I would also like to point out to the importance of the political role played by some of the dragomans holding office at Constantinople and to the circumstances in which they were able to collaborate with the Phanariot grand dragomans of the Porte and their circles. The most typical example is that of the Fonton family, numbering during four generations as many as 14 dragomans, who served the Embassy of France at Constantinople for 150 years, and the Embassy of Russia for 120 years<sup>29</sup>. As already mentioned, the family counted among its member the distinguished musician Charles (1725-1793) and his elder brother Jean Baptiste (1741-1816), who became apostolic bishop at Constantinople in 1796<sup>30</sup>; they were both the sons of the prolific dragoman of first rank, Pierre Fonton (1687-1756), in the service of France, who from his marriage to Lucrezia Navoni begot no less than 21 children. Five among these became dragomans in the service of France not only at the Porte but also in a number of schele of the Levant, and one of them, namely Jean Joseph (1747-1832), resigned from office after the proclamation of the Republic and the decapitation of King Louis XVI, took a 180° turn, and placed himself in 1795 in the service of the Russian Embassy of

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<sup>27</sup> M.D. Sturdza, *op. cit.*, p. 581.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 587.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 577-578; Marie de Testa et Ant. Gautier, *Quelques dynasties de drogmans in Drogmans et diplomates européens*, pp. 163-171.

<sup>30</sup> M.D. Sturdza, *op. cit.*, p. 577; Marie de Testa et A. Gautier, *Une vie, une oeuvre, Mgr. Jean-Baptiste Fonton (1741-1816), évêque de Syra, vicaire apostolique de Constantinople, archevêque de Marcianopolis*, in *Drogmans et diplomates*, pp. 391-343.

Constantinople, as dragoman of first rank<sup>31</sup>. The example of Joseph Fonton (further referred to by the Russians as Iosif Petrovici) was also followed by other members of the family. Therefore, his nephew Charles, the son of the musician Charles, who was employed by the chancellery of the French Consulate of Smirna (Izmir), entered the service of the Russians in 1793, and replaced in the position of General Consul of the Tsar at Ragusa, in 1801, another renegade, Ivan Franzević Barozzi; in 1806, Charles Fonton (now Karl Karlovici) was driven away from the Dalmation coast by the troops of Lauristan, a general in Napoleon's army, and joined the Court in Sankt Petersburg as a counselor. The staff of the Russian Embassy of Constantinople also included, beside Iosif Petrovici, two other nephews of his, the sons of Antoine Fonton (1724-1802), head of the French mission in 1792 after the flee to Poland of the monarchist ambassador Count Gabriel de Choiseul Gouffier. These two aforementioned were Pierre (1765-1846), who later became Piotr Antonovici, dragoman of second rank of the Russian Embassy, and Antoine (Anton Antonovici) (born in 1782), who acceded to the position of dragoman of third rank. After 1805, Piotr Antonovici ensured the secret relations of the Russians with the heads of the great and influential Phanariot families (Ipsilanti, Moruzi, Şuţu), and Anton Antonovici made a brilliant career in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sankt Petersburg, as a counselor<sup>32</sup>. The most prominent position in the diplomatic activity of Tsarist Russia at Constantinople was held by Piotr Antonovici (alias Pierre) Fonton. However, to begin with 1802, Piotr Antonovici was secretly in contact with Dimitrie Moruzi, the kapukehaiua of his brother Alexander at the Porte, prince of Moldavia (1802-1806). The dragoman of Russia was being informed by Dimitrie Moruzi – in close relation with the grand dragoman of the Porte Alexander Michaël Soutza (1802-1806) – about the talks between the Ottoman officials and the French General Guillaume Brune, Ambassador of Bonaparte, who had reached Constantinople in the summer of 1803. Through Fonton, Moruzi had been instructed to persuade the Ottoman officials to adopt an

