

Ion Ghica, a Prince of Two Worlds:  
A Romanian Nationalist in Ottoman Service; 1848–1859



*Ion Ghica*

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### **A Note on Names**

Place names in this thesis follow the usage of the period under study. Constantinople is used throughout rather than Istanbul, reflecting both the conventions of the 1840s–1860s and the usage of Ghica himself in his letters. Similarly, the two autonomous principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia are referred to collectively as “the Principalities” or the “Danubian Principalities,” the standard shorthand in both contemporary sources and the historiography of the period.

For Romanian place names, standard modern Romanian orthography is used, including diacritical marks, except where quoting directly from sources that omit them.

Regarding personal names, Stratford Canning, who became Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe in 1852, is referred to throughout as Canning. This is a personal editorial choice for the ease of the reader.

Romanian personal names retain their diacritical marks throughout.

### **Archival Abbreviations**

**BAR:** Biblioteca Academiei Române; Bucharest, Romania

**TNA:** The National Archives; Kew, United Kingdom



*Ion Ghica, sitting, alongside Vasile Alecsandri, standing. The picture was taken in 1855 in Constantinople. Note that Ion Ghica is wearing a fez.*

## Introduction

On the 4th of November 1858, Ion Ghica disembarked at Brăila, a Wallachian port city on the Danube, after a rough passage from Constantinople. A storm had driven the steamer back to Kavak on the first night, trapping the passengers below deck until Friday; when the weather broke they danced through the small hours, and by morning the hills above Varna were white with frost. At Brăila, Ghica was received, as he told his wife Alexandrina, “with all the honors due to my rank.”<sup>1</sup> The rank in question was that of an Ottoman prince: the Bey (Prince) of Samos, decorated with the medal of the Order of the Mecidiye, arriving in the country of his birth as though visiting from abroad. His cousin Babiano appeared in full ceremonial dress and immediately lobbied him for a decoration of his own. Ghica checked into the Hotel Stadt London, ate well, slept warmly, and the following morning climbed into a carriage drawn by eight horses bound for what he called “the capital of intrigue.”<sup>2</sup>

The man in that carriage does not fit easily into any single national or imperial category. Ion Ghica was the descendant of a boyar dynasty that had given nine rulers to Wallachia and Moldavia across two centuries.<sup>3</sup> He had trained as a mining engineer at the *École des Mines* in Paris, taught geometry and geology at the Mihăilean Academy in Iași, participated in the 1848 Wallachian Revolution, spent a decade in political exile in the Ottoman Empire, governed the autonomous Ottoman island of Samos from 1854 to 1858, and was about to enter the political world that would produce, within months, the unification of the Danubian Principalities under Alexandru Ioan Cuza. He would serve as Prime Minister of Romania multiple times. His career,

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<sup>1</sup> Ion Ghica to Alexandrina Ghica (Hereafter “IG to AG”), 4 November 1858, in Ghica, *Opere*, vol. V, pp. 262–63.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Boyars were members of the highest rank of the feudal nobility in Eastern Europe, comparable to Dukes or Grand Dukes.

in short, moved between empires, nations, and political identities in ways that defy the clean narrative of a linear journey from Ottoman subject to Romanian national.

Rather than presenting a full political and intellectual biography of Ion Ghica, this thesis focuses on the periods of his exile and Ottoman service, from 1848 to 1859, as a case study of the entangled relationship between empire and nation. It argues that Ghica's career reveals the porousness of the boundary between these two categories during the very decades in which they are conventionally understood to have hardened into opposition. Rather than treating Romanian nationalism as developing against Ottoman rule, the thesis shows how Ghica articulated and pursued what might be called a philo-Ottoman nationalism. His political vision for the Danubian Principalities was one enacted not against but through Ottoman imperial networks. His engineering formation at the *École des Mines* shaped a distinctive administrative style built around quantification and fiscal transparency. His elite social networks, cultivated in Parisian salons and Constantinople's diplomatic households, gave him access to the European and Ottoman actors who were reshaping the Eastern Question. And his political correspondence reveals a coherent program in which Romanian autonomy was presented as compatible with, and even dependent upon, Ottoman sovereignty — a position articulated simultaneously to Ottoman officials, British and French diplomats, and fellow Romanian exiles.

In making this argument, the thesis complicates the nationalist teleology present in much of Romanian historical writing. The foundational syntheses of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including A.D. Xenopol's *Istoria românilor din Dacia Traiană* (1888–1893) and Nicolae Iorga's ten-volume *Istoria Românilor* (1936–1939), established a narrative framework in which the Romanian nation was traced from its Daco-Roman origins through

centuries of foreign domination toward its eventual fulfilment in the unified national state.<sup>4</sup> In Xenopol's case, as Lucian Boia has observed, the very title of his synthesis implies a claim about the direct and unbroken relationship between ancient Roman Dacia and the modern Romanian nation.<sup>5</sup> Iorga, whose scholarly expertise in Ottoman history was unrivalled among his contemporaries, nevertheless produced a national history that placed the Romanian people and their destiny at its center.<sup>6</sup> In both cases, the Ottoman centuries appeared primarily as a period of subjection from which the nation progressively emancipated itself, and the events of 1821, 1848, and 1859 were arranged as stages on the road to independence. Other recent English-language works have largely retained this. Gerald Bobango's *The Emergence of the Romanian National State* frames the period from 1829 to 1866 as the story of "Romania's emancipation from the Turkish realm," tracing a classic sequence from cultural nationalism in the 1830s and 1840s to the political consolidation of the 1850s and 1860s.<sup>7</sup>

Keith Hitchins's *The Romanians, 1774–1866*, the most authoritative English-language treatment of this period and which this thesis draws extensively for background, presents the era as a "transition from long-established agrarian economic and social structures and medieval political forms to a society moulded by urban and industrial values and held together by allegiance to the nation-state."<sup>8</sup> Hitchins's account is far more attentive to complexity than the older Romanian histories, yet the narrative remains focused on the progressive loosening of Ottoman suzerainty, which leaves less room for figures like Ghica, who pursued national objectives through Ottoman imperial channels.

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<sup>4</sup> Xenopol, *Istoria românilor*, 6 vols.; Iorga, *Istoria Românilor*, 10 vols. For an overview of their place in Romanian historiographical tradition, see Boia, *History and Myth*, 33–37.

<sup>5</sup> Boia, *History and Myth*, 35.

<sup>6</sup> On Iorga's Ottoman scholarship alongside his nationalist politics, see Țăranu, "Imperial Nostalgia," in Ploeanu, Manea, and Omer, eds., *The Empire: Between Dispute and Nostalgia* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2021) and Iorga's five-volume *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*.

<sup>7</sup> Bobango, *The Emergence*, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Hitchins, *The Romanians, 1774–1866*, Preface.

This study draws instead on scholarship that has emphasised the persistence and complexity of imperial structures in the age of nationalism. Christine Philliou's 2011 *Biography of an Empire*, a study of the Phanariot statesman Stephanos Vogorides, traces how Ottoman governance in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries operated through individual actors who used family and patronage relationships to forge projects across formal institutions and confessional divides, as a mode of political life that the conventional narrative of nation-state formation has tended to obscure.<sup>9</sup> Philliou's work demonstrates that the political crises of the early nineteenth century, including the Greek Revolution and its aftermath, grew out of these realities of governance, and that the Phanariot class, which the Ghica family was familiar with, was central to the functioning of the Ottoman imperial system in the Danubian Principalities.<sup>10</sup>

Konstantina Zanou's *Transnational Patriotism in the Mediterranean* offers a complementary biographical method, tracing the lives of Ionian and Adriatic intellectuals who had to manage the collapsing Venetian imperial world and the emerging national worlds of Italy and Greece. Zanou's subjects inhabited what she describes as a world of "transnational patriotism," in which loyalties were suspended between or across multiple empires and emerging nation-states, and in which nationhood and empire were not yet mutually exclusive.<sup>11</sup> Her insistence on recovering "the forgotten realities and lost possibilities obscured by what was to come" and on imagining the epoch as a contingent period with an open and unknown future informs the approach this thesis takes to Ghica.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, Constantin Iordachi's *Liberalism, Constitutional Nationalism, and Minorities* analyses the making of Romanian citizenship across the long nineteenth century, integrating into

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<sup>9</sup> Philliou, *Biography of an Empire*, xvii–xx.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 5–37.

<sup>11</sup> Zanou, *Transnational Patriotism*, 6–10.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

the story the Phanariot and Russian experiments in state-building that Romanian historiography has often stigmatised as retrograde or anti-national.<sup>13</sup> Iordachi's concept of "constitutional nationalism," where the state advanced liberal principles of citizenship which were nonetheless increasingly defined by ethno-national criteria, provides a framework for understanding the transitional period within which figures like Ghica operated.<sup>14</sup> In sum, Ghica, as someone who articulated nationalist ideals while operating comfortably within an Ottoman framework, offers an opportunity to bridge the gap between accounts of imperial continuity and the teleological nationalist narrative.

### **Historical Background**

Since the world Ghica inhabited is unfamiliar to many readers, a brief overview of the political landscape of the Danubian Principalities and their relationship to the Ottoman Empire is necessary before turning to the chapters themselves.

The principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, which will be referred to throughout this thesis as the Romanian Principalities, the Danubian Principalities, or just the Principalities, form the territories that would become modern Romania, and they had occupied a distinctive position within the Ottoman imperial system. Unlike the Balkan lands south of the Danube, which had been directly incorporated into the empire as provinces governed by Ottoman officials, the Principalities retained their political autonomy under Ottoman suzerainty. Their rulers recognized the sultan's authority, paid annual tribute, and fulfilled certain military and economic obligations, but they preserved their own administrative structures, their own boyar nobility, and their own Orthodox ecclesiastical institutions. This arrangement meant that the Romanian elite

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<sup>13</sup> Iordachi, *Liberalism, Constitutional Nationalism*, xii–xiii.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii–xvi.

survived as a governing class in a way that the Bulgarian and Serbian nobilities, destroyed by Ottoman conquest in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, did not.<sup>15</sup>

This autonomy was, however, significantly eroded over the eighteenth century. From 1711 in Moldavia and 1716 in Wallachia, the Ottoman Porte began appointing rulers from the Phanariot class, Greek-speaking elites drawn from Constantinople's Phanar district, to govern the Principalities. The Phanariot period, which lasted until 1821, has been treated in much of Romanian historiography as a form of foreign domination, though more recent scholarship has complicated this picture by showing the extent to which Phanariot governors operated within and through existing Romanian structures.<sup>16</sup> The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774, which ended a six-year Russo-Ottoman war, granted the Russian ambassador in Constantinople the right to make representations on behalf of the Principalities, providing the legal pretext for systematic Russian intervention in their affairs over the following decades.<sup>17</sup>

The Greek War of Independence in 1821 ended the Phanariot system. The Ottoman Empire, no longer trusting its Greek-speaking intermediaries, appointed members of the native boyar families as rulers. Yet this turn toward indigenous governance coincided with deepening Russian influence. The Russo-Turkish War of 1828–1829 resulted in a Russian military occupation of the Principalities and the imposition of the *Règlement Organique*, or “Organic Regulations,” a statute that paradoxically modernized administrative institutions while entrenching Russian predominance.<sup>18</sup>

A new intellectual and political elite, many of them educated in Paris and absorbed by the idea of national unity and independence, began to emerge in the 1830s and 1840s. Their

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<sup>15</sup> Hitchins, *The Romanians*, 9–26

<sup>16</sup> Iordachi, *Liberalism, Constitutional Nationalism*, 18

<sup>17</sup> Hitchins, *The Romanians*, 18–24

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 146–157

aspirations found expression in the revolutions of 1848, when liberal-nationalist movements erupted across the Principalities alongside the broader European upheavals.<sup>19</sup> In Wallachia, revolutionaries including Ion Ghica, C.A. Rosetti, and Nicolae Bălcescu demanded constitutional government, administrative reform, and national autonomy. The Wallachian revolution briefly achieved power before being suppressed by Ottoman and Russian intervention, and sending a generation of liberal intellectuals, including Ion Ghica, into exile.<sup>20</sup>

It was the Crimean War of 1853–1856 that transformed the diplomatic landscape. The conflict weakened Russia's position in the region, and the Treaty of Paris in 1856 placed the Principalities under the collective guarantee of the European powers rather than under exclusive Russian protection. The Treaty also established a European commission to consult the inhabitants on their political future. This opened the path to the election of Alexandru Ioan Cuza as prince of both Moldavia and Wallachia simultaneously in January 1859, the act of personal union that created the precursor to the modern Romanian state.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, throughout this period and in particular the mid-nineteenth century, the boundaries of Romanian political identity remained fluid: imperial structures continued to shape the conditions under which nationalism was expressed, and key figures navigated these overlapping systems rather than simply opposing them. The future of nationalism, and thus the future of the organization of Europe's nations and states, was still contingent and undetermined. Ghica's career is among the most vivid illustrations of this reality.

