

FROM RUSCUK TO BESSARABIA: MANUK BEY AND THE CAREER OF AN OTTOMAN-RUSSIAN MIDDLEMAN AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 19TH CENTURY

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Abstract

The life and political career of Manuk Mirzayan (d. 1817), the Armenian money-lender and acolyte of Mustapha Pasha Bairaktar, the ayan of Ruscuk, presents a good case of study of a Ottoman-Russian middleman of the early 19th century Balkans. As a product of the complicated internal and international problems of the Ottoman Balkans, he aptly managed to survive amongst the conflict between two empires and even benefited from the international conflicts as a middleman. By tracing his activities from Ruscuk to Bessarabia, this paper argues that Manuk's decisions can be considered as strategies to improve his status and secure his life in an environment about which he could only speculate but which clearly favored agents who could cater to the competing interests of different empires and political factions.

Keywords: Manuk Mirzayan, Balkans, Russia, Ottoman Empire

Ruscuk'dan Besarabya'ya: Manuk Bey ve Bir Osmanlı-Rus Aracısı'nın 19. Yüzyıl Başındaki Kariyeri

Öz

Ruscuk ayanı Alemdar Mustafa Paşa'nın sarraf ve yardımcısı olan Ermeni Manuk Mirzayanının (ö. 1817), hayatı ve siyasi kariyeri 19. yüzyılın ilk yarısında Osmanlı-Rus bir arabolucunun stratejilerini anlamak açısından çok iyi bir örnek sunar. Aynı dönemin Osmanlı Balkanlarının karmaşık iç ve dış denge ve problemlerinin bir ürünü olan Manuk Bey, iki imparatorluk arasındaki çekişmelerde kurnaz bir şekilde ayakta kalmayı becermekle kalmamış, bir aracı olarak bu çekişmelerden faydalananmayı da bilmıştır. Ruscuk'tan Besarabya'ya kadar uzanan hayat hikayesini takip eden bu çalışmada speküasyon ve öngörüleriyile hareket edebileceği ve iki imparatorluğun çatışan çıkarlarına hizmet eden aracı ve ajanların avantajlı olduğu bu karmaşık ortamda Manuk Bey'in statüsünü yükseltme ve ayakta kalma stratejileri inceleneciktir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Manuk Mirzayan, Balkanlar, Rusya, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu

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The first decade of the 19th century was particularly tumultuous for Ottoman elites in Constantinople as well as in the Balkans, and it was full of promise for enterprising middlemen in Ottoman politics and international negotiations. Factionalization and intervention of local power holders in Ottoman central politics paralleled and sometimes echoed the volatile state of international politics during the Napoleonic wars. Between 1800 and 1812, the Constantinopolitan politics witnessed the deposition of Selim III, a Janissary rebellion, the rise and fall of prominent Muslim and Christian Phanariot bureaucrats, a protracted war with Russia and unfavorable international alignments. At the same time, the Balkan lands saw the rise and fall of *ayans* such as Pasvanoğlu and Mustapha Pacha Bairaktar, and a Russian offensive and occupation of the Danubian Principalities, the borderland with the Habsburg and Russian Empires that was offered as a sinecure to the Phanariot officials.¹

However, such a hazardous environment fueled, if only briefly, the rise to significant political and diplomatic prominence of lower-rank agents of power such as Manuk Bey Mirzayan, the Armenian money-lender and acolyte of Mustapha Pasha Bairaktar, the *ayan* of Ruscuk. The death of Alemdar Mustapha Pacha and the Janissary revolt of 1808, which left the *ayan*'s supporters in disarray, did not hinder Manuk's political ambitions. Manuk Bey moved to Bucharest, in Wallachia, where he owned extensive land estates and the title of "cup bearer" (*sakî*). From 1809 until 1817, the year of his death, Manuk Bey deployed a tireless and complicated diplomatic and political activity that makes it difficult to identify his loyalties and ambitions. He was involved in the Russian plans of permanent occupation of the Principalities and the Ottoman-Russian peace negotiations from 1809 until 1813. He was in touch with Mustapha Pacha's old companions who had fled to Russia and with Ottoman bureaucrats in Constantinople. He also kept interfering with the administration of Wallachia and Moldavia and became a detractor of the local rulers on account of their alleged violation of the Ottoman-Russian peace treaty of 1812, which set limitations to the Ottoman administration of these borderland principalities by Constantinopolitan Phanariot officials.²

How can we explain the relative longevity of Manuk's activity and his transition from one imperial service to another at a time when the vagaries of international politics and political turmoil in the Ottoman Empire brought the downfall of major Ottoman powerholders? As response, in this paper I argue that the seemingly dangerous environment of diplomatic intrigues of the 1800s expose two parallel trends that allowed a skillful Ottoman-Christian fixer to acquire new honors and importance. On the one hand the protracted nature of the Napoleonic

¹ For more details on the period, see Aysel Yıldız, *Crisis and Rebellion in the Ottoman Empire: The Downfall of a Sultan in the Age of Revolutions*, (forthcoming, IB Tauris: 2017); Ali Yaycioğlu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in The Age of Revolutions* (Stanford: California, 2016).

² Gheorghe Bezviconi, *Manuc Bei*, (Chișinău: 1938); Stefan Ionescu, *Manuc Bei, Zaraf și diplomat la începutul secolului al XIX-lea*, (Cluj-Napoca, Editura Dacia, 1976).

wars and the instability of alliances during the period facilitated the rise of informers and middlemen in the diplomatic service embassies and consulates of most European states.³ By welcoming diplomatic overtures from different parties involved in the wars at a time of domestic political turmoil the Ottoman Empire gave a chance to such middlemen to offer their espionage and mediation services. In parallel, Ottoman Christian officials became more deeply involved in international politics by virtue of their own activity as diplomatic agents and thanks to the international visibility that the status of Christian elites in the Ottoman Empire acquired during the period.⁴ This trend was catalyzed by the international discussions that Russia instigated about the political privileges of the Danubian principalities.

To explain Manuk Bey's strategies and discern his long-term plans, I will closely survey the local and international context in which these individuals were acting. In 1812, the Russian-Ottoman Peace Treaty was signed, Napoleon invaded Russia, and Ioannis Karadzas, an enemy of Mustapha Pasha Bairaktar and a versatile diplomat with Russian and French connections⁵ was appointed the prince of Wallachia.⁶ In response to these events and to the repression against the old associates of Mustapha Pacha, Manuk changed his strategy and allegiance and tried to secure an official position in the Russian administration.