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<sup>31</sup> Vezi Marie de Testa et A. Gautiers, *Jean Joseph Fonton (1747-1832), drogman de France et diplomate russe* in *Drogmans et diplomates*, p. 261-217. As recently shown by researcher Armand Goşu in a study published in Istanbul in 2003, entitled *La troisième coalition anti napoléonienne et la Sublime Porte 1805*, p. 50, it is noteworthy that: part of the informers and agents of influence employed by the Embassy of France at Istanbul, including Fonton, placed themselves at the disposal of Russia. They were very numerous and holding important offices. In the past, many Phanariot families had sought the protection of France, the traditional ally of the Ottoman Empire. The ambassadors of France had influence over the decisions of the Ottoman Government and the appointment of the office bearers, as many reasons for the Phanariots who targeted various offices, to work their way into the good graces of the French mission. These relations were not controlled by the ambassador, but rather by the dragomans, the translators of the Embassy and, especially, the grand dragoman. Therefore, when Joseph Fonton placed himself in the service of the Russian Embassy, the "clientele" system of relations of Istanbul, which until then had served the interests of France, fell under the control of the Tsarist diplomacy.

<sup>32</sup> M.D. Sturdza, *op. cit.*, p. 578.



attitude favorable to Russia, in their talks with Brune, with the assistance of the grand dragoman Soutza. On 30 June 1803, the Russian ambassador to the Porte, Andrei Iakovlevici Italinski, rated quite satisfactory the conduct of Moruzi, who was informing Piotr Fonton about the talks between General Brune and the reis-efendi, and about the accounts given by Bonaparte's envoy to the dragoman of first rank of France, Francesco Frankini. The same Piotr Fonton also established secret contacts with Alexander Ipsilanti, the father of Prince Constantin, at that time in Wallachia. The cunning Phanariot prince had advised him as early as March 1803, during a meeting, to be careful in giving information to the ambassador of the Tsar. Alexandru Ipsilanti informed Fonton about the talks carried out in Constantinople, at the embassies of France, the Austrian Empire and Prussia, as well as about the results of Brune's approaches; furthermore, the former prince advised the Russian diplomacy about the conduct to adopt in various circumstances so as to prevent a possible penetration of the French in the area of the Balkans. The upheavals of 1806, as well as the eviction and the reappointment of princes to the thrones of Bucharest and Jassy, brought about no favorable evolution in the relations between the Russians and the Ottomans. The latter, instigated by the new emissary of Napoleon, General Horace Sébastiani, were being reluctant, and the Russians, on the pretext that the Turks were hesitant about fulfilling their obligations, declared war, and invaded the Romanian Principalities before the end of the same year. The outcome was detrimental to the brothers, Alexander being evicted from the throne, and Dimitri and Panaioti Moruzi being exiled, while the old Prince Alexander Ipsilanti was apprehended, tortured and put to death. The new accession to power of the Moruzi family occurred in 1808, when owing to the appointment as grand vezir of Mustafa Bairaktar Pasha, a friend of the family, Dimitrie was made grand dragoman of the Porte (1808-1812)<sup>33</sup>. Negotiations were tedious. However, the Turks showed their willingness to continue these negotiations, despite the exaggerated claims of the Tsarists, and Dimitrie Moruzi, who was at that time in the camp of the grand vezir at Şumla, was informed by his brother Panaiotis, holding the position of locum tenens of the grand dragoman in Istanbul, about the notifications made in May 1811 by the attaché d'affaire of France to the Porte, the Marquis Florimond de La Tour Maubourg, concerning Napoleon's intention to break relations with Russia and give support to the Ottoman Empire. The information was passed on immediately to Joseph Fonton, dragoman of

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<sup>33</sup> As shown by Armand Goşu in his well-documented study on *Pacea de la Bucureşti şi Moruzeştii* published in 1998 in the volume dedicated to historian Şerban Papacostea, Piotr Antonovici's relations with Dimitrie Moruzi were resumed during the peace negotiations between the Ottomans and the Russians that started as early as 1810. The intention of the Tsarist diplomats was to have Fonton influence the grand dragoman of the Porte, Dimitrie Moruzi, to determine the grand vezir Yusuf-pasha to eventually accept the annexation of the Principalities by the Russians, the Principalities being already occupied and no longer under the authority of the Ottomans.