## **Thesis Outline**

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 223

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 265. See also, Jianu, *A Circle of Friends*.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 289.

The thesis proceeds in three chapters, each of which examines a different dimension of Ghica's career during the period 1848–1859, while contributing to the overarching argument about the relationship between imperial belonging and nationalist aspiration.

Chapter One reconstructs Ghica's administration of the Ottoman autonomous island of Samos in the Aegean, where he served as governor and prince from 1854 to 1858. Drawing on his memoir, official speeches to the Samian Assembly, his administrative correspondence, and his private letters to his wife, the chapter argues that Ghica's engineering formation at the *École des Mines* produced a distinctive governing sensibility: one built around fiscal quantification, institutional transparency, and a rhetoric of civilization that made progress measurable. The chapter traces his efforts to suppress piracy, reform the island's finances, and establish legal and educational institutions, showing how these reforms were shaped by the constraints of a small, underfunded jurisdiction during the Crimean War. In doing so, the chapter establishes the professional credentials and the administrative record expressed and earned under difficult conditions that Ghica would carry into the world described in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter Two turns to the social networks that connected Ghica to the British and French embassies, Ottoman officials, and European liberal circles in Constantinople during the 1850s. Beginning with his boyar lineage and the Ghica family's historic relationship to Ottoman imperial authority, the chapter traces Ghica's entry into elite European networks through the Paris of the 1830s, where he encountered figures ranging from the Greek diplomat Kolettis, to the Polish statesman-in-exile Czartoryski, and to the Scottish publicist David Urquhart, and follows these connections forward to Constantinople, where, despite not having any official diplomatic credentials, Ghica cultivated sustained relationships with both Ambassador Stratford Canning at the British embassy and Ambassador Édouard de Thouvenel at the French. The

chapter argues that Ghica's embeddedness in these networks casts him a trans-national and trans-imperial character, and that his investiture as Prince of Samos is only intelligible against this backdrop of elite connections, personal trust, and cosmopolitanism.

Chapter Three examines the political vision Ghica articulated across his correspondence in exile: a philo-Ottoman, anti-Russian nationalism that presented Romanian autonomy as compatible with Ottoman sovereignty. Analyzing letters addressed to the Ottoman official Ahmed Vefik, the Romanian radical C.A. Rosetti, the Hungarian revolutionary Lajos Kossuth, and British and French diplomatic contacts, the chapter shows how Ghica deployed the same essential political program to different audiences, adjusting rhetoric while preserving the fundamental ideas. It then follows the correspondence through 1859, tracing Ghica's role as an intelligence-gatherer and broker between imperial actors and the Romanian cause, and showing how the imperial networks mapped in Chapter Two were the very channels through which the nationalist project was pursued. The chapter concludes by arguing that Ghica's nationalism was enacted not despite but precisely because of his imperial belonging.

In short, the Ion Ghica who arrived at Brăila in November 1858, decorated with the Mecidiye and bound for "the capital of intrigue" with eight horses, was not leaving one world for another. He was carrying the accumulated work of a decade spent inside the Ottoman and European systems: an administrative record, a network of diplomatic relationships, a political theory, and a reputation to Ottoman ministers and Western ambassadors alike. This story is not simply biographical. It illuminates a broader historical reality: that the transition from empire to nation in southeastern Europe was not a clean rupture but a process of negotiation, adaptation, and strategy, conducted by figures who inhabited multiple political worlds simultaneously and

who used and relied upon that multiplicity. Understanding how they did, and what kind of nationalism their particular position made possible, is the task of the chapters that follow.

## Chapter One

### Ion Ghica as Governor of Samos: Administration and Reform

*“I have had no other desire than to respond to the sovereign’s expectation by governing with justice and selflessness and thereby contributing, as much as possible, to the moral, intellectual, and material development of your country.”*

I. Ghica, Speech to the Samian Assembly, 2 March 1855

#### Introduction

Ghica reached Port-Vathy, Samos, on a French corvette in the third week of April 1854, a few weeks into the Crimean War. His reception was a spectacle: bells, cannons, crowds, the Senate and notables waiting at the quay, the clergy in vestments, schoolchildren carrying laurels, a procession to the cathedral, and, at the capital Chora, two hours’ ride inland, the same performance all over again. In twenty-four hours, Ghica told his wife Alexandrina, he had been to church “at least ten times” and had worn out his throat “making speeches to everyone.”<sup>22</sup>

Ghica did not have previous connections to the Aegean island. His family name, however, carried weight across the Ottoman and Romanian worlds. Beginning with Ion Ghica, the family no longer carried merely descendants of boyar rank or of hetman; what they carried instead were “diplomas of engineers, mathematicians, chemists.”<sup>23</sup> Ghica had trained at the *École des Mines* in Paris, taught geometry and geology at the Mihăilean Academy in Iași, and arrived at Samos not as a Phanariot dynast or intermediary but as something new: a prince with an engineering diploma and the ability to measure things.

This chapter reconstructs what this eventual Prince of Samos did when he was given a jurisdiction to govern. Ion Ghica administered the autonomous island of Samos, in the eastern

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<sup>22</sup> IG to AG, 20 April 1854, in *Opere*, vol. V, 188–90.

<sup>23</sup> Ion Roman, “Introduction,” in Ghica, *Opere*, vol.I, 7–8.

Aegean, from April 1854 to late 1858 — the years of the Crimean War and its aftermath, when the Ottoman Empire and the European powers were renegotiating the terms of imperial governance. Samos was a small stage, but Ghica used it to produce something distinctive: an administration built around fiscal responsibility, institutional development, and a rhetoric of civilization that put Ghica's engineering background into the practice of Ottoman reform. What this administration looked like in practice is the subject of this chapter: the piracy he could not suppress without French ships, the vine disease that destroyed his revenue base for five consecutive years, and the former pirates he kept on the gendarmerie payroll because dismissing them would only have increased brigandage. Thus, this chapter asks: what was Ghica's administrative record, and what kind of mind produced it?

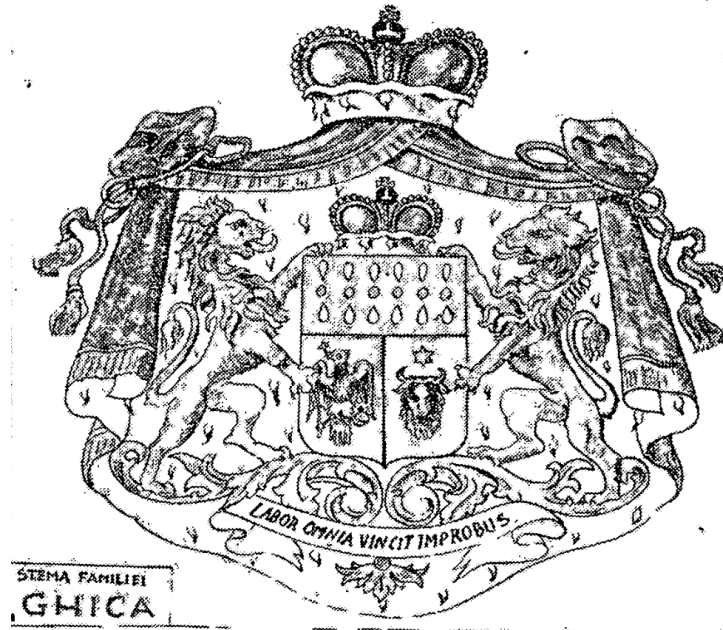
### **Engineer in a Princely Family**

In 1894, one of Ion Ghica's sons sat down and drew the family's genealogical tree. His instrument of choice was the set square and compass, tools that were "well handled in the family."<sup>24</sup> The result was spread across a sheet of paper the size of a desk: male descendants enclosed in squares, female descendants in circles, nine ruling princes traced back through two centuries of Wallachian and Moldavian history. In the upper left corner, the family coat of arms displayed its heraldic lions, its crown of gold, and, inscribed on a white band below, the Ghica motto: *Labor omnia vincit improbus*, or "Persistent labor conquers all." This motto fit for the last Ghica marked on the tree: Ion Ghica.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.



*Figure One — The Coat of Arms and Motto of the Ghica family.*

The Ghica family was originally of Albanian origin, with a history in the Danubian Principalities stretching back to the sixteenth century. The family's first known ancestor in Moldova was a certain Matei, active between approximately 1560 and 1620, whose son Gheorghe became the first Ghica to occupy the throne, ruling briefly in Moldova before moving on to Wallachia. This inaugurated a "tradition": six of the nine Ghica rulers governed alternately across both principalities.<sup>26</sup> The branch from which Ion directly descended was founded by Dumitru Alexandru Ghica, a brother of the martyred Grigorie-vodă, who became "mare ban" of Wallachia.<sup>27</sup> Through successive generations the line reached Ion's father, Tache Ghica, who had been educated in Vienna, rose to the chief military dignitary of Wallachia by 1828, and was a founding member of the Bucharest Philharmonic Society in 1834. Tache Ghica was a man formed equally by Ottoman court culture, which he reflected in his dress and household, described as wearing a turban, a red "anteriu," and riding a "splendid Arab horse," and by the

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

Westernizing currents of Wallachian elite society, evident most clearly through his Vienna education.<sup>28</sup>

Ion Ghica was born in Bucharest on 12 August 1816, connected by birth to many of the most eminent boyar families: the Văcăreștis, Dudeștis, Cîmpinenis, Otetelișenis, and Filipeștis.<sup>29</sup> This connected world is captured in his own account, in his memoir, of his great-aunt Elenca Dudescu, who would press the young Ion to read her legal documents for hours, rewarding him with sweets, then embrace him saying: “When I think of the nobility of our family, I get dizzy. We are related to all the great boyars — the Cîndeștis, Cîmpinenis, Filipeștis, Cantemireștis, and even to Maria Theresa.”<sup>30</sup> Ghica remarks that he smiled at her confusion about the Maria Theresa connection, but it does reveal a self-conception that moved fluidly across Ottoman, Romanian, and broader European frames of reference simultaneously.