The primary sources that I utilize to detail Manuk's life between 1809 and 1817 are mostly letters with Russian officials, Wallachian and Moldavian *boyars* and runaway Ottoman officials, and his will. These documents were deposited at the Museum of History of Bucharest, the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire, the Central State Historical Archive of Leningrad (now the Central State Historical Archive of St. Petersburg) and the Central State Archive of the Armenian Soviet at Yerevan. For this study I will use the copies and translations which are available in the Archival Fund H.Dj. Siruni at the National Archives of Romania in Bucharest, no. 1464, 1466-1469. Between 1957 and 1960, Hagop Djololian Siruni, a famous Romanian-Armenian historian, conducted a vast

³ Keith Hamilton and Richard Langhorne, *The Practice of Diplomacy: its evolution, theory and administration* (New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 74-75; *The Diplomat's World: A Cultural History of Diplomacy 1815-1914*, ed. by Markus Mosslang and Torsten Riotte, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 349-350; Veniamin Ciobanu, Înființarea consulațelor străine în Principatele Dunărene,” in *Istoria românilor*, ed. by Paul Cernovodeanu, Nicolae Edroiu, vol. 6, Bucharest, 2002, pp. 642-652.

⁴ Stefania Costache, “The Ottoman-Russian-Habsburg Information Networks and the Negotiation of Ottoman Affairs on the Danube (1800s-1820s),” *Revista istorică* XXVI/3-4 (2015), pp. 251-253

⁵ Anatolii F. Miller, *Mustapha Pacha Bairakdar*, (Bucharest: Association Internationale d'Etudes du Sud-Est Européen, 1975), p. 199; I.C. Karadja, “Corespondență lui Capodistria cu Ioan Caragea Vodă,” *Revista Iсторică*, 7-9 (1921), p. 182.

⁶ Armand Goșu, *La Troisième Coalition Antinapoléonienne et la Sublime Porte: 1805*, (Istanbul: Isis, 2003), pp. 52-59.

research project about Manuk, during which he reproduced and translated documents from the above-mentioned archives.⁷

I. International context

Attempting to navigate the shifting politics of the Napoleonic wars (the Second, Third and Fourth Coalition), the Ottoman diplomacy committed to conflicting agreements with France and Russia that later offered the pretext for international involvement in the rule over Ottoman Christians and transformed its future into an international bargaining chip. As this paper will later argue, the accumulation of precedents and requirements offered the background for skillful mediators such as Manuk Bey to build their reputation and aspire to a career transferable between empires.

After an initial rapprochement to France, which resulted in the appointment of pro-French Phanariot officials to the rule of the Danubian Principalities, by 1802 the Ottoman Porte committed to issue a *hatt-i-serif* that confirmed Russia's claim to intercede on behalf of these borderlands.⁸ The Russian-Ottoman relations were further delineated in 1805 with a treaty that declared France as the common enemy and which granted Russian warships access through the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. The Russian version of the treaty contained several secret articles according to which a Russian army corps were to be stationed in Wallachia and Moldavia, on the shores of the Danube and the Ottoman Empire committed to grant Christians in the empire religious freedom and the application of the same laws as for the Muslims. The last secret article proposed by the Russians also provided that the Russian tsar should receive intercession right on behalf of the Christian religious leaders in matters involving the community.⁹ After long meetings between the Ottoman delegates including the minister of the interior Ismet Bey, the succeeding ministers of Foreign Affairs Mahmud Raif and Ahmed Vasif and the dragoman of the Russian embassy Joseph Fonton and the Russian ambassador Italinsky, none of the secret stipulations were included in the ratified treaty.¹⁰ The only concession that the Russian delegation could obtain from the Ottomans was, at the behest of the prince of Wallachia Constantin Ypsilanti, the creation of a local army in Wallachia, to oppose the raids of the *ayan* of Vidin, Pasvan-oglu.¹¹

⁷ Vartan Arachelian, *Munca unui savant armean în România*, (Bucharest: Biblioteca Bucureștilor, 2008), pp. 44-45.

⁸ Veniamin Ciobanu, «Principatele și Problema Orientală», *Istoria Romanilor*, Academia Romana, vol. 6, p. 624.

⁹ Gosu, *La Troisième Coalition*, p. 14.

¹⁰ Gosu, *La Troisième Coalition*, pp. 27-30

¹¹ Gosu, *La Troisième Coalition*, p. 32

The apparent improvement in Russian-Ottoman relations came to an end once the Porte responded to Napoleon's overtures following his victory in the War of the Third Coalition. However, the stipulations of the previous Russian-Ottoman treaties would continue to constrict the international options available to the Porte.¹² Following assiduous lobby by French diplomats, such as the general Horace Sebastiani who was serving as an ambassador to Constantinople, the Porte moved to cancel the privileges acknowledged to Russia in the treaties, open the straits to the French military ships, and replace the pro-Russian with pro-French Phanariot rulers in Wallachia and Moldavia. Scarlat Kallimaki and Alexander Soutzo took the thrones of Moldavia and Wallachia from Alexander Morouzi and Constantin Ypsilanti respectively.¹³

Russia accused the Porte of not complying with its demands concerning the defense of Wallachia against the raids of the rebellious *ayan* of Vidin Pasvan-oglu, the opening of the Straits to the Russians ships and the break of the relations with France. Russia thus threatened to occupy the Danubian principalities. As the Porte responded by declaring war on 15/27 December 1806, Russia occupied Moldavia and Wallachia. From his stronghold in Ruscuk, Mustafa Pacha Bairaktar, Manuk Bey's patron, assumed the defense of the Danube frontline.

The occasion for agents such as Manuk to assume a prominent role appeared thanks to the combination of such international dynamics and Ottoman domestic changes. By 1807 the Ottoman Empire's international situation further weakened with the rapprochement between Russia and France through the Treaty of Tilsit in the context of the wars of the Fourth Coalition. While the treaty appeared to advance conditions for a Russian-Ottoman armistice with French oversight, its secret articles envisioned the partition of the Ottoman Empire. The disclosure of these secret articles irrevocably damaged the possibility of a Russian-Ottoman armistice.¹⁴ However, the violent deposition of Selim III in Constantinople (1807) created the conditions for new negotiations between the loyalist Ottoman troops on the Danube, the Russian diplomats and the high-ranking commanders. In need of a respite to march on Constantinople and restore Selim III, Mustafa Pasha Bairaktar entered negotiations with Russian diplomats and generals such as the heads of the Russian army General Michelson and the field marshal Prozorovski.¹⁵ These negotiations, about which the factions in power in Constantinople were only partially aware,¹⁶ were conducted with the mediation of Manuk Bey. The discussions concerned the possibility for the principalities to remain under the Ottoman authority while also being under Russian influence. The

¹² Ciobanu, «Principalele si Problema Orientala», p. 626.

¹³ Ciobanu, «Principalele si Problema Orientala», p. 626.

¹⁴ Miller, *Mustapha Pacha Bairaktar*, p. 199

¹⁵ Ionescu, *Manuc Bei*, p. 82

¹⁶ DANIC, Fond Siruni, 1464, ff. 67-68

same documents also suggest Russia's willingness to answer Mustafa Bairaktar's propositions and negotiate with the Ottomans without French mediation.