Ambassador Italinski, entrusted to carry out negotiations in Wallachia. Dimitrie Moruzi continued to be secretly in contact with Piotr Fonton, who was observing the developments in the capital of the Ottoman Empire. Alarmed by the preparations under way in France and wishing to put an immediate end to the war with the Turks, Russia showed willingness in making concessions, and reduced her claims first to Moldavia as a whole, then to the territory advancing eastward as far as the Siret, including the Danube Mouths. The negotiations were carried out in Bucharest to begin with January 1812, General Kutuzov being pressed by the Tsar to sign the peace as soon as possible. In a memoir addressed to the Cabinet in Sankt Petersburg in February 1812, Piotr Fonton was pointing out to the imperativeness of settling a peace as soon as possible, prompting to the best of his abilities Dimitrie Moruzi and his brother Panaiotis to persuade the Turks to give in and disregard the false promises of the French. When it became clear that Napoleon intended to attack Russia and to advise the Turks not to sign the peace, to which effect he had sent a new ambassador to the Porte, Count Antoine Andréossy, the Moruzi brothers tried to hide from the Ottoman negotiators the position of France, and advised the Russians to settle a peace as soon as possible. Before the arrival in Bucharest of the emissary of the Tsar, Amiral Pavel Ciceagov, the commander of the Russian troops stationed in the Principalities, General Mihail Ilarionovici Kutuzov, lowered the claims of Russia to the Moldavian territory between the Dneestr and the Prut, including the Danube Mouths, and the Turks immediately accepted the terms. The well-known peace of Bucharest of 16/28 May 1812 was thus settled.

The treachery of brothers Dimitrie and Panaioti Moruzi was eventually exposed, and the two paid with their lives the fury and resentment of the Porte on 8 and 20 November 1812. The Russians were only able to offer humanitarian assistance to the sister of the two murdered brothers, through the dragoman Piotr Fonton. This is the most eloquent and tragic example of the relations between the dragomans of Constantinople and the Phanariots<sup>34</sup>.

Having addressed so far the official role of the dragomans, not only as interpreters at Constantinople but also as consular agents sent to the Principalities by various ambassadors of the European Powers, I should further mention their less readily admitted and often concealed role as agents of influence. In this sense, the accounts of the Prime Consul to the Principalities, the Levantinized German Franz Summerer, who Anglicized his name into Francis Summerers, include expenses incurred in the public service and in the secret service not only during his activity

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<sup>34</sup> In this respect, see Ion Jarcutchi, Vladimir Mischeva, *Pacea de la București (din istoria diplomatică a încheierii tratatului de pace ruso-turc de la 16/28 mai 1812)*, Chișinău, 1993, pp. 117-175; Armand Goșu, *Rusia la Dunărea de Jos. Pacea de la București (mai 1812)* in "Studii și materiale de istorie modernă", vol. X (1996), pp. 70-79. See also the point of view of the Ottoman party at Fehmi Ismail, *Bükreş Andlaşmasının Müzaheresi 1811-1812* in "Belleten", 1982, no. 181, pp. 77-120.