Nonetheless, Ghica's academic background is also vital to this story. Ghica arrived in Paris around 1835 as a young boyar's son.<sup>31</sup> The city he entered was charged with the aftermath of the 1830 revolution and the mounting agitation that would, within a decade, produce 1848. Romanian students gathered on Saint-Hyacinthe Street and spent their evenings at the Café Corneille and Café Procope, forming lasting bonds with one another; according to Ghica, it was here that Wallachians and Moldavians were discovering their shared language and beginning to articulate the idea of union.<sup>32</sup> These student circles would produce many of the leading figures of the 1848 revolution and the exile generation that followed, or the world, in other words, into which Ghica's political career would be launched. The social and political networks Ghica built

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ghica, “Scrisori Catre V. Alecsandri”, in *Opere* vol.1, 259.

<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, his tutor Lichiardopulo was best known for having transcribed the opera “Norma” onto Byzantine chant notation. — Roman, “Introduction,” in Ghica, *Opere*, vol.I, 14.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

during these years, which extended well beyond the Romanian student community, is, however, the topic of the next chapter.

In January 1836, the eighteen-year-old Ghica sat his “baccalauréat en lettres” at the Sorbonne and received four passing grades and one failing grade. After a year or two at the *École Centrale des Arts et Manufactures*, Ghica passed a second baccalauréat in the mathematical sciences and enrolled at the *École des Mines*, apparently taking additional courses at the same time. After completing his second year at the *École des Mines*, he crossed to England to visit mining enterprises, a field trip that suggests how seriously he took his specialist training.<sup>33</sup> He would return to Romania in late 1840 with his engineer's diploma.

In a letter to his uncle Ioan Câmpineanu, Ghica declared that “natural sciences were the principal object of my studies in youth.” The authors who captivated him were Georges Cuvier, Élie de Beaumont, François Arago, and Alexander von Humboldt.<sup>34</sup> What united these four was a shared ambition of the systematic observation, measurement, and classification of the physical world. Cuvier’s comparative anatomy, Élie de Beaumont’s geological stratigraphy, Humboldt’s *Kosmos* all proceeded from the conviction that nature yielded its structure to those who measured it carefully enough.

When Ghica returned to Wallachia in 1841, he nonetheless found every professional door closed. He drew up a salt-mine exploitation project, but it was rejected as too costly. He wanted a professorship at the Sfântul Sava college in Bucharest, but the authorities, not unreasonably, viewed him with suspicion given the anonymous pamphlets he had published in Paris denouncing the Wallachian administration.<sup>35</sup> Somewhat cornered, he took the counsel of his

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 17–18.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>35</sup> The pamphlets were *Coup d’oeil sur l’état actuel de la Valachie* (1835) and *Poids de la Moldo-Valachie dans la question d’Orient* (1838), both published under false initials. — *Ibid.*, 18–19.

uncle Câmpineanu and left for Moldavia, where the head of the school offered him a position at the Mihăilean Academy in Iași. Ghica ended up looking back with affection on a period he had unexpectedly enjoyed: “And here I am, seated before a blackboard with chalk in hand, showing students in the morning the properties of the circle, the ellipse, the parabola, and the hyperbola, and in the afternoon talking to them about mountain formations and earth strata.”<sup>36</sup> He also taught political economy, and a former student, Ion Ionescu de la Brad, recalled that Ghica had a gift for descending from “the high region of science” to make practical applications to Romanian conditions.<sup>37</sup> The pay was poor at roughly one franc per lecture, but the professor, according to his own account, was “well rewarded by the satisfaction I felt seeing every day the circle of good ideas widening.”<sup>38</sup>

It would be twelve years from Ghica’s time as teacher to when he stood before the meeting room of the Samian Assembly, reading out budget figures to the piastre. But the habits acquired in Paris and Iași, the tendency to quantify and measure and the instinct to rely upon these measurements, had remained and had found a new object.

### **An Uneasy Arrival**

The initial glamour of Ghica’s arrival to Samos wore off almost immediately. “As for the inhabitants,” he continued in his first letter to his wife after his arrival, “the fair sex is not pretty, the men are intriguing and drunken, and the gendarmerie is frightful.”<sup>39</sup> He had seen pirate ships from his windows. His servant Louis, an ex-gendarme and ex-smuggler, announced that one would have to have murdered one’s mother and father to consent to living among such people. Ghica’s predecessor, a certain Conemenós, had, by all accounts, and especially Ghica’s own,

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<sup>36</sup> Ion Ghica, cited in Roman, “Introduction,” in Ghica, *Opere*, vol.I, 20.

<sup>37</sup> Ion Ionescu de la Brad, in *Țăranul român* (1861), cited in Roman, “Introduction,” in Ghica, *Opere*, vol.I, 22.

<sup>38</sup> Ion Ghica, cited in Roman, “Introduction,” in Ghica, *Opere*, vol.I, 20.

<sup>39</sup> IG to AG, 20 April 1854, in *Opere*, vol.V, 188–90.

“organized a system of spoliation and tyranny difficult to describe.” The countryside was magnificent, “but man has done nothing to it.”<sup>40</sup> Ghica, who had a taste for the dramatic, compared himself to Prometheus chained to a rock.

The drama was not entirely misguided. The British consul on Samos, G.L. Mare, confirmed the severity of the situation in his own dispatches to Stratford Canning at the Constantinople embassy. Writing in July 1854, Mare reported that the new governor was already “profoundly disgusted” and had privately expressed his desire to leave the island. The consul explained why: to establish order, security, and good morals on an island whose population had been “corrupted” by the preceding administration, Ghica needed material force, institutional support, and encouragement from the Ottoman government, none of which, Mare observed, Samos had. At every step the governor encountered “difficulties, obstacles, and brazen opposition on the part of the officials.”<sup>41</sup> A principal early source of obstruction was a man named Lecati, a former revolutionary whom Conemenós had installed as president of the appellate tribunal despite the man having been previously denounced by the Ottoman government itself. Lecati, together with a dismissed gendarmerie chief, ran a sustained campaign of rumor and political sabotage on behalf of the deposed governor, spreading word that Ghica was merely an instrument of British influence and that the French were preparing to intervene.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, according to Mare, “popular outbreak is imminent,” and “it owes its existence to three causes: agitation from abroad, internal dissatisfaction with the local government, and famine.”<sup>43</sup>

Moreover, the fiscal situation Ghica inherited was dire: the treasury accounts showed 345,058 piastres owed to the treasury by debtors, and 459,815 owed by it, including roughly

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> G.L. Mare to S. Canning, 24 July 1854, TNA: FO195/356.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

400,000 in unpaid tribute to the Porte. Commune accounts had not been settled since 1849. The gendarmerie devoured 18,400 piastres monthly and its ranks were stocked with former pirates.<sup>44</sup> Real piracy, meanwhile, was epidemic: Nicholas Moros, the Goudounni brothers, and Macry, who had attacked an English schooner and killed its entire crew, all operated in the waters around the island.<sup>45</sup> Hellenic irredentist networks linked agitators in Athens and Constantinople to sympathizers on Samos, and Conemenós had, by Ghica's account, deliberately encouraged the very disorder that justified his strongman rule.<sup>46</sup> There was no standing army, no fiscal cushion, no steam vessel, and no realistic prospect of leaving. "I am writing volumes to everyone," Ghica told Alexandrina, "imploring cooperation."<sup>47</sup>

It should also be noted here that Samos in 1854 was not a routine provincial posting. It was a privileged principality produced through the post-1821 diplomatic settlement following the Greek War of Independence, and it was governed by a Christian prince in the sultan's name.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, its stability was important in a moment when the Ottomans were being discussed in European conversations. Moreover, the Crimean War had transformed the Aegean into a heavily surveilled theatre: Allied fleets patrolled, Greek irredentist networks ran from Athens through the islands, and piracy was a way through which the war was fought.<sup>49</sup> Disorder on Samos would be read as evidence about the empire's capacity to govern during times of conflict. The British, in particular, believed that brigands, such as the aforementioned Moros, were employed by "agitators" who planned to organize a "revolt when the news reached Samos that active hostilities had commenced between Russia and Turkey."<sup>50</sup> This is the frame within which Ghica

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<sup>44</sup> I. Ghica, "Discours d'ouverture de l'assemblée samienne," *Vithora*, 2 March 1855

<sup>45</sup> I have been unable to learn more about these apparently infamous pirates, perhaps due to my lack of ability in Greek.

<sup>46</sup> IG to AG, 28 May 1854, in *Opere*, vol.V, 199–201.

<sup>47</sup> IG to AG, 18 May 1854, in *Opere*, vol.V, 198–99.

<sup>48</sup> Philliou, *Biography of an Empire*, 142.

<sup>49</sup> Gunnin, "The British Consular", 22.

<sup>50</sup> G.L. Mare to S. Canning, 24 July 1854, TNA: FO195/356.

understood his appointment from the beginning, and it explains the dire situation he had inherited as well as why his reports are always co-addressed to Ottoman ministries as well as to the British and French officials.



Figure Two — An 1853 English map of the Aegean. Samos is circled in red.

Nevertheless, Ghica was a distinctive choice for the position. He was an engineer with little administrative experience in the Romanian Principalities but, crucially, a known reputation to both Ottoman officials and European diplomats that his predecessor had never possessed. His first letter back to his wife records what he evidently considered a significant fact: the transfer of power from Conemenós had occurred “peacefully, for the first time; everyone wonders how it was done.”<sup>51</sup> In a jurisdiction where every previous transition had been contested, this novelty was itself impressive.

<sup>51</sup> IG to AG, 20 April 1854, in *Opere*, vol.V, 188–90.

## Governing in Practice

The piracy problem was at once military, political, and fiscal, and Ghica's resources for addressing it were negligible. He tracked this frankly in his letters: he was entirely dependent on French and British naval presence, in the corvettes *Le Chaptal* and *Le Narval*, HMS *Warp*, and Lord John Hay's squadron. In late May 1854, he conducted a general sweep of the island with the assistance of a French naval division: the pirate Arapis was taken, and the Goudounni brothers and Macry followed soon after. Ghica would expel ten political agitators from the island as a result.<sup>52</sup>

One early case in the correspondence captures his general approach to this dependence. In June 1854, Ghica convened a full joint meeting of naval commanders, the Senate, and deputies from every village, and the following day dispatched an express courier to Constantinople carrying a detailed report of the proceedings.<sup>53</sup> This was characteristic: before anything else, Ghica would document the problem and send the documentation to his superiors. Ghica would do the same with the budget, with the courts, and with education. For him, the first step in improving a system was to make it visible, or put more simply, to report on it.

The collective responsibility law of March 1855 codified his legal approach: communes were held liable for brigandage committed on their territory, with fines for failure to pursue criminals and pensions for those injured in service. The law acknowledged what the correspondence showed plainly, that the administration lacked independent coercive capacity, and shifted the enforcement onto local society.<sup>54</sup> More revealing still was an admission buried in Ghica's official reports: he had retained former pirates in the gendarmerie "so as not to increase

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<sup>52</sup> IG to AG, 28 May 1854, in *Opere*, vol.V, 199–201.

<sup>53</sup> IG to AG, 16 June 1854, in *Opere*, vol.V, 202–203.

<sup>54</sup> Ion Ghica, "Discours à l'Assemblée de Samos," March 1855, BAR: mss. fr. 186, *Rapoarte si corespondenta din Samos*, 131.

the number of those actively involved in brigandage.”<sup>55</sup> Ghica was thus evidently a pragmatic governor, who was working as hard as possible to do well with the imperfect and limited tools he had received.