Manuk Bey continued to mediate the peace negotiations even after Bairaktar's death in clashes with Janissaries following his march on Constantinople and instatement of sultan Mahmud II. The peace between the Ottomans and the Russians continued to be one of the main preoccupations for Manuk, the Russian consuls, ambassador and ministry of foreign affairs during the years following the deposition of Mustafa IV, the enthronement of Mahmud II and Mustafa Bairaktar's death in 1808. New factors complicated the international situation and by 1812 both the Russian and Ottoman Empires were ready to conclude peace. Russian diplomacy felt more pressured in this respect as Napoleon prepared for the invasion of Russia. The Porte, in its turn, was pressured to transfer more territories to the ambitious governor of Egypt Mehmet Ali. The Treaty was finally signed in May 1812 in Bucharest. It stipulated that Russia evacuated Wallachia and Moldavia and acquired the stripe of land at the east of Moldavia, on the left side of the Pruth River. Wallachia had been tax-exempt for two years. The Ottoman Porte finally recognized the autonomy of Serbia. In exchange, the Ottoman Empire was returned several fortresses in the Caucasus.¹⁷

II. Political and Military Events Before 1812

After Mustapha Pasha's death, his former associates and counsellors Manuk Bey and Köse Ahmed Efendi, who assumed the *ayanlik* of Ruscuk and leadership of the Ottoman troops on the Danube, found themselves in mortal danger.¹⁸ The factionalization that plagued Ottoman politics and threatened Manuk's and Ahmed Efendi's life was also reflected at the level of the Ottoman diplomatic approach to the conflict with Russia. On the one hand, Ahmed Efendi strove to lead the negotiations with Russia and continue the discussions from where they had been left at the death of Bairaktar. A Russian consular report from December 10th informs that Manuk arrived from Ruscuk to Bucharest to ask for peace on behalf of the Ruscuk *ayan*, Ahmed Efendi, provided that the Principalities were left under Ottoman suzerainty.¹⁹ The French consul, in his turn, suspected that Köse Ahmed was in charge of the negotiations with the Russians at that moment.²⁰ On the other hand, another diplomatic direction was being developed at Constantinople, which was less accommodating to the Russians' demands. Just as Manuk suspected that the pro-French faction gained more influence in the imperial capital, Ahmed Efendi was sentenced to death. In this context, Manuk sought to secure his life by

¹⁷ Matthew Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923: a study in international relations*, MacMillan 1966.

¹⁸ DANIC, Fond Siruni, "Articole privind Manuk Bey", f. 5

¹⁹ DANIC, Fond Siruni, "Articole privind Manuk Bey", f. 9.

²⁰ DANIC, Fond Siruni, "Articole privind Manuk Bey", f. 10.

tightening his own relations with the Russians but without placing himself in complete and definitive Russian service. From this ambiguous position, he also attempted to negotiate advantageous conditions for his associates in charge of the Ottoman troops on the Danube, who tried to escape death sentences by taking refuge to Russia.

Manuk had been granted Russian protection since 1805²¹ but in December 1808 he met with the Russian consul Luca Chirico to negotiate his collaboration with the Russians. Chirico wanted to secure Manuk's mediation and services as an informant while also creating the proof that he was passing under Russian control. He offered him a pension, allegedly to compensate for the material losses after Mustapha Pasha's death, which Manuk refused.²² He was, however, striving to receive the Order of Saint Anna in second class, a Russian knighthood order, which the Russians offered on condition that he would resettle in occupied Wallachia.²³ However, Manuk was not willing to comply with this condition. Manuk emphasized that after an "ungrateful nation", the Ottoman Empire, rewarded his loyal and painstaking works with anguish and with only the title of dragoman, he was willing to offer his services to the sole "nation" that took upon itself the protection of the Christians in the Ottoman Empire. But while he pledged that he would acquit himself of this duty while still being on the right shore of the Danube, he was not specific about the moment when he would relocate to Wallachia to continue his services for the Russians.²⁴ In what concerns the Order, Manuk assumed an apparently indifferent position and claimed that it was a reward due to him for his past services, promised by Mustapha Pasha, and not a gift to secure his future service. In fact, when the Russian tsar sent the Order of Saint Anna to Constantinople months before, the award was to be given to one of the Ottoman subjects of Greek Orthodox confession but not to someone in particular. The tsar thus responded to the Sultan Mustapha IV who had awarded a Russian officer with an Ottoman distinction.²⁵

Few weeks later, Manuk left Ruscuk and crossed the Danube to Wallachia for fear that if Ahmed Efendi died, Ruscuk would fall into chaos.²⁶ He tried to convince Abdullah Ramiz Pacha, the former grand admiral (kapudan pasha), to follow him to the Russian side, but the pasha refused, hoping that a counter revolution would take place in the Empire.²⁷ In January 1809, the Russian consul Chirico entreated Manuk to convince Ahmed Efendi to abandon the fortresses of Ismail and Giurgiu to the Russians, but Manuk refused this attempt for fear that

²¹ DANIC, Fond Siruni 1464, f. 15.

²² DANIC, Fond Siruni 1464, f. 112.

²³ DANIC, Fond Siruni 1464, f. 125.

²⁴ DANIC, Fond Siruni 1464, f. 112.

²⁵ DANIC, Fond Siruni 1464, f. 125.

²⁶ DANIC, Fond Siruni 1464, f. 139.

²⁷ DANIC, Fond Siruni 1464, f. 139.

his family left in Ruscuk might suffer from the Ottomans' reappraisals. Manuk thus insisted that his service should be kept secret and the Russians create the impression that he was still devoted to the Porte.²⁸ Concerning the two Danubian fortresses, Manuk pointed out that Ahmed Efendi had left them defenseless, using the troops against the insurgents supporting the Janissaries. All Ottoman troops there, which would try to resist the Russian offensive, would be useless without Ahmed Efendi's leadership.²⁹

When Manuk fled to Wallachia, the Ottoman *ayans* rallied at Ruscuk to decide about sending a delegation headed by Manuk to the Russian camp and ask for peace based on the conditions decided during the negotiations with Mustapha Pacha Bairaktar.³⁰ At the same time, a delegation of representatives of the Porte was awaited on the shores of the Danube to contact with the Russians. In February 1809, the Porte revoked the *ayan* Köse Ahmed Efendi from his office and condemned him to death.³¹ After this order of removal and Manuk's instances, Ahmed Efendi crossed together with Ramiz Pacha, Memis Aga, the *ayan* of Tarnovo, Inge Bey, the navy commander, and the cashier of the Capudan Pasa, the Danube to Wallachia and demanded shelter from the Russians in March 1809. The conditions that the Russian general and senator of the Russian administration of Wallachia Michael Miloradovic asked from Ahmed Efendi, so as to let him flee to Wallachia, was a matter Manuk had to negotiate skillfully. Miloradovic demanded that Ahmed Efendi deliver Giurgiu without a fight.³² Manuk replied that the inhabitants of Ruscuk, the fortress across the Danube from Giurgiu, were aware of Ahmed Efendi's Russian sympathies and that any sign indicative of Ahmed's plan to desert would have mobilized the population. He suggested, in exchange, that the Russian armies cross the Danube in four points, advance into the Balkans and implement the Russian administration in the occupied lands. Manuk argued that it was only through a fast Russian advancement and spread of the Russian administration that the Muslim population of the Balkans would not have united to resist the Russians. Manuk also denied that he had ever promised that Ahmed would deliver Giurgiu before the Russian troops occupied Ruscuk.³³