in the Principalities 1801-1807, but also after his refuge to London until 1810, before his return to Constantinople and his resignation from the position held at the British Embassy. These accounts are included in the appendixes (listed A to N) to the petitions addressed to the heads of the Foreign Office, Lords Harrowby, Mulgrave, Howick, Bathurst, Wellesley, Ch. Fox and George Canning, as well as to the sub-secretary of state George Hammond, to various ambassadors at the Porte, Elgin, Drummond, Arbuthnot or Liston, to the British Cabinet and, eventually, to King George III himself. In these accounts, drawn up in hesitant French, but listing with German accuracy every single pound, shilling or penny spent, the aforementioned diplomat makes his financial claims by every means, with Levantine pecuniary tenacity. Summeres divides the expenditures into public and private, including every small sum, and every bribe to servants or to officials in the period under consideration, which shows the unprejudiced way in which he had acted. No different is the case of his colleagues in the service of Russia, France or Austria, the methods applied being “universal”: corruption, theft, deceit or overt manipulation. One should consider the accounts forwarded to the British Government under the letter H, including the expenses incurred by Summeres between 18 January 1803 and 7 December 1806: nine pounds two shillings paid on 27 July 1803 to an individual entering Transylvania surreptitiously, in order to find out details about a secret message sent by the commissary of France to the Austrian General Count Mittrowski; fifteen pounds twelve shillings paid on 30 September 1805 to a number of individuals, to keep an eye on the moves of the Commissary of France Sainte Luce and look into his intrigues and nocturnal meetings with the heads of the Wallachian Divan; sixteen pounds sterling paid on 30 July 1806, in several installments, to the boyars Manolache Hariton and Iancovici in exchange for some secret reports on the actions of Sebastiani, Napoleon’s Ambassador to the Porte, during his stay in Bucharest, and on his secret negotiations with the most prominent boyars of the Principality; seventeen pounds six shillings eight pence paid on 31 August 1806 for a gold watch offered as a gift to the Divan intendant of Wallachia, so that Summerers could make a copy of the notes and secret reports presented by the Commissary of France to Bucharest to the ruling Prince. More primitive means were employed on other occasions. On 6 September 1806, seven pounds sterling was paid to the various employees of the Princely Post to stall a French messenger traveling from Constantinople together with an English courier, so that the latter may arrive in Vienna earlier. On 6 September again, two pounds, six shillings eight pence was paid to the Janissaries accompanying the French messenger, so that the latter would drink to intoxication at the nearest inn be overtaken by the English messenger; fifteen pounds sterling paid on 5 October 1806 to a second rank boyar, so that the latter should act as a partisan of the French and inform on the nocturnal meetings of the grand boyars and the intrigue woven with Talleyrand. Six pounds thirteen shillings four pence paid on 10 October 1806, so that the Prince should inform Summerers about the coming and going of the secret servants and emissaries of the Post master Alexander Sutzó, and of the

emissaries sent by the commissary of France at every hour of day and night; twelve pounds sterling paid on 11 November 1806 for the arrears of Mr Vincent, professor of Italian in the service of St. Luce, the Consul of France, and of his successors, Parant and Le Doulx, serving in fact as an English spy; ten pounds sterling to secure on 30 November 1806 the services of an employee of the agency of Austria in exposing the intrigues woven by the Austrian agent in Bucharest and the French Commissary; two hundred piastres paid on 7 December 1806 to a certain Vasile Pantazoglu, sent to the French Commissary, so that the latter should collect information, acting as a partisan of France<sup>35</sup>.

In addition to these accounts, to which several others added, Summerers also claimed reimbursement for damages suffered as a result of his being forced to leave his consular residence in Bucharest in June 1807, and losing the luxurious house he had there, on which occasion his silverware, furniture, library with precious Arab, Persian and Greek manuscripts, as well as clothing, chinaware, carriage, and thoroughbreds, were stolen by the Turkish hordes and the bashkiri of the Russian army, the incurred damages totaling eight hundred pounds sterling<sup>36</sup>; however, the petitions addressed to Prime Minister Wellesley and to King George III went unanswered<sup>37</sup>. Summerers was forced to accept payment of five thousand pounds sterling for unpaid salaries and public service, the remaining claims not being taken into consideration. As a result, he left England in the summer of 1810 and returned to Constantinople<sup>38</sup>, where he resumed his activity as a dragoman, as already mentioned, in the service of Sardinia.

The time of the dragomans was in decline.

To begin with the nineteenth century, the dragomans of the Levantine families lost their hereditary positions, which were given to co-nationals of every foreign embassy. In fact, many members of these families left Constantinople and the East to settle in their adoptive countries, France, Austria, Holland or Russia. Those who remained in the capital of the Ottoman Empire entered anonymity, lost nationality, and many of them eventually emigrated to Greece, North Africa or the Middle East. Thus ends the captivating history of a cosmopolitan clan dominating the political scene of the embassies of the European Powers to the Ottoman Empire for centuries, with echoes in the history of the Danubian Principalities that deserve a special focus and are yet to explore.

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<sup>35</sup> Public. Record Office, Foreign Office, *Turkey*, file 78/66, ff. 14-24 v<sup>o</sup> (account H, 18 January 1803 - 7 December 1806).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, ff. 26-54.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, file 78/71, ff. 149 v<sup>o</sup>-151 v<sup>o</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, ff. 156-156 v<sup>o</sup>.