Ghica would particularly emphasize reducing the expenses of the state. He would announce these reductions to the Samian Assembly, making public his actions and his reasoning. The gendarmerie, which had cost 18,400 piastres per month at Ghica’s arrival, was reduced to 10,700 with a further cut to 8,000 projected, achieved by a process of slowly removing unnecessary gendarmes. The administrative chancery fell from 3,250 to 1,600 per month, saving 19,800 per year. The Constantinople office dropped from 3,000 to 1,800 per month, saving another 14,400 annually.<sup>56</sup> The accounting year was shifted from December to March to align it with the agricultural cycle and the olive oil sales on which Samian revenue depended, since the old calendar had made accurate budgeting structurally impossible. Public instruction funds were separated from general revenues, where they had been pooled conveniently for anyone who wanted to misappropriate them.<sup>57</sup>

Total receipts for the first eleven months stood at 911,724 piastres. Tribute paid to the Porte amounted to 289,215.<sup>58</sup> What is perhaps most significant about these figures is simply their existence, as they did not exist under Conemenós. Producing and extracting them from his predecessor’s chaos and setting them before the Assembly was a primary reform for Ghica. The Vogoridi accounts affair, as the unresolved records of a former prince stretching back to 1849, also ran through the 1855 speech and through multiple letters to the Porte.

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<sup>55</sup> Ion Ghica, 2 February 1855, BAR: mss. fr. 186, *Rapoarte si corespondenta din Samos*, no.5.

<sup>56</sup> Ion Ghica, “Discours à,” March 1855, 126.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

Lastly, the public instruction fund had fallen from roughly 30,000 piastres per year in 1848 to 3,850 by the time Ghica arrived, because the fund was moved to vine and raisin production and the vine disease that had been ravaging the island since at least 1853 had collapsed the revenue base.<sup>59</sup> Again, this emphasizes just how constraining were the island's finances. Ghica was working with almost nothing and it was by necessity that his reforms were sequential and targeted. The grand aspirations of the speeches, as we shall see, sat atop very modest means.

Ghica was also, due to his intellectual background and education, committed to the development of institutions, a perspective which aligns with his involvement in Tanzimat circles in Constantinople. The institutions Ghica established during his first two years in Samos, announced in the 1855 speech and then assessed retrospectively in 1858, followed a revealing sequence: legal infrastructure came first, then institutions of documentation, then cultural institutions.

Justices of the peace and notarial offices were created. A mortgage registry was opened and was the first reliable record of property encumbrances on the island, which Ghica claimed had immediately increased the availability of credit and lowered interest rates.<sup>60</sup> A prison was built, economically with the forced labor of its own future inmates. From January 1855, civil registration, including births, marriages, and deaths recorded in dedicated communal registers, was introduced, explicitly so that, as Ghica told the Assembly, "statistics and the census can draw on these documents."<sup>61</sup> A marine law was promulgated to regulate the island's principal economic activity, and the Pythagorean gymnasium was founded. It is hard to know how much

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<sup>59</sup> Ion Ghica, "Discours à l'Assemblée de Samos," February 1858, BAR: mss. fr. 186, *Rapporte si corespondenta din Samos*, 286.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.

<sup>61</sup> Ion Ghica, "Discours à," March 1855, 132.

to make of the name (Pythagoras was, after all, from Samos) but it is at least a nice touch that the man who had studied at the *École des Mines* and taught math in Iași chose a mathematician to give his school its identity.<sup>62</sup>

### **The Rhetoric of Civilization**

Three of Ghica's surviving speeches to the Samian Assembly, delivered in April 1854, March 1855, and February 1858, trace Ghica's rhetorical arc from civilizational promise to proof. They are also, read together, a sustained public expression of Ghica's governance this chapter has been tracing: the conviction that improvement is what can be measured, and that measuring it is already a form of improvement.

The first speech was delivered on 5 April 1854 during his first week on the island, at the reading of the imperial firman, which was Ghica's first public act. He had seen the pirates from his window, had no money, and had just written to his wife comparing himself to Prometheus. Against this private backdrop, the speech was steeped in official optimism. According to Ghica, the Sultan desired to see his Samian subjects advance; Ghica would use his power for "the moral, intellectual, and material development of the inhabitants"; but Samos, he regretted to note, found itself "still far from the lights of arts and sciences which today constitute the glory of man on this earth."<sup>63</sup>

The three requirements he laid on the Samians, obedience to the firmans, productive labor, and good Christian conduct, corresponded to the three problems he had privately diagnosed: political instability, economic stagnation, and moral disorder. Ghica therefore presented this as a civilizational condition requiring Ottoman guidance.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ion Ghica, "Discours aux Samiens à l'occasion de la lecture du firman," April 1854, BAR: mss. fr. 186, *Rapoarte si corespondenta din Samos*, 16.

The second speech, a year on, was structured around numbers. Ghica presented accounts, then institutions, then education, then a passage on political conduct. Unsurprisingly, the budget was the main focus of Ghica's speech. The education section introduced a theme that would become central by 1858: the danger of what Ghica called "demi-instruction," half-education, which he judged worse than ignorance itself because it produced "men who are useless and even harmful."<sup>64</sup> According to Ghica, a partially reformed system, whether of education or of armed men, could be more dangerous than an unreformed one.

The most striking passage concerned the Assembly itself. Deputies were invited to examine accounts and propose reforms "without passion, without systematic opposition, solely in order to see clearly and to arrive at the truth of motives and results."<sup>65</sup> Ghica was disciplining the Assembly's political function and was also legitimating its fiscal oversight. The Assembly was to audit and check the numbers, not to make policy. Democracy, in so far as the word applies, meant only scrutiny of accounts here.

By 1858, the last year of his governorship, Ghica had his proof, and the final speech is where the engineering formation and the civilizational rhetoric converge most completely. According to Ghica, court cases had declined year over year, and the proportion of disputes resolved amicably, although through the advice of justices of the peace rather than through formal judgement, had risen. He was doing with justice statistics exactly what he had done with the budget, making the system visible and then claiming it as proof of progress.<sup>66</sup>

One of the most interesting parts of the speech, however, was a passage about the "wheel and steam."<sup>67</sup> Ghica told the Assembly that the wheel was an instrument that multiplied human

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<sup>64</sup> Ion Ghica, "Discours à," February 1858, 295.

<sup>65</sup> Ion Ghica, "Discours à" March 1855, 136.

<sup>66</sup> Ion Ghica, "Discours à," February 1858, 286.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 298.

labor in prodigious fashion; that those who used machines could multiply their brief years “by ten, by a hundred, by a thousand, by a million.” Not a century ago, according to Ghica, a French philosopher had said the dividing line was where Latin ceased to be spoken. “Today,” Ghica stated, “one can say with more reason that this limit is where there is neither wheel nor steam.”<sup>68</sup> It was a remarkable redefinition. Civilization was not a matter of language, faith, or cultural refinement, but was a matter of machinery. And the beauty of this formulation, from Ghica’s perspective, was that it made civilization measurable by the very instruments he had been deploying. He had been importing shovels, pickaxes, and wheelbarrows, and he had been building roads. He had been promoting sulfur against the vine disease. By 1858, his definition of progress had converged with the specific things he had been doing. The student, with his ambition to catalogue and quantify the physical world, had become the administrator who catalogued and quantified fiscal and judicial performance.

A passage about sulfur drove the point home. Sulfur consumption, Ghica informed the Assembly, was “in proportion to the development of the civilization of peoples.” Those proprietors who refused to use it persisted in “hesitation and superstition.”<sup>69</sup> An agricultural management problem was in this way reframed as a civilizational difference. It was a striking move: here was a Christian governor, appointed by the Ottoman Sultan, directing at his fellow Orthodox Christians the same civilizational differentiation that Tanzimat reformers directed at the Empire’s own populations. The language was European, but the authority was Ottoman and his targets were fellow Orthodox Christians.

The budget, announced at the speech’s close, confirmed the arc. The treasury balanced with a surplus of 150,000 piastres, represented by olive oil in storage. The surplus was “very

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 299.

small in truth,” Ghica admitted, “but sufficient to give you an idea of what it might have been had God spared” the vine disease for a fifth consecutive year.<sup>70</sup> It was proof and it was in numbers, and for a man like Ghica, that was almost the most important point.

Overall, the public record, as Ghica fashioned it, was considerably polished, with successes foregrounded, failures explained away, and coercion dressed in the language of law. His letters to his wife Alexandrina and his private conversations show something quite different. They reveal exhaustion, frustration, contempt for the officials he was forced to rely on, and a settled low opinion of the population he was publicly guiding toward civilization. The Samians, he wrote upon arrival, were “intriguing and drunken”; there was “not a man who knows how to read and write who is not part of some intrigue or conspiracy.”<sup>71</sup> He longed to leave. He described Samos as “a veritable exile.” He pleaded for a cook who was not Greek and who, ideally, was not an assassin, though, he added, he would not object if the man were a thief.<sup>72</sup>

The gap between what the governor told the Assembly and what the governor told his wife is not necessarily hypocrisy. It is evidence that the civilizational language of the speeches was a kind of performance of the language appropriate to the role, rather than a personal conviction. Ghica believed a population had to be described clearly and orderly before anything else could follow, and the rhetoric of civilization was the available language in which to say so. This distinction, between the institutional register and the private one, matters for understanding Ghica more broadly. As Chapter Three will show, he was capable of saying recognizably different things to Ottoman officials, European diplomats, and Romanian nationalists while pursuing what was, in substance, the same project.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 300.

<sup>71</sup> IG to AG, 26 April 1854, in *Opere*, vol. V, 193–95.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

## Conclusion

The record Ghica carried off Samos in late 1858 was telling. Functioning courts, a mortgage registry, civil registration, a marine law, a gymnasium, a budget surplus, gendarmerie costs halved from 1854 levels, and four years of declining crime statistics. Nonetheless, piracy had returned every time the French corvettes sailed away, education was underfunded from start to finish, corrupt officials were retained throughout by practical necessity, and a vine disease that had destroyed the revenue base and showed no sign of going away. Yet the record was genuinely impressive for a man working with almost nothing.

This pragmatism was recognised from outside just Ghica's own presentation. In April 1855, Stratford Canning wrote directly to Ghica with an assessment of the governorship that reads almost as a summary of his administration. Canning listed what he understood to be the results of Ghica's administration: "the restoration of good order, the removal of brigands, the suppression of piracy, the balancing of public revenues and expenditures, and the maintenance of the law without corruption and without arbitrariness."<sup>73</sup> Significantly, Canning attributed his knowledge of these results to the very practice this chapter has identified as Ghica's most distinctive administrative habit. "Your reports and the results of your administrative system," Canning wrote, "have not gone unnoticed by those who are required to be aware of them."<sup>74</sup> The reports, including the budgets laid before the Assembly, the dispatches to the Porte, and the correspondence with the British consul, had done what Ghica intended them to do. The governor who believed that the first step in improving a system was to make it visible had reached the British ambassador's desk and, through him, the Ottoman ministry. Canning added that Reşid Pasha had expressed satisfaction, and that the absence of any complaint from the islanders

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<sup>73</sup> Stratford Canning to Ion Ghica, 5 April 1855, BAR, Bucharest, S21(1)/DCIX.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

confirmed his conviction that recommending Ghica's appointment had been “a good deed for both the Porte and the island.”<sup>75</sup>

Nevertheless, what distinguishes this administration and makes it here something other than a minor footnote in the history of Ottoman provincial governance was the kind of mind that produced it. The young man who had studied the natural sciences in Paris and stood before a blackboard in Iași teaching math to students, had become the governor who measured the treasury and told the Samian Assembly that civilization was where there was wheel and steam. His intellectual formation does not explain his entire governorship, but it does explain Ghica's most distinctive quality as administrator: Ghica counted things, made them accessible, and represented how this counting constituted progress.