Manuk used all his persuasion to facilitate Ahmed's flight to the Russian occupied Wallachia, without conceding to Russian demands such as the request that Ahmed should leave the fortress of Giurgiu defenseless. The plan of a Russian "forceful" advancement in the Balkans, which he proposed to Miloradovic, appears gratuitous since for this plan to succeed, fortresses such as Ahmed's needed to be disarmed. Nevertheless, Manuk emphasized that welcoming Ahmed

²⁸ DANIC, Fond Siruni 1466, f. 27.

²⁹ DANIC, Fond Siruni 1466, f. 23.

³⁰ DANIC, Fond Siruni, 1466, f. 27.

³¹ DANIC, Fond Siruni, "Articole privind Manuk Bey", f. 10.

³² DANIC, Fond Siruni 1466, f. 28.

³³ DANIC, Fond Siruni 1466, f. 30.

Efendi was a wise decision in itself, as Ahmed was stronger than all the other Ottoman commanders, who also happened to be his adversaries. In April 1809, Alexander Langeron, a general in the Russian army, claimed that Ahmed Efendi had weakened Giurgiu's defense before fleeing to Wallachia, for fear that when Bosniak-Aga, another Ottoman official, received the vizier's mandate to take over Ahmed Efendi's territory, he would destroy all those who had been loyal to Mustapha Pasha.³⁴ Nevertheless, with a weakened defense or not, Giurgiu did not capitulate to the Russian assault.³⁵

The hostilities continued at the same time that Manuk negotiated with Russia both on behalf of his friends as well as for the Porte. In February 1809, an Ottoman delegation led by Mehmed Seid Ghalib, the Reis-Efendi (the minister of foreign affairs), traveled to Bucharest and to Iassy, to continue the discussions with the Russians.³⁶ The Russian-Ottoman negotiations from February 1809 failed. Ghalib Efendi refused any territorial concession, having the reassurance of the recently-concluded Treaty of Dardanelles between the Ottomans and the English, which obliged the Britain to protect the integrity of the Ottoman state against the French, by means of its fleet and weapon-supply to the Porte.³⁷ Manuk, in his turn, continued to mediate and host Russian-Ottoman negotiations in his house in Bucharest.³⁸

While in Wallachia, Manuk expanded his business and developed new connections with the local boyars.³⁹ The country's assembly offered him tax exemptions for land estates in the vicinity of Bucharest, in exchange for the "patriotism" he repeatedly showed when lending money to Wallachia's treasury.⁴⁰ He kept an active correspondence with Ahmed Efendi and Mehmet Memis who wrote to him from Russia to request money and to send letters to their families.⁴¹ He also maintained contact with Pehlivan Pasha who had been defeated and captured at Bazaracic and was held prisoner in Moldavia. At the same time Manuk developed ties with Ghalib Efendi, the Ottoman diplomatic delegate. Invoices from March 1809 show that Manuk lent money to Ghalib Efendi.⁴² As late as 1817 the Ottoman delegate still owed significant sums of money to Manuk.⁴³ In parallel, he also pleaded with the Russian consul Kiriko and the Russian general Bagration, to be awarded a new Russian distinction. The reasons that Kiriko and Bagration

³⁴ DANIC, Fond Siruni 1466, f. 32.

³⁵ DANIC, Fond Siruni, "Articole privind Manuk Bey", ff. 11-12.

³⁶ DANIC, Fond Siruni, "Articole privind Manuk Bey", f. 12.

³⁷ DANIC, Fond Siruni, "Articole privind Manuk Bey", f. 13.

³⁸ DANIC, Fond Siruni, "Articole privind Manuk Bey" f. 14.

³⁹ *Documente turcesti*, vol. III, p. 262.

⁴⁰ DANIC, Fond Siruni 1466, ff. 44-45.

⁴¹ *Documente turcesti*, vol. III, pp. 264-266, 269-273.

⁴² DANIC, Fond Siruni, "Articole privind Manuk Bey", f. 13.

⁴³ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1468, f. 24.

invoked, when suggesting the tsar to award Manuk a new medal, were the material losses Manuk incurred when he fled to Wallachia to serve the Russian army and the fact that Mustapha Bairaktar did not attack thanks to Manuk's efforts.⁴⁴ In May 1810, Manuk finally received the Order of Saint Vladimir in third class from Tsar Alexander I.⁴⁵

In May 1810, the Ottoman and the Russian diplomats met again. Despite their defeats in battle, the Ottomans continued demanding the restitution of Wallachia and Moldavia. Russia proposed, in exchange, the drawing of the border on the Danube and autonomy for Serbia. As the French promised the Ottomans the re-acquisition of the principalities and of the Crimea in case they did not end the war, the Ottoman-Russian discussions bore no result.⁴⁶ However, from June until September 1810, in parallel with the war, the Ottomans continued to send delegates to Manuk, to negotiate the peace with the Russians. The Russian army took over Silistra, which Pehlivan Pasha had successfully defended earlier.

During this period Manuk Bey first contacted the prince Hovakim Lazarian in Saint Petersburg, the descendant of an Armenian wealthy owner of an iron factory, who was well connected with the Russian government.⁴⁷ In a letter dated November 24th 1810, Manuk narrated his life story to Lazarian. The way in which he described his rising prominence near Tersenikli-oglu and Mustapha Pasha and in Wallachia, his diplomatic service and his difficulties after Mustapha's death deserves particular attention. Manuk evoked his loyal service to the sultan, at the side of Tersenikli-oglu and Mustapha Bairaktar, just as he emphasized the services he offered to the Russian army when it crossed into Wallachia. Manuk did not notice anything treacherous in his activity but argued instead that his services were portrayed as such by the envious "Westerners," implying the French, who sought to pit the Ottoman people against the Russians and against Manuk as a serviceman for the Russians.