In sum, this chapter has tried to show how and what Ghica's professional credentials were made of. This administrative record was earned under difficult conditions and accessible to like-minded Ottoman officials and European diplomats, and he carried and used it into the world described in the chapters that follow.

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter Two

### Ion Ghica and Constantinople's Elite: Social Networks and Self-Fashioning

*"I will immediately be invested with the title of Prince of Samos; everyone agrees on this, ministers and ambassadors alike. [...] I am considered a veritable phoenix here."*

I. Ghica to A. Ghica, 5 Dec. 1855

#### Introduction

On the evening of Tuesday, January 7, 1856, Ion Ghica attended a grand ball at the British embassy in Pera. Ghica had been in Constantinople throughout late 1855 and early 1856 to receive his nomination as Prince of Samos from the Sultan. Writing the following day to his wife Alexandrina, who remained at Samos with their children, he described the scene: Lady Canning was "resplendent with diamonds," Lady Paget "resplendent with beauty," the rooms thick with red uniforms and Ottoman dignitaries.<sup>76</sup> Ghica himself wore his Ottoman decorations. He had spent New Year's Eve at the French embassy, where Ambassador Thouvenel had been "charming all the time" for him, and had rung in the small hours of 1856 in his own salon alongside Romanian exile companions Alecsandri and Negry, and a French lieutenant named Laurent, who sang with the talent, Ghica noted, of a grand theater.<sup>77</sup> Now, barely a week later, he was at Stratford Canning's ballroom, moving between two of the most powerful men in the Ottoman Empire as though he belonged in both worlds equally. How had he gotten there, and what kind of belonging was this, really?

This chapter argues that Ghica's presence at the center of Constantinople's European diplomatic society in 1856, despite not being recognized as an official diplomatic representative of any state, was not accidental and that understanding how he arrived there is essential to

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<sup>76</sup> IG to AG, 3 January 1856, in *Opere*, vol. V, 231–32.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

understanding both the man and the broader argument of this thesis. It contends that Ghica's embeddedness in these elite networks was the product of decades and multiple settings, and that this very embeddedness confounds any simple reading of him as a straightforward Romanian nationalist. His ability to move fluently between the Ottomans, the British, and the French was not a betrayal of national commitments, but rather a reflection of the older, trans-national structures of legitimacy and sociability within which a figure like Ghica had always operated. His service in Samos, and his nomination as its Prince, only makes sense against this backdrop.

The chapter proceeds in five sections. The first reconstructs Ghica's social background, focusing on his noble boyar origins and the ways in which the Ghica family's relationship to Ottoman imperial authority shaped the networks he would later inhabit. The second examines his formative years in Paris in the 1830s and his entry into liberal-nationalist circles, from Madame de Champy's salon to the evenings of Prince Czartoryski, which gave him the social connections of a European liberal milieu which he would draw upon for the rest of his life. The third and fourth sections turn to Constantinople itself in the 1850s, tracing his sustained relationships with the British and French embassies. A final section brings these threads together to show how Ghica's position in these social networks directly shaped the outcome of his Samos appointment, revealing the extent to which Ottoman governance, European diplomacy, and personal sociability were, in this milieu, inseparable.

### **The Ghica Family and Ottoman Authority**

The Ghica dynasty introduced in the previous chapter was inherently intertwined with Ottoman suzerainty and authority. The family's noble status was legitimated by and was a result of the Ottoman appointment system. This is made plain in Ghica's own telling of how his kinsman Grigorie Ghica obtained the Wallachian throne in 1822: following the "zavera," or the

removal of Phanariots as rulers under the Ottomans, the Ottoman commander in Bucharest invited the remaining boyars to send a delegation to Constantinople, and the Sultan named Grigorie Ghica prince of Wallachia, “the Porte no longer trusting the Phanariots.”<sup>78</sup> The Ghica elevation to princely authority in the early nineteenth century was, in other words, a direct act of imperial appointment, with the family positioned as the Porte’s preferred indigenous governing class.

In the letter to his uncle Ioan Cîmpineanu, Ghica describes the political orientation of the network of boyars in which his family centrally figured.<sup>79</sup> The guiding principle of this circle was that the right of Ottoman suzerainty, as established by the old capitulations, constituted a guarantee for the preservation of the Romanian Principalities. This was a position that used the Ottoman framework instrumentally as a hedge against the more immediately threatening absorptive ambitions of Russia and Austria. This was the political background Ion Ghica was born into: membership of a boyar network that had developed a doctrine about how to navigate between competing imperial systems. What Ion Ghica's generation would bring to this inheritance was the language and ambition of nationalism, and Ion Ghica would in particular attempt to transform the family’s long-practiced accommodation with Ottoman power into something new. Nevertheless, it was precisely this Ghica family inheritance, as dynastic, Ottoman-derived, domestically entrenched, and gesturing westward, that gave Ghica his entry into the wider European elite networks he encountered in Paris.

### **Ion Ghica’s Paris Years**

Ghica's Parisian years, whose intellectual dimensions were traced in the previous chapter, also produced a set of social connections that would prove as consequential as the engineering

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<sup>78</sup> Ghica, “Scrisori Catre”, in *Opere* vol.1, 129.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 416.

background. In particular, what distinguished his time in Paris from that of his compatriots was the extent to which his family name and his own personality opened doors into networks that extended beyond the Romanian student community.

A primary vehicle for this was the Parisian salon. Through a former teacher, Ghica gained access to the weekly gatherings of Madame de Champy,<sup>80</sup> which he describes in his memoir as assembling “everything Paris contained of Hellenic, Hellenist, and philhellene” sentiment: veterans of Missolonghi and Navarino, professors, deputies who had spoken in favor of Greece, and students from prominent Greek families received as “living descendants” of Homer’s heroes.<sup>81</sup> It was here that Ghica was presented to General Ioannis Kolettis, the extraordinary envoy of King Othon of Greece, whose posting in Paris, Ghica notes, was effectively a gilded exile from the Aegean where he had accumulated too much personal influence.<sup>82</sup> The encounter is described at length in his memoir: Kolettis, recognizing Ghica’s name, assumed he was Greek, while Ghica insisted on his Romanian identity; Kolettis replied in Aromanian, saying “I too speak Aromanian,” and the evening turned into a long personal conversation, ending with Kolettis seeking Ghica out to ask for Romanian books to read.<sup>83</sup> That the actual conversation unfolded in this way is somewhat hard to believe. Nonetheless, Ghica would indeed have had the opportunity to meet such figures and speak with them at length, and it is almost certain that he would be discussing similar topics with these figures.

Similarly, through a French classmate, Ghica found himself at a hunting party and dinner in Avalon alongside Armand Carrel, editor of *Le National* and the leading republican journalist

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<sup>80</sup> Ghica describes Madame de Champy as the sister of Charles Fabvier, the French general and ambassador who had played an important role in the Greek War of Independence. Nonetheless, I have not been able to locate any other descriptions of Madame de Champy’s salon specifically.

<sup>81</sup> Ghica, “Scrisori Catre”, in *Opere* vol.1, 200.

<sup>82</sup> Kolettis was coincidentally Governor of Samos between 1828–1829.

<sup>83</sup> The Aromanians were a group of “Latin-speaking slavs” or “Vlachs” who lived and continue to live in modern-day Greece and Bulgaria. The Aromanian language is thus quite similar to Romanian, although it is hard to believe that Ghica and Kolettis would be speaking Romanian/Aromanian to each other rather than French.

of the July Monarchy opposition, and Michał Czajkowski, a Ukrainian Cossack exile who would later himself convert to Islam and become known as Sadyk-pasha, who was at this moment secretary to Prince Czartoryski. Within days, Ghica recognized his own account of Russian conduct in the Principalities reproduced in *Le National's* columns; Carrel thereafter opened the paper to him for a regular “Correspondance de Bucarest,” introducing him to collaborators Jules Bastide and Maillefer.<sup>84</sup> Through Czajkowski, Ghica was presented to Prince Adam Czartoryski himself, the great Polish statesman-in-exile, regularly consulted in Paris and London, who had already sent his own agent to Bucharest to liaise with Campineanu’s national party. Ghica would moreover become acquainted with Werner, one of Prince Czartorski’s secretaries, with whom he would discuss political issues regarding both the Principalities and the Poland; what is also preserved in his letters is also Ghica’s attempt to balance this political activity with his academic responsibilities, writing “I would also ask you to bring back to the Prince [Czartoryski] the petition [...] as there is little time left until classes resume in Metz.”<sup>85</sup>

Nevertheless, it was at one of Czartoryski’s evenings that Ghica encountered the most vivid personality of his Paris, and later Constantinople, years: David Urquhart, the Scottish former first secretary at the British embassy in Constantinople, who had advised Sultan Mahmud II, pushed the “Vixen” affair almost to a rupture between Britain and Russia, entered Parliament, and denounced both his ambassador and Palmerston as servants of Russian interests. Ghica describes him entering the salon to be surrounded immediately by every political figure present, with the French Prime Minister Adolphe Thiers crossing the room to shake his hand.<sup>86</sup> According to Ghica, their own relationship began badly — Urquhart flew into a rage when Ghica criticized Ottoman treaty violations — but was apparently mended at a later dinner when Ghica’s

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<sup>84</sup> Ghica, “Scrisori Catre”, in *Opere* vol.1, 210–11.

<sup>85</sup> I. Ghica to C. Werner (Woronicz), Dec. 4 1839, in Ghica, *Opere*, vol.VI, 249.

<sup>86</sup> Ghica, “Scrisori Catre”, in *Opere* vol.1, 212.

description of Moldovan pastoral life moved the Scotsman to tears, prompting an embrace and the declaration: “You have a homeland; love it, and never let anyone do to it what England has done to Scotland.”<sup>87</sup> Urquhart would become a committed advocate for Romanian autonomy and unification, and the two would continue to meet across France, England, Switzerland, and the Ottoman Empire for years afterwards.

Ghica would also make connections in Paris with acquaintances directly involved in the Ottoman state. For example, as a student in Paris in the late 1830s, he had come to know Emin Mühlüs Efendi, then first secretary at the Ottoman embassy, and Colonel Mehemet Bey, then the military attaché. Both men he found in the 1850s occupying senior positions in the Ottoman government; Emin Efendi had become grand dragoman of the Porte, while Mehemet Bey was a divisional general.<sup>88</sup>

Taken together, what emerges from these encounters is a map of the mid-century European liberal, and especially anti-Russian, political world: a Greek ambassador with Aromanian roots navigating the politics of the new Hellenic state; a French republican editor placing the Romanian question in the columns of the opposition press; a Polish prince-in-exile coordinating resistance to Russian expansion from Paris; and a Scottish publicist and future MP whose campaign against Russian influence in British foreign policy would influence debate in Parliament. Ghica moved across all of them as a valuable interlocutor with something to offer; namely, intelligence, political analysis, and a cause that mapped naturally onto their own preoccupations. These were the networks he carried back from Paris, and they would shape his political activity for decades to come.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ghica, *Amintiri din pribegia*, 12.

## The British Connection

Ghica had arrived in Constantinople at the end of 1855 to secure his formal investiture as Prince of Samos, a title the sultan had officially conferred but which remained entangled in the logistics of the Ottoman bureaucracy. He would remain in the city through mid-March 1856, waiting on the Ottomans while at the same time the Congress of Paris was simultaneously redrawing the “Eastern Question.” His correspondence from these weeks reveals a man who used the interval with great deliberateness, attending gatherings almost every evening and interacting with Western diplomats often. This sociability was the culmination of a relationship with the British in particular that Ghica had been building across several years, and understanding that arc is essential to grasping what the ballroom scenes actually meant.

One layer of the relationship was strictly official. From Samos, Ghica corresponded with Stratford Canning in the subordinate register of an Ottoman provincial governor reporting to a superior power. His letters of July and August 1855 reporting the capture and arrests of pirates closed with “your most humble and most obedient servant,” the language of a functionary addressing a superior.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, Ghica wrote to the British ambassador as though to a direct administrative superior, which was not strictly his position. The British and French were, to be sure, materially involved in the suppression of Aegean piracy, providing naval assets and personnel to Ghica’s administration; but Ghica was performing as a more or less direct civil servant of the British, which positioned him within the British administrative hierarchy even when writing from a distant non-British island.

Moreover, the dispatches of the British vice-consul on Samos, G.L. Mare, addressed to Canning throughout the period of Ghica’s governorship, reveals the British’s regular reporting on the governor’s progress. Mare attended the Samian Assembly alongside the French naval

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<sup>89</sup> I. Ghica to S. Canning, 18 July 1855, BAR, Bucharest, S38(1)/DCXII.

commander and Ottoman garrison officers, forwarded translations of Ghica's legislation, enclosed copies of his official reports to the Porte, and described the political opposition Ghica faced, understanding that Ghica's success was linked to British prestige on the island.<sup>90</sup> When the Samian senators heard rumors that Ghica would be elevated to Prince, they came to the consul's house and asked him to convey their gratitude and enthusiasm to Canning, requesting that the ambassador use his influence to hasten the appointment.<sup>91</sup> The consul, in other words, was part of this network too: receiving intelligence and administrative records from the island, transmitting it to the ambassador, and serving as a point of contact through which Samian voices reached the embassy.

Nevertheless, as evidenced in his letters in the autumn of 1855, when Ghica began making extended visits to Constantinople to lobby for his political causes, there was certainly a social dimension to this as well, as the British Embassy at Therapia had become close to a second home. Ghica had spent three days at the British Embassy in Therapia in September 1855. A few weeks later he was at Therapia again, this time for four days, lodged at the hotel but dining at the embassy at every meal and spending his evenings in the ambassador's company. The letters to his wife in this episode are the gossipy chronicles of a houseguest. Ghica observes the social dynamics of the embassy with an amused and slightly predatory eye: the ambassador's barely concealed infatuation with the beautiful Lady Paget, the operatic musical evenings in which Lady Canning and Miss Canning played piano duets and a young attaché named Russell<sup>92</sup> sang Italian arias in German, and the backgammon tables where, Ghica notes with satisfaction, "I

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<sup>90</sup> G.L. Mare to S. Canning, 28 March 1855, 17 April 1855, 14 May 1855; TNA: FO 195/356.

<sup>91</sup> G.L. Mare to S. Canning, 31 December 1855; TNA: FO 195/356.

<sup>92</sup> I have surmised, at the suggestion of Professor Mark Mazower, that this "young attache" Russell singing arias was Odo Russell, later the 1st Baron Amptill and the first British Ambassador to the German Empire.

always beat Lady Canning at the tables.”<sup>93</sup> Ghica thus fashioned himself as a participant in the household’s internal life.



*Figure Three — The British Embassy at Therapia*

The political dimension of this intimacy surfaces in a telling aside from a November 1855 letter. Canning’s circle wanted Ghica to participate in the forthcoming diplomatic work on the Principalities, a role that would require him to remain in Constantinople longer than he had planned. “They want me to take part in everything that will be done for the Principalities,” he told Alexandrina. “I am very pleased and flattered, but it has the disadvantage of keeping me separated from you longer.”<sup>94</sup> Ghica, evidently, never forgot his personal affections when writing to his wife. Nonetheless, when he raised this tension with Canning directly, the ambassador’s response was revealing: “But you would do well to bring Madame Ghica.”<sup>95</sup> The invitation to

<sup>93</sup> IG to AG, 21 November 1855, in *Opere*, vol.V, 222–25.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

bring his family to Constantinople was the gesture of a man who regarded Ghica as someone worth staying close to.

Canning's own letters to Ghica from this period confirms this. In October 1855, Canning wrote to Ghica reporting that he had made "another effort" with Ali Pasha to arrange Ghica's leave to Constantinople, presenting the terms under which the visit could be framed — officially as leave for Alexandrina's health and the family's well-being, while acknowledging privately the political conversations that would take place. "I would be delighted by your presence here," Canning wrote, "to talk with you about things that would otherwise go unaddressed, whether in the Principalities or elsewhere."<sup>96</sup> The letter reveals Canning actively advocating for Ghica's access to the capital and coordinating with Ottoman ministers on his behalf. Canning was indeed a patron arranging the logistics of a valued interlocutor.

Ghica's engagement with British networks in Constantinople was not, however, confined to the ambassadorial household. There was also his sustained intellectual collaboration with David Urquhart, the Scottish publicist and former diplomat whose anti-Russian campaigns had already made him a controversial figure in British political life, and whose quarrel with Canning over access to the sultan the Ghica talked about with some amusement. Urquhart had, as already discussed, been a Paris acquaintance of Ghica's from his student years, but by the early 1850s the two were working together in Constantinople on a project for a "confederation of the Danube nations," a proposed framework in which the Ottoman Empire would serve as guarantor of a collective arrangement capable of resisting Austro-Russian pressure.<sup>97</sup> As historian Cornelia Bodea has examined, Urquhart discussed these projects at length with Ghica, finding in him an interlocutor who was, in her phrase, "eagerly seeking formulae for the future organization of the

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<sup>96</sup> S. Canning to I. Ghica, 9 October 1855, BAR: S21(4)/DCIX

<sup>97</sup> Bodea, "David Urquhart", 221.

Principalities.”<sup>98</sup> The intellectual formula they arrived at cast the Principalities’ relationship to the Porte in terms of mutual necessity: the Porte would owe to the Principalities “the protection of an impenetrable military barrier,” while the Principalities would owe to the Porte “relief from an insupportable load of governing disorder.”<sup>99</sup> The confederation framework was, from Ghica’s perspective, a vehicle and a way of articulating Romanian aspirations in a way that the Porte and the Western powers could accept. This was not so different from what he was doing with Canning: in both cases, he was working within a framework set by a more powerful British interlocutor while pursuing his own agenda. The difference was that with Urquhart, this divergence was intellectual and the collaboration was closer to near-equals; with Canning, it was asymmetrical.

The 1856 memorial on the condition of the Wallachian peasantry, a dense document of several pages sent to Canning, marks this difference clearly. The piece was composed after Ghica and Canning had discussed the peasant question in conversation and Canning had indicated he found the topic “interesting.”<sup>100</sup> In the document, which was a systematic historical account of land tenure, serf conditions, and the failures of the 1831 *Règlement*, Ghica presented himself as the authoritative expert on Romanian agrarian society for the benefit of the European commission established by the Treaty of Paris. He was, in other words, using the intimacy of the embassy household to insert himself into the diplomatic conversations of the post-Crimean War world. “It should be noted that I am an authority on matters concerning the Principalities and that both ambassadors are very pleased with me,” he wrote to Alexandrina on January 3, 1856, with quiet satisfaction. “In short, my position is currently excellent.”<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 223.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>100</sup> I. Ghica to S. Canning, 1856, in *Opere*, vol.V, 89–93.

<sup>101</sup> IG to AG, 3 January 1856, in *Opere*, vol.V, 231–32.

Ghica was still aware of the limits of what that proximity could actually deliver and had certainly learned from his past experiences. Writing to Golescu-Negru in the aftermath of 1848, when he was defending his record as the Romanian revolutionary committee's agent in Constantinople, he framed his failure to move the great powers in terms that were melancholic but mature: "A more transcendent ability than mine might perhaps have devised a way to make General Aupick and Canning support Turkey, to make them declare war on her [Russia]; but neither I nor my friends here have discovered it."<sup>102</sup> Ghica had known back then that his closeness to the British and French ambassadorial worlds did not mean power to direct them. The relationship was one of access and influence, not command. By 1856, Canning had come to regard Ghica as an indispensable expert on Romanian affairs and had actively lobbied for his retention in Constantinople; but this was not to be taken for granted. The asymmetry that the 1849 letter names so candidly was present in the ballroom six years later, even if it was now dressed in grand decorations.

### **The French Connection**

The French connection developed along rather somewhat different lines. Ghica's relationship with the British embassy had been anchored in Canning's household from early on, evidenced in correspondence to Ghica's wife, extended stays at Therapia, and connections to figures like Alison and Urquhart. His past with the French was indeed well-established since his Paris days, but nevertheless his relationship with the diplomatic world in Constantinople took longer to reach the ambassadorial level.

France's position on the Romanian question was in the long term, Ghica believed, more important than Britain's. In a long letter to Mathurin Joseph Cor, a secretary in the French

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<sup>102</sup> I. Ghica to G. Golescu-Negru, 17 July 1848, BAR: S 3(2)/DCXIV.

embassy and also another one of Ghica's "old acquaintances from Paris,"<sup>103</sup> written in 1853, Ghica had laid out the argument with characteristic directness: the Principalities were "more French than anything else" by temperament and education. As Ghica states, "for half a century, all our hope has been in France."<sup>104</sup> Romanian students had trained in Paris, Romanian political culture had absorbed French liberal ideas, and the French consul's influence in Bucharest had been decisive especially during hostile conditions such as the revolution of 1848.<sup>105</sup> This was, in some ways, flattery written for a French reader; in other ways, however, it was indicative of how Ghica approached the French diplomatic corps.

In 1848, at the height of the Wallachian revolution, Ghica had written directly to General Aupick, then French ambassador in Constantinople, invoking "the sympathy I found in Your Excellency's feelings for my country's cause" and requesting military support for the revolutionary government.<sup>106</sup> The request came to nothing, but the appeal itself is significant: as early as 1848, Ghica had felt entitled to the French ambassador's attention on the most urgent political needs.

Nonetheless, from Ghica's time in Samos, the most relevant French diplomatic connection is with Admiral Bouet-Villaumez, commander of the French naval division in the Levant, to whom Ghica wrote multiple letters during his early days in Samos. Ghica provided the French naval captains who were stationed at Samos with intelligence on pirate movements, held joint operations, while the French squadron provided the visible armed presence that kept order in waters where Ghica's own gendarmerie was insufficient.<sup>107</sup> The letters to Bouet-Villaumez are written with the formality of diplomatic correspondence and with the urgency of practical men

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<sup>103</sup> Ghica, *Amintiri din pribegia*, 140.

<sup>104</sup> I. Ghica to M.J. Cor, 1853, in *Opere*, vol.5, 113–18.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> I. Ghica to J. Aupick, 1 July 1848, BAR: A3126, f.153.

<sup>107</sup> I. Ghica to L.E. de Bouet-Villaumez, 1854, BAR: A3126, f.210–220.

who needed each other: Ghica lobbied for French vessels to remain on the island, alerted the admiral to Russian ships taking refuge Greek ports, and even advocated for Ottoman decorations for French officers he felt had been unfairly overlooked. It was the kind of useful intermediary service that accumulated goodwill on both sides.