Manuk claimed that he became involved in state affairs at the time of the signing of the peace between the Ottomans, the Russians and the Habsburgs in 1787, when he became *sabinci*. He was involved in tax-farming and thus became acquainted with Tersinikli-oglu. Tersinikli administered his lands with the help of Manuk, Mustapha Pasha and Ahmed Efendi "not completely independently from the Ottoman sultan, but as supreme governor and prince in submission to the sultan [...] thus serving the government."⁴⁸ Manuk further alleged that he facilitated the elimination of the bandits, possibly of Pasvan-oglu, who were devastating Wallachia. For his help, the Wallachian ruler offered him an office in

⁴⁴ DANIC, Fond Siruni 1466, ff. 47, 52.

⁴⁵ DANIC, Fond Siruni, "Articole privind Manuk Bey", f. 19.

⁴⁶ Academia Romana, Istoria Romanilor, vol. VI, p. 628.

⁴⁷ DANIC, Fond Siruni, 1466, f. 106.

⁴⁸ DANIC, Fond Siruni, 1466, f. 69.

the country's administration and lands in a country where foreigners and especially Armenians could not own land.⁴⁹

Manuk did not seem troubled by the contradictions in his narrative of loyalty to both the Ottoman and the Russian Empires, as he narrated his alleged involvement in the Deed of Agreement (*Sened-i İttifak*) of 1808 as well as the way he sabotaged the Ottoman forces and *ayans* by escaping to Wallachia. As justification, Manuk argued that the death of Mustafa Pasha also spelled the end of the Deed of Agreement, which had been designed to end the abuses "in administration and the Ottoman army."⁵⁰ Therefore, he continued, some "unlawful usurpers" managed to come to power in the imperial capital. For him, this new state elite betrayed the state interests and sabotaged the ongoing reforms and thus released him from any commitment to a political entity that had then become "illegitimate". By escaping to Wallachia he vowed to exact revenge and destroyed his properties at the south of the Danube. Resettling in Wallachia, Manuk expected to be compensated by the Russian treasury for these losses. He also demanded to keep his rank and to receive a pension. Given the ungrateful treatment he received from the Porte, in contrast to the generosity that the tsar bestowed on his servants and the mercy he has shown to the Armenian kin, he offered his services to the Russian empire.⁵¹

Manuk's afore-mentioned letter offers a glimpse at the way in which he sought to position himself favorably in three contexts, emphasizes his abilities and achievements in service and avoids suspicions of treachery, which would have damaged his credibility as a serviceman for either empire. One such context was that of the recent relations between the Ottomans and the Russians, which had oscillated between hesitant peace and war, another was that of him in the Ottoman service and lastly – of him in the Russian service. Manuk sought to demonstrate that his performance in the Ottoman service was faultless and loyal to the Ottoman state and the sultan. He also emphasized his participation to the pact of *ayans* (*Sened-i İttifak*), which was also meant to strengthen the empire and put down the rebellions. Simultaneously, he emphasized the assistance he provided to the Russian armies in their campaign to Moldavia, with no mention that the service he carried for both Ottomans and Russians was contradictory. Similarly to the time when he pursued the Russian Order of Saint Anna while in Ottoman service, Manuk again pressed for keeping the rank he had acquired from one Empire when being under the authority of the other.

After General Kutuzov reputed important new victories against the Ottoman troops towards the end of 1811, the vizier demanded the armistice and

⁴⁹ DANIC, Fond Siruni, 1466, f. 70.

⁵⁰ DANIC, Fond Siruni, 1466, (ACISL, fond 880, opis 5, dos. 7, f. 76-83. fotocopia MIB, no. 46521 (7101/57)), f. 72.

⁵¹ DANIC, Fond Siruni, 1466, f. 73.

offered the Russians the territory on the left side of the river Siret in Moldavia. Even as Kutuzov accepted the proposition, the vizier changed his offer and proposed a border on the Pruth River. An Ottoman delegation arrived in Bucharest in December 1811 to restart peace negotiations. As they still opposed the proposal of territorial concession up to the Siret River, the Russians entrusted Manuk with the mission to expound to Mehmed Seid Ghalib the plans of division of the Ottoman Empire, which the Western Powers were setting up and which the Ottomans could counter by immediately concluding peace with the Russians⁵². Ghalib Efendi was suspicious and argued that Russia was equally interested in the Empire's division. In response, Manuk noticed that in the eventuality of such a division, Russia would receive a share far less important than the shares that the other powers would claim.⁵³ Given the increasingly unavoidable war with France, the Russian diplomacy sought, throughout 1811, to conclude the war with the Ottoman Empire and proposed a number of plans that the Ottomans repeatedly countered. The Russian diplomats' became even more restless at the news, provided by Manuk, that Ghalib Efendi had been informed about the imminence of the Russian-French war.⁵⁴ The discussions around a peace treaty started anew in Bucharest, at the beginning of 1812. The Peace Treaty was ratified one day before Napoleon invaded Russia, on June 11th 1812. It confirmed the Ottoman suzerainty over the Principalities, the setting of the Russian-Ottoman border on the Pruth River, navigation rights for Russia on the Danube and autonomy for Serbia.⁵⁵

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From 1809 until 1812 Manuk invested his efforts in rescuing himself from the persecutors of those who had been associated with Mustapha Pasha. He escaped to Wallachia, which was at the time under Russian occupation, but he did not bring his family from Ruscuk. The choice of Wallachia as a refuge was not random. As the land was occupied by the Russian troops, Manuk was out of the immediate threat from the Ottomans. At the same time, as Wallachia was officially a territory under Ottoman suzerainty, even under Russian occupation, Manuk could not have been formally accused of treachery and of siding with the enemy. It is probable that Manuk chose to flee to Wallachia with the hope that the Ottomans would finally concede this land to the Russians. In this event, he would have been well established in the province as he had started to develop his business there by acquiring land, landing money to the country's assembly and renting a salt mine. Some Ottoman officials also speculated that Manuk hoped that Wallachia would remain to the Russians, for fear that in case it did not and he returned at the Porte, his life would have been in danger.⁵⁶ Moreover, the fact that he sought to retrieve

⁵² DANIC, Fond Siruni, "Articole privind Manuk Bey", f. 19.

⁵³ DANIC, Fond Siruni, 1466, f. 89.

⁵⁴ DANIC, Fond Siruni, 1466, f. 93.

⁵⁵ Academia Romana, Istoria Romanilor, p. 629.

⁵⁶ *Documente turcesti*, vol. III, p. 280.

his family and bring them to Wallachia can indicate that Manuk ultimately decided to end his service to the Ottomans and relocate under Russian authority.

However, just as it is possible that Manuk already prepared to break his ties with the Ottomans, it is also possible that he thought it was wise to secure his standing with the Russian administration, while he still hoped for a new change of the Ottoman ruling circles. He maintained correspondence with the remaining of Mustapha Pasha's collaborators, some of which had fled to Russia. He also continued his service for the Ottoman diplomats, mediating the peace negotiations and emphasizing that the "circumstances" forced him to move to Wallachia.