By the autumn of 1855, these threads had converged in the figure of Édouard Thouvenel, Aupick's successor as French ambassador. Ghica's account of the relationship in his letters home is framed as "I won over Mr. Thouvenel," revealing how significant an achievement he deemed it.<sup>108</sup> He adds a mocking parenthesis: the winning over had been achieved despite a new polemical pamphlet by a fellow Romanian exile, Heliade Rădulescu, that portrayed Ghica as "the most infamous man on earth" while simultaneously crediting him with being "the most capable and skillful man that the earth has ever borne."<sup>109</sup> An attack that testified to his importance was, in practical terms, almost as useful as a recommendation. By the evening of December 6, Ghica confirms: "Tonight I'm having dinner at Mr. Thouvenel's, who has taken a great liking to me."<sup>110</sup>

The réveillon, or New Year's Eve celebration, in 1856 captures what the relationship had become by that point. Ghica spent New Year's Eve at the French embassy, where Thouvenel "has been charming to me the whole time" and "who was drinking to your [Ghica's wife] health with me."<sup>111</sup> When the official evening ended, the party moved to Ghica's rooms and then to Costache Negry's salon, continuing until four in the morning.<sup>112</sup> Captain Laurent, encountered first as a naval officer on the *Chaptal* during the Crimean War period, reappears here commanding Thouvenel's personal dispatch vessel, connecting the Samos naval world to the diplomatic world of 1856. Where the British evenings in Therapia were fixed and hierarchical in the ambassador's

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<sup>108</sup> IG to AG, 4 November 1858, in Ghica, *Opere*, vol. V, pp. 262–63.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> IG to AG, 5 December 1855, in Ghica, *Opere*, vol. V, pp. 229–31.

<sup>111</sup> IG to AG, 3 January 1856, in Ghica, *Opere*, vol. V, pp. 231–32.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

household with its regular guests and rituals of backgammon and piano, the French sociability was more mobile, moving between the embassy, private apartments, and the decks of warships, with Romanian exiles, French naval officers, and the ambassador's staff in the same informal circle. Nonetheless, the French relationship gave Ghica another set of well-placed allies and reinforced his standing on the Danubian Principalities question.



*Figure Four — Ion and Alexandrina Ghica*

### **Elite Networks and Ottoman Governance**

Ghica's place within these networks finds its most concrete expression in the question of his nomination as Prince of Samos. The honor was, as Chapter One established, grounded in the quality of his administration. But the correspondence from the autumn and winter of 1855–56 makes clear that it was also actively discussed and promoted within the very circles this chapter has traced, and that specific kinds of social occasions which Ghica attended were themselves an

important characteristic of the relationship between European diplomats and the Ottoman officials in these years.

The grand balls that punctuate Ghica's letters from January and February 1856 were occasions where proximity to power could be both publicly and socially displayed, functioning much as historian Brian Vick has shown in the salon culture of the Congress of Vienna: as a semi-restricted space in which a range of actors beyond the official diplomats or officials could participate in European political life.<sup>113</sup> In 1856 Constantinople, this is also present. The city was functionally a satellite of the negotiations surrounding the post-Crimean Treaty of Paris, with Ottoman plenipotentiaries preparing their departure and the Principalities question actively under discussion between the respective ambassadors and ministers.

Ghica describes these events quite precisely in his letters to his wife: the sultan arrived at Lady Canning's ball at half past eight and left at ten, taking a lemonade and a biscuit and, according to Ghica, "looked quite bored."<sup>114</sup> The sultan had also attended Thouvenel's ball at the French embassy. Ghica compared the two balls in letters to his wife: the English ball was grander, although "not as good as at the Palace of England", but the French had deployed more military honors, and the courtyard lighting for the sultan's departure had been better managed.<sup>115</sup> These were social observations, but Ghica was also assessing which power had made the better impression at a moment when French and British influence over the war's aftermath was at stake. His own position within the events was carefully managed: he wore his newly acquired decorations and moved between Lady Canning's ballroom and Thouvenel's salon within the same season, treating his presence at both as unremarkable.

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<sup>113</sup> Vick, *The Congress of Vienna*, Introduction.

<sup>114</sup> IG to AG, 7 February 1856, in Ghica, *Opere*, vol.V, pp. 235–36.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

This was the Constantinople in which Ghica was nominated for the honor of Prince of Samos. Ghica describes how, in November 1855, after three days at Therapia, he reported to Alexandrina that “Lord Canning is of the idea that I should be appointed Prince of Samos” and that he should return to the island on a longer-term basis.<sup>116</sup> The same letter notes that Ahmet Fethi Pasha had already been treating Ghica as though the title were effectively settled, “telling me that I would be in a few days.”<sup>117</sup> Canning’s own correspondence supports Ghica’s words. As early as April 1855, the ambassador had lobbied Reşid Pasha for Ghica to receive the Order of the Mecidiye, insisting on the 3rd class rather than the 4th “as it was more honorable for you and more befitting your service.”<sup>118</sup> The advocacy over the decoration’s class is a small detail, but it illustrates how directly Canning involved himself in the Ottoman honours system on Ghica’s behalf. How the nomination progressed is striking: Canning forms an opinion, an Ottoman pasha treats it as fact, and Ghica reports both as if it was normal, which, in the Constantinople of this period, it was. Historian Roderic Davison has documented how thoroughly European ambassadors had been involved in Ottoman decision-making in this period. Ali Pasha had even three times asked London to recall Canning, charging that the ambassador demanded influence “so paramount and notorious” that the Porte lost prestige in its own subjects’ eyes.<sup>119</sup> French and British diplomats, Davison notes, “sometimes made and unmade grand vezirs.”<sup>120</sup> Canning’s advocacy for Ghica’s nomination was an expression of this same phenomenon. By January 1856, having secured the appointment, Canning had moved on to the princely title itself, writing to Ghica and addressing him simply as “Dear Prince.”<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> IG to AG, 5 December 1855, in Ghica, *Opere*, vol.V, pp. 229–31.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> Stratford Canning to Ion Ghica, 5 April 1855, BAR, Bucharest, S21(1)/DCIX

<sup>119</sup> Davison, *Reform in*, 71.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Stratford Canning to Ion Ghica, 21 January 1856, BAR, Bucharest, S21(2)/DCIX

Moreover, throughout that month, while Ghica attended balls at Canning's residence and dined with Thouvenel, Canning was simultaneously meeting with Thouvenel and the Austrian representative Prokesch, alongside Ali Pasha and Fuad Pasha, to negotiate the Ottoman Reform Edict. The reform edict that would inaugurate the second phase of the Tanzimat was being drafted in the same diplomatic world Ghica inhabited. His nomination to Samos was thus being discussed in the same circles that were shaping Ottoman governance at the highest level.

This was possible largely through the extent of Ghica's personal familiarity with relevant figures, especially as he held no official diplomatic credentials. Indeed, European diplomats and Ottoman officials, particularly the Tanzimat reformers, often shared the same company informally. For instance, passing through Smyrna on his way back to Samos, Ghica spent several days in the company of Ali Pasha<sup>122</sup>, dining with him, making day trips together to Bournabat, and attending a grand dinner at his residence.<sup>123</sup> On one of those days, wandering alone through the bazaar, he encountered Ali Pasha and an Englishman named Smyth, later Lord Strangford, son of the former British Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, and at the time an attache under Canning, "strolling through the Bazaar with a fez on his head."<sup>124</sup> By the 1850s, the boundaries between European diplomatic and intellectual culture and the Ottoman elite world had become surprisingly permeable. Ghica moved between both, spending his mornings with an Ottoman official and his evenings comparing the merits of two ambassadors' ballrooms, and in doing so occupied a position that the more rigid categories of European or Ottoman belonging could not quite contain.

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<sup>122</sup> Ghica's letter refers to a "Ali Efendi", which is presumably Ali Pasha, a famous Tanzimat statesman and a good friend of Ghica.

<sup>123</sup> IG to AG, 10 April 1857, in Ghica, *Opere*, vol.V, pp. 248–51.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

## Conclusion

The ball at the British embassy on the evening of January 7, 1856 was, in one sense, simply a social occasion: an evening of diamonds and red uniforms and of pleasantries exchanged across language barriers. Yet read against the full arc of this chapter, it becomes something more: a snapshot of how elite belonging functioned in the mid-nineteenth-century. Ghica was there not by accident or charm alone, but because of a lifetime of social networks — a boyar lineage entangled with Ottoman authority, a Parisian education that provided him with a European liberal world, and years of correspondence and personal relations with the most powerful diplomatic households in Constantinople. He belonged in that ballroom because he had worked, across decades and geographies, to make himself the kind of person who could.

This chapter has demonstrated that this belonging was genuinely trans-national and trans-imperial in character. Ghica moved between Stratford Canning and Édouard Thouvenel, between the Porte and the Parisian salon, between the position of a loyal Ottoman provincial governor and the intellectual peer of European liberals, and he did so not despite his identity but through it. The networks he inhabited were imperial and cosmopolitan by structure, predating the national categories that were, in this very period, beginning to harden. His investiture as Prince of Samos was made possible not by Romanian national credentials, but by his elite connections and personal trust.

And yet this is not the whole story. For while Ghica circulated through these imperial networks comfortably, he was simultaneously writing letters that pressed France and Britain on the fate of the Principalities, composing memorials on the Wallachian peasantry, and corresponding with Romanian exiles. The man who wore Ottoman decorations at Canning's ball was the same man who believed and argued in the Romanian cause, especially the unification of

the Principalities. How these two commitments coexisted unparadoxically is the question that the following chapter will take up directly. If this chapter has shown the imperial networks within which Ghica operated, the next asks what he was trying to build inside it.

### Chapter Three

#### Ion Ghica and the Politics of the Romanian Principalities: Nationalism Through Empire

*“The Romanians have the greatest confidence in their country and are determined to be an integral part of the Ottoman Empire and to serve as its bulwark.”*

I. Ghica to D. Urquhart, 1852

#### Introduction

In November 1844, Ion Ghica ran into a Moldavian boyar at Focșani, where the princes of Wallachia and Moldavia had gathered for a meeting, and asked after their mutual acquaintance Mihail Kogălniceanu. The sarcastic answer was that Kogălniceanu was at a monastery, praying for the forgiveness of his sins. Had he taken monastic vows? No: he had been sent there as punishment for having written “some unnecessary words in favor of the Moldavian peasants.”<sup>125</sup> The letter closed with news that Ghica and others were launching a political weekly.<sup>126</sup> The anecdote is somewhat unimportant, but it captures a certain world: the tight circle of Romanian liberal intellectuals, including Ghica, Grigore Alexandrescu, Mihail Kogălniceanu, and Nicolae Bălcescu, bound together by shared convictions about national development and peasant reform, and already running against the censorship and repression that would push them toward revolution in 1848 and into exile thereafter. It was this network and these same convictions that Ghica would carry with him to Constantinople, and there it was through the imperial connections he built there that he would pursue the national project. Over a decade later in 1858, Ghica would return to Wallachia, as the project he had been working toward through letters, lobbying, and imperial connections for nearly a decade was entering its decisive phase.