III. After 1812

After the conclusion of the Ottoman-Russian peace in May 1812, and a series of events that suggested a new configuration of the political circles in Wallachia and at Constantinople. Manuk changed his strategy and actively pursued an office in the Russian administration. The peace treaty confirmed the Ottomans' suzerainty over Wallachia and Moldavia, set the Ottoman-Russian border on the Pruth River, thus assigning the eastern region of Moldavia, known as Bessarabia, to Russia, and recognized the autonomy of Serbia. For eighteen months after the conclusion of the treaty, Moldavians could relocate in the Ottoman or the Russian territory. Until 1818, the Russian administration conducted censuses for the land owners and nobles in Bessarabia. Between 1818 and 1812, the assemblies of the nobles selected a few from among themselves for official duty in Bessarabia.⁵⁷

Important events also took place in Wallachia and at Constantinople. In September 1812 Ioannis Karadzas, an associate of the Halet Efendi who had been the enemy of Mustafa Pasha Bairaktar became prince of Wallachia, and in October and November the dragomans Dimitrios and Panaiotis Morouzi were executed under the accusation of treachery. In October, Ghalib effendi, the head of the Ottoman diplomacy, prepared a meeting in Bucharest between Pehlivan Pasha, Ahmed Efendi and Ramiz Pasha on the one hand, and Bosniak Aga, the new *ayan* of Ruscuk on the other, to solve their disagreement, and to reinstate them to the former positions. But in March 1813, Ioannis Karadzas and Mahmud Aga, the *delilbaşı* who had accompanied him to Wallachia upon his appointment as a prince, executed Ramiz Pasha on his way to Bucharest. Karadzas informed the foreign consuls that the execution was carried at the sultan's order. This sudden turn of events indicated that Manuk, Pehlivan Pasha and Ahmed Efendi still had strong enemies at Constantinople and in Wallachia. Also following the warning of the former prince of Moldavia Alexander Hangerli that Ioannis Karadzas had plans to eliminate him, in April 1813 Manuk escaped to Sibiu, in Habsburg Transylvania. For the next two months, Manuk wrote letters to the kehaya Ahmed Amis, in

⁵⁷ Gheorghe Bezviconi, *Boierimea Moldovei dintre Prut si Nistru. Actele Comisiei pentru cercetarea documentelor nobilimii din Basarabia la 1821*, (București: Tritonic, 2004, pp. 5-8.

which he explained that Ioannis Karadzas' persecutions forced him to leave. Manuk also explained that in all his official correspondence he repeatedly stressed that he was planning to relocate in Russia so as to mislead his enemies.⁵⁸ Contrary to the general suspicion that he intended to flee to Russia, Manuk argued that in fact he postponed as much as possible the departure with the pretext that he had business to take care of in Wallachia. If he disclosed his true intentions, Russia would have denied him protection and then he would have been at the mercy of his enemies.⁵⁹ In the meantime, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs intervened to facilitate Manuk's stay in Transylvania, and ordered Italinsky to make sure that Manuk could keep his possessions and his family would be allowed to follow him.⁶⁰ In July 1813, Manuk became Russian citizen. He also made his option for being in Russian service clearer.

In the following years Manuk intensified his efforts at obtaining rank and recognition in the Russian Empire but changed his narrative. Whereas earlier he had tried to gain Russian appreciation by extolling his service both to Russia and the Ottoman Empire, by 1813 he referred mostly to his Russian service in the context of the mounting French menace. His escape from Wallachia under Karadza was depicted as the only means to survive the rise to power in Constantinople of the pro-French faction to which Ioannis Karadza and Halet Efendi belonged, and even Napoleon's request for his assassination.⁶¹ The rise of Ioannis Karadza and Halet Efendi was indeed followed by the execution of Ramiz Pacha and of Dimitrios Moruzi. However, Manuk's indictment of Karadza is also an exaggeration. Karadzas did not only serve the French, but also served the Russians, as his correspondence with Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Capodistria after 1817 suggests⁶² and Manuk implies after 1814.

Manuk attempted to strengthen his case also using more outlandish claims. In a letter dated August 1813 to prince Lazarian in Saint Petersburg, Manuk requested reparations from the Russian state for the pending confiscation by the Ottomans of the lands he had purchased in Wallachia by justifying that his refuge in the province was the only means to escape Napoleon's order to Halet Efendi and Karadza for his execution. Napoleon allegedly began to detest Manuk when he succeeded to conclude the Russian-Ottoman and the agreement of the border on the Pruth River, which upset Napoleon's plans in the East.⁶³ But given the failure of the French campaign in Russia, the French faction in Constantinople lost its influence. Manuk further explained that the confiscation of his lands had no legal

⁵⁸ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1466, f. 125.

⁵⁹ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1466, f. 125.

⁶⁰ DANIC, Fond Siruni 1466, f. 9.

⁶¹ Halet Efendi had served as Ottoman ambassador in France and supported a pro-French line of action at Constantinople until the French-Russian Treaty of Tilsit.

⁶² Karadja, "Corespondenta lui Capodistria", p. 182.

⁶³ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1466, f. 130.

justification as his defection from the Ottoman Empire was not an act of treason. As the Ottomans could not declare him a traitor, Manuk emphasized that his lands should not be confiscated.⁶⁴

After numerous insistences to the Russian ambassador Italinski,⁶⁵ at the beginning of 1814 Manuk succeeded to have his requests partially fulfilled. His family finally arrived in Russia and the Porte allowed him to sell his land estates in Wallachia.⁶⁶ Finally, Manuk announced Prince Lazarian about his intention of settling at Chisinau, in Bessarabia, the land newly acquired by Russia.⁶⁷ He continued to write and counsel his friend Ahmed Efendi, who was willing to return to Constantinople or move to Egypt, and become part of the Ottoman governor Mehmet Ali's retinue.

A new challenge to the Ottoman Empire, the daring territorial claims of Egypt's governor Mehmet Ali, fueled interest among the Western Powers as well as Russia while it provided Manuk with a new opportunity to pursue advancement in Russian service by claiming diplomatic acumen. Serving his new endeavor was his acquaintance with Ahmed Efendi who considered entering Mehmet Ali's entourage. By 1814 Mehmet Ali had consolidated his power was claiming Damascus and Aleppo for himself. Ahmed Efendi, Manuk's old acquaintance, considered the possibility of returning to Constantinople or entering Mehmet Ali's service and sent a certain Salih Aga to test the reaction of the Porte and Egyptian governor to such a possibility. According to Salih, both the Porte and Mehmet Ali showed themselves receptive to Ahmed Efendi's overtures.⁶⁸ Advising Ahmed Efendi to be suspicious of Salih Aga, Manuk used these reports about the situation in Egypt to show to the Russian authorities that he was familiar with the intricacies of the new configuration of interests in the reporting about the situation in Egypt to claim knowledge of the new point of interest in international politics. The dispute between Mehmet Ali and the Porte captured Manuk's interest for the next two years.

In 1815, as the Allies defeated Napoleon, the Porte feared that the division of the Ottoman Empire would reemerge in the European Powers' plans. As Manuk related to the new Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Capodistria, based on what he had found out from Ahmed Efendi, Mehmet Ali aimed at ruling over and protecting two of Islam's sacred places, and thus become *padisah* a title that the Ottoman sultans exerted. Noticing the efforts of Great Britain to improve its relations with the Vali of Egypt, Manuk suggested in 1816 that Russia establishes contact with Mehmet Ali. In this fashion, Manuk speculated that the British trade

⁶⁴ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1466, f. 135.

⁶⁵ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1466, f. 144.

⁶⁶ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1466, f. 161.

⁶⁷ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1466, f. 170.

⁶⁸ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1466, f. 147.

through the Egyptian ports would be hindered and the supply of Istanbul could be delayed.⁶⁹

It is in this context that in August 1815 Manuk finally left the lands of the Habsburg Crown, to relocate in Bessarabia and to attempt to become a Russian official. A month before his departure Manuk wrote his testament at Brasov. The document relegated most of the fortune and the protection of the entire family to Murat, his eldest son, who was placed in the tutorship of Asadur Avedian until his majority. The legacy was transmitted on male line, under the condition that the heirs properly endowed their female relatives and married exclusively Armenian women, i.e. followers of the Armenian Apostolic Church of the Holy See at Etchmiadzin.⁷⁰ Manuk also entrusted his descendants with the construction of a school for poor Armenian children, where the students were supposed to learn Armenian and the language of that time's government.⁷¹ Manuk signed his testament as Grand Dragoman of the Ottoman Empire, "current state advisor of the Russian Empire" and "Knight in Third Class of the Vladimir Order."⁷² He also made it executable under the "all powerful and all merciful master of all Russians."⁷³ Manuk obviously wanted to secure his family's possessions and keep it united by ties revolving around economic interest and Armenian Christian confession. He also wanted to inaugurate a tradition of imperial service for the members of his family and for other members of the Armenian community, as the endowment for an Armenian school teaching the government's language or his urging that his sons learn the European chanceries' languages suggests.

Relocated in Bessarabia, Manuk invested his efforts in building a city "at his own expense" at Reni, which would have demonstrated his ability as a Russian imperial administrator. Manuk planned to develop a multi-confessional town at Reni, on lands that he had purchased in Bessarabia, to show that he delivered exquisite civil service and thus gain a noble rank in the province. After Russia received Bessarabia, between 1816 and 1821, a series of censuses and assemblies recorded the major landowners and nobles present in the province in 1812 and compiled lists of names for rank confirmation.⁷⁴ Noble rank in Bessarabia was the result of entitlement by the sovereign, of special military merits or civil service, immigrant nobility and titled nobility. In the end, the registers of Bessarabian nobles of 1821 recorded Manuk Bey and Ahmed Efendi as nobles.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1467, f. 68.

⁷⁰ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1466, f. 189.

⁷¹ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1466, f. 185.

⁷² DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1466, f. 190.

⁷³ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1466, f. 190.

⁷⁴ Bezviconi, *Boierimea Moldovei*, pp. 7-8.

⁷⁵ Bezviconi, *Boierimea Moldovei*, pp. 13, 43-44.

Manuk purchased land in Besarabia, at the confluence of Pruth River with the Danube, in the district of Tomarova that had been an issue of litigation between the Ottoman and the Habsburg Empires. When the Habsburgs acquired Bukovina, a region to the North West of Moldavia, they also took control over the monasteries therein, which claimed land possessions in Moldavia and Bessarabia. Whereas the Porte agreed to the ownership over lands in Moldavia, and bought the lands from the monasteries, it declined the rights over some of the lands in Bessarabia. The Habsburgs sold some of the monasteries' lands to Moldavian nobles from whom they were purchased by Manuk.⁷⁶ As Bessarabia entered Russian suzerainty, Manuk became familiar with the legal details of the litigation and took upon himself to purchase this land at his own expense, and create a port-city named Alexandropol. He also bought the land estate of Hancesti, in the vicinity, from where to bring the wood necessary to his urban plan.⁷⁷ In exchange, Manuk demanded tax exemptions from the tsar for his land estates.⁷⁸ The town was meant to be a settlement where Manuk and old "compatriots" of his from Ruscuk and relatives would have settled.⁷⁹ It was also supposed to show Manuk's utility to his new "motherland".⁸⁰ Although Manuk did not demand money for his enterprise, he wrote the tsar to be granted the crown lands surrounding Reni for posterity, in addition to those he had already purchased.⁸¹ In what concerned the peasants who lived on the land, locals and immigrants from the Ottoman provinces, Manuk suggested that since they could continue living on the property, as his tenants.⁸²

The town was meant to have an autonomous government, on the model of other Armenian and Greek towns in the Russian Empire. Subject to the governor of Bessarabia, the leading institution of the town would have been the magistrate, chosen by the inhabitants from among any of the Christian confessions. He was in charge of the distribution of justice and of taxation. However, his aides were supposed to be imperial civil servants, whose service at Reni could earn higher ranks in the imperial administration. Also, the appeal court for all decisions of the magistrate would have been the governor of Bessarabia. The quarantine service of the town would have been regulated and staffed by the Russian state. The town's inhabitants would have been spared the imperial capitation tax, all taxation being levied from the trade and transit through the port city.

⁷⁶ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1467, f. 35.

⁷⁷ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1467, f. 43.

⁷⁸ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1467, f. 43.

⁷⁹ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1467, f. 42.

⁸⁰ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1467, f. 51.

⁸¹ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1467, f. 44.

⁸² DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1467, f. 44.

The town was open to settlement by followers all Christian confessions⁸³ and Muslims too, provided they pledged loyalty to the Tsar.⁸⁴ Manuk considered that Muslims would have been encouraged to settle at Reni by Manuk's and Ahmed Efendi's presence and by the promise of freedom of religion⁸⁵ Manuk emphasized the benefits of welcoming Muslim colonists to Reni. Not only where they skillful craftsmen in leather, a trade yet undeveloped in the south of Russia, but their settlement would have brought a political advantage too: showing good will to Muslim colonists would have countered the Ottoman propaganda against Russia.⁸⁶ Manuk took upon himself to carry several measures of urban planning at his expense. He promised that with the help of an engineer sent by the Tsar, he would build stone houses at the center of the city, two Christian churches, one Greek Orthodox and the other Armenian, and two schools in their proximity. In one of them the students would have learnt Russian and Greek, and in the other one, Russian and Armenian. Finally, Manuk emphasized the economic advantages of a port-city at Reni. Not only the city would have helped the trade of Bessarabia and transformed it into a prosperous province, but it would have also regulated trade and undermined the smuggling on the lower course of the Danube.⁸⁷

Manuk also endeavored to preserve his involvement in the Russian-Ottoman relations with respect to the Danubian Principalities. Beginning with 1816, he vehemently accused the Porte and the appointed princes Scarlat Callimachi and Ioannis Karadzas of unlawful taxation and spoliation of Wallachia and Moldavia, in violation of the peace treaty regulations that stipulated the principalities' exemption from taxation for two years. Manuk conducted an entire investigation, contacting the old treasurers of Wallachia and Moldavia, some of whom were local nobles disgruntled with the princes' rule, and asking for the treasury reports. He also asked other local nobles to provide data about the excessive taxation for the previous four years, to verify the reports provided by the treasurers. He even circulated a list of twenty four questions concerning the taxes that had been levied without reason, the artificial increases of the taxes and the differences in the prices of the wares to be delivered to Constantinople, which were meant to ensure the princes an additional income.⁸⁸

Manuk's involvement in the case of unlawful taxation of Moldavia and Wallachia reveals several important aspects related to Manuk's new ambitions, the Russian speculations about the political factions in Constantinople, and the possible dissensions in the ranks of the Russian diplomatic corps in Constantinople and Bucharest. In a lengthy correspondence with Minister

⁸³ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1467, f. 46.

⁸⁴ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1467, f. 49.

⁸⁵ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1467, f. 49.

⁸⁶ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1467, f. 49.

⁸⁷ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1467, f. 50.

⁸⁸ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1467, ff. 90-91, 116-121.

Capodistria, Manuk emphasized that the Russian authorities needed to be concerned with the abuses that the Phanariot rulers, in agreement with the Porte, committed in the principalities in violation of the treaty. Manuk argued that by trespassing the provisions of the peace treaty, the Porte made it possible for the Russian government to impose its own conditions. In this respect, Manuk suggested that Russia demanded the recalculation of the taxes for the previous four years, and damages for the sums levied illegally, the temporary placement of Moldavia under Russian sovereignty or the cession to Russia of the territory between the Rivers Siret and Prut. Manuk carefully proposed that Moldavia, if acquired temporarily by Russia or the land between Siret and Prut be placed under the authority of a wise and skillful man who could make them prosperous and useful to the empire. Even though Manuk did not specifically propose a name for this administrative job, it is plausible that he meant himself,⁸⁹ especially as he had bought large domains in the proximity, in view of building the city of Reni.

Another reason for which Manuk might have followed so persistently the question of the abusive taxation could have been his personal conflict with Ioannis Karadzas and Halet Efendi, Karadzas' patron in Constantinople. Indicative is the fact that Manuk did not build a case so much against Scarlat Callimaki, the prince of Moldavia, as he did against Karadzas. Manuk alleged that the taxes that Karadzas had extorted from Wallachia were meant to help Halet Efendi to control all the imperial ministers and the sultan himself, even as he was not a minister anymore. If Halet Efendi, who was a supporter of the French and the British, was deprived of the financial means to exert influence, then the Ottoman diplomacy would become pro-Russian. However, just as Manuk strove to show the advantages of eliminating Karadzas from the throne of Wallachia and how to stripe a political Ottoman faction of its power, Karadzas himself had acquaintances among the Russian diplomats at Constantinople. Manuk came to warn Capodistria that the Fontons, the Russian dragomans in the Ottoman capital, could not be trusted. At the same time, Baron Stroganoff, the Russian Ambassador in Constantinople, wrote to Manuk to attention him that he was heeding falsified information from untrustworthy people.⁹⁰ In the end, however, Karadzas succeeded to ingratiate himself to the Russian representatives, as his lengthy correspondence with Capodistria from 1817, concerning the renewal of his appointment as prince of Wallachia, shows.⁹¹

The letters between Manuk and Stroganof about the finances of Wallachia continued until the Manuk's death. On June 20th, 1817, Manuk died at his land estate at Hancesti, during the feast organized for several Russian officers. The circumstances of his death were considered suspicious. Although still young and

⁸⁹ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1467, ff. 65-66.

⁹⁰ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1467, f. 165.

⁹¹ Karadja, "Corespondenta lui Capodistria", pp. 183-187.

apparently healthy, Manuk suffered a crisis at a time when his family doctor was not at Hancesti. The available accounts do not support a definitive conclusion on this matter. His body was buried near the Armenian Church in Kishinev.

His intention of placing himself and his family in the ranks of Russian imperial administration and to act as an enlightened reformist materialized only partially. Manuk's daughters married Russian officials of Armenian confession, and his eldest son, Ioan Murat - the daughter of a Russian general of Armenian descent. Their offspring scattered around Europe as they married into various European noble families.⁹² Through a letter from 1820, Russian Minister Capodistria informed Manuk's widow that the Russian crown declined Manuk's plan to build a city, Alexandropol, at Reni. Moreover, the Crown acquired the Bessarabian lands that used to belong to monasteries in Bukovina and denied any particular claim, Manuk's included, to them. The widow received a twenty years tax exemption for the land estate at Hancesti⁹³.

Concluding remarks

This paper retraces Manuk's life and activities from his flight from Ruscuk, after the death of his patron Mustapha Pasha Bairaktar, to his temporary stay in Wallachia, settlement in Bessarabia and death at Hancesti. I did not analyze Manuk's activity between 1809 and 1817 as pre-determined by his ambition to acquire a certain position in the Russian administration. Instead, I interpreted his decisions as strategies to improve his status and secure his life in an environment about which he could only speculate but which clearly favored agents who could cater to the competing interests of different empires and political factions.. Factors in this environment were the political strife at Constantinople, the Russian foreign policy and the different plans of the Russian diplomats and the changing alliances and the rising unpredictability involved in the Napoleonic wars.

From 1809 until 1812 all these factors had repercussions on the Russian-Ottoman war, the discussions concerning the occupied Wallachia and Moldavia and the fate of the former allies of Mustapha Pasha Bairaktar. Manuk took advantage of the favoring position as a mediator, which lacked to other Ottoman Friends of Ruscuk who were deserting officers under pending death penalty, to improve his status with the Ottoman Porte and also prepare an alternative – his entrance into Russian service. After 1812, as the Ottoman-Russian peace was concluded and some of those in charge of the negotiations were executed while the throne of Wallachia was occupied by Ioannis Karadzas who was in the entourage of Mustapha Bairaktar's enemies, Manuk chose to serve the Russian Empire. Similarly to the time when he served Mustapha Pasha and the Empire and accumulated titles such as that cup bearer in Wallachia and dragoman, after 1812

⁹² Bezviconi, *Boierimea Moldovei*, pp. 43-44.

⁹³ DANIC, Fond Siruni, no. 1469, f. 5.

he invested his efforts into rising in the Russian service in Bessarabia. Despite the adventurous character of his life, Manuk strove for a stable administrative career.

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