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<sup>125</sup> I. Ghica to M. Kogălniceanu, 2 November 1844, in Ghica, *Opere*, vol.VI, 65.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

The previous chapter argued that Ghica's embeddedness in Constantinople's European diplomatic society was trans-national and trans-imperial in character, the product of social networks built across decades. It ended by asking how this imperial belonging coexisted with his simultaneous commitment to the Romanian national cause. This chapter argues that Ghica's Romanian nationalism was enacted through and precisely because of his imperial embeddedness. His political vision for the Danubian Principalities, namely a philo-Ottoman, anti-Russian, and unificationist one, was formulated in the language of Ottoman reform alongside British and French liberal politics. The same political reasoning appears in his letters to an Ottoman Tanzimat official, a British MP, a Hungarian revolutionary, and a Romanian radical.

The chapter is broken into two sections. The first reconstructs the political theory Ghica expressed, shown most fully in his correspondences with Ahmed Vefik Pasha, C.A. Rosetti, and Grigore Alexandrescu, revealing how a coherent philo-Ottoman nationalism was presented to Ottoman and Romanian audiences alike. The second examines Ghica's practical activity as a broker between imperial actors and the Romanian cause, tracing his role as intermediary through 1859 and showing how the imperial networks mapped in Chapter Two were the very channels through which the nationalist project was pursued.

### **Philo-Ottoman Nationalism**

The most sustained articulation of Ghica's political theory appears in his letter to Ahmed Vefik Pasha, written in 1851 from Constantinople. Ahmed Vefik was an Ottoman official associated with the Tanzimat, a man Ghica was personally friends with and who shared similar political sentiments regarding the future of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>127</sup> The letter contains the outline

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<sup>127</sup> Ghica and Ahmed Vefik visited each other frequently, and Ahmed Efendi appeared as a regular guest of the Ghica household.

of Ghica's political ideas, an outline that would stay more or less fundamental across his correspondence for the next eight years.

In the letter, Ghica argues that for twenty years the conduct of the Wallachian princes, boyars, and the Russian consulate had driven everything intelligent in the country to look toward Constantinople, even though the Ottomans had effectively forgotten the Principalities and was known to the younger generation only by tradition and by firmans that contradicted the country's rights. Yet popular instinct, he insists, correctly identified the Ottoman side as the source of salvation: "there is nothing like the instinct of self-preservation of a people for divining the quarter from which salvation may come."<sup>128</sup> The analysis of the 1848 revolution follows the same logic. Everyone, including the prince, boyars, Russia, and the Wallachian patriots, had pushed toward revolution, each for their own reasons. The Porte could have exploited the situation to its advantage but hesitated. The apparent result was a Russian victory; but Ghica insists the real advantage will ultimately belong to the country and "to the Porte, unless unpardonable mistakes are made."<sup>129</sup> According to Ghica, if the moment comes, "at the vanguard of the Ottoman armies we shall recover sooner or later what we have lost over a century."<sup>130</sup> Romanian nationalism marching under Ottoman banners, capturing the philo-Ottoman position in its most expressive form.

Here, Ghica is presenting Romanian national aspirations as good policy for the Porte. The Principalities are an asset to be mobilized for the Ottoman Empire and Romanian patriots are not a threat to Ottoman sovereignty but its most natural allies against Russia. The letter is, in effect, a

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<sup>128</sup> I. Ghica to Ahmed Vefik, 1851, BAR: A3126, f.240–244

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

policy memorandum, and Ghica encloses with it a memorial by David Urquhart, already submitted to the Ottoman minister, which proposes the constitutional framework he envisions.<sup>131</sup>

Less than a year earlier, Ghica's long letter to C.A. Rosetti, a fellow Wallachian exile<sup>132</sup>, in March 1850 contains the same political ideas; but this time written in Romanian, addressed to a radical exile in Paris, and with a frankness and ambition Ghica would never have used with an Ottoman official, even a friend. The opening declaration is clear: "I believe in Turkish politics and I would like to lean upon it, for we need a point of support."<sup>133</sup> Archimedes, Ghica observed, said give me a lever and I will move the world; if he had found his "fulcrum on the head of a fez," the earth might have moved long ago.<sup>134</sup> Ghica tells Rosetti plainly that European diplomacy will not listen to the Romanians on their own merits, and that they are heard only when they present themselves "in Turkish form," as part of the Ottoman interest.

Ghica's vision is nevertheless ambitious: "my desire is a Romania of nine million from the Dniester to Timișoara."<sup>135</sup> But the path to this vision runs through Constantinople, not against it. Independence, Ghica warns, would be a danger: Austria and Russia both want the Principalities' independence, the one hoping to make another Crimea, the other confident it can create another Cracow. Only the Ottoman framework prevents absorption.<sup>136</sup> Ghica's proposal includes a network of twenty well-placed Romanians with agents at Constantinople, London, Paris, Frankfurt, and among the Polish, Hungarian, Italian, and Serbian emigrant networks. This was, it should be noted, a realistic assessment of the movement's actual scale; as Alex Drace-Francis has shown, the active Romanian revolutionary intelligentsia in 1848 numbered

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Rosetti was, however, located in Paris at this time. Rosetti was part of the group of exiles who were more "radical" and advocated for the independence of the Principalities.

<sup>133</sup> I. Ghica to C.A. Rosetti, 12 March 1850, in Ghica, *Opere*, vol.VI, 149–55.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

much fewer than a hundred, and the exile community that Ghica was addressing was smaller still.<sup>137</sup>

A third letter, written four months after the Rosetti letter and addressed to the Wallachian Grigore Alexandrescu in Bucharest, reveals how Ghica's philo-Ottoman argument functioned when Ghica was trying to convince. Alexandrescu was a cautious personality, who was skeptical and also professionally involved in the Wallachian administration as secretary of the Senate. Here, Ghica argues that the revolution of 1848 did not fail, but dealt a decisive blow to Russian influence as even the formerly most pro-Russian boyars now had their eyes turned toward the Ottomans and to Western influence. Ghica is clear about their motives: "it is neither patriotism nor love of the good, but it is a great deal that people should know that Russia is not the strongest and that positions and honors will come from another direction."<sup>138</sup> It is a frank admission that self-interest was driving the realignment of these boyars, but this did not trouble Ghica.

The letter then lays out the practical conduct that a "good Wallachian" should follow. First, stick with Turkey and act according to the directions of the Ottomans. There would however be a temptation, Ghica warns, to be drawn toward Austria by the hope of union with Romanians in Transylvania and the Banat, but he worries that this could be accompanied by the danger of a German colonization and cultural absorption. On the other hand, "With Turkey, we have nothing to fear of all that: she has no colonists to send us, no language, no civilization to impose upon us. We would be left to our national genius."<sup>139</sup> Ghica also insisted on no popular uprisings, encouraging instead "absolute tranquility until the moment when we can clearly see the definitive consequences of 1848."<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture*, 139; Jianu, *A Circle of Friends*, 115–16, who estimates 150 individuals were exiled after 1848.

<sup>138</sup> I. Ghica to G. Alexandrescu, 20 July 1850, BAR: A3126, f. 331–334.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*



Figure Five — An 1866 cartoon satirizing Ghica (left), shown bowing to Sultan Abdulaziz (right)

The Alexandrescu letter builds the full argument for a cautious, domestically involved intellectual who could actually have direct influence in Bucharest. The danger, Ghica explains, comes from the radical party who “constantly flatter the base passions of the masses” and keep “spirits in a continual state of irritation,” which Russia will use as a pretext for reoccupation. The enemy of the national cause is premature action, while the correct path is patience within the Ottoman framework. Alexandrescu was apparently convinced: “I am convinced that our interest, as you say, is to keep ourselves attached to the empire.”<sup>141</sup>

Comparing these three letters is therefore very valuable. The political outline is consistent across all of them: Russia is the enemy, the Ottoman framework is the only viable path for Romanian nationalism, constitutional reform within Ottoman suzerainty is both achievable and safe, and the key to success lies in positioning within the European and Ottoman powers.

<sup>141</sup> Ghica, *Opere*, vol.IV, 783.

Between the letters, Ghica changes his exact expression of this outline. To Ahmed Vefik, Romanian nationalism is an asset for the empire. To Rosetti, the Ottomans are a tool for Romanian liberation. To Alexandrescu, it is a practical necessity to convince a wary man.

If Ghica's philo-Ottoman nationalism was adjusted for different audiences, his anti-Russian analysis was the one element of his political ideology that moved unchanged. To Ahmed Vefik, Russia had corrupted the Principalities for twenty years through its consulate and its client-princes. To Rosetti, Russia and Austria both desired Romanian independence as a prelude to absorption.<sup>142</sup> To Alexandrescu, Russian reoccupation was the specific danger that popular agitation would invite.<sup>143</sup> To Lajos Kossuth, the famous Hungarian revolutionary, only the nationality principle could prevent the gravitational pull toward Russia, since religion, the other available mass principle, "leads us straight into the arms of Russia, for this law of nature, the attraction of a mass toward a greater one, is found in politics as in physics."<sup>144</sup> To Ion Bălăceanu, pro-Russian boyars were blind men forging "the knife that Russia will soon place in the hands of" Romanian demagogues.<sup>145</sup> To the Romanian émigrés at Brusa, any political settlement that did not rest on "absolute respect for nationalities," as the Russians have refused to show, would be "ephemeral and incapable of serving as a guarantee of order and peace."<sup>146</sup>

Ghica argued that Russia's preponderance could only be addressed through counter-alliances: primarily Ottoman, but also British, French, or even a confederation of small nationalities. This was a position that drew on Czartoryski's vision of a Polish-Hungarian-Romanian-Ottoman front against Russian expansion, transmitted to Ghica through the Paris networks described in the previous chapter and reinforced by his collaboration

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<sup>142</sup> I. Ghica to C.A. Rosetti, 12 March 1850, in Ghica, *Opere*, vol.VI, 149–55.

<sup>143</sup> I. Ghica to G. Alexandrescu, 20 July 1850, BAR: A3126, f. 331–334.

<sup>144</sup> I. Ghica to Kossuth, 1850, Ghica, *Opere*, vol.VI, 75–76.

<sup>145</sup> I. Ghica to I. Bălăceanu, 1852, BAR: A3126, f.335–336.

<sup>146</sup> I. Ghica to Emigrantii Romani de la Brusa, 1849, BAR: S32/DCXIV.

with Urquhart.<sup>147</sup> It was also a position that happened to be correct about the immediate future: the Crimean War of 1853–1856 would be fought on exactly the anti-Russian partnership Ghica had been describing since 1850, and the post-war settlement would create the opening for the unification of the Principalities.

This was the political moment in which, as Roderic Davison has documented, the Ottoman Reform Edict of 1856 was being drafted in the same diplomatic circles Ghica inhabited — Canning, Thouvenel, and the Austrian diplomats meeting alongside Ali Pasha and Fuad Pasha to produce an edict that promised equality among all Ottoman subjects and a tentative step toward common citizenship.<sup>148</sup> Ghica’s philo-Ottomanism was a bet on a reform process that was actually underway, even if, as Davison shows, it was fiercely contested within the Ottoman governing class itself. Ghica was not arguing for loyalty to a stagnant empire but to a reforming one.

### **Ghica as Broker**

Ghica worked to translate the political theory laid out in these letters into practical action, and his correspondence reveals a figure who operated as intelligence-gatherer and intermediary, brokering the Romanian cause across the networks he inhabited.

In a February 1852 letter to Alexandrescu, Ghica gave specific practical advice. As the British embassy secretary Alison was about to visit Bucharest, Ghica wrote to Alexandrescu instructions: “To enlighten the Ottoman government and the English mission at Constantinople on the true interests and needs, the political and social needs that must absolutely be satisfied, of our country seems to me the most useful and most patriotic mission that a good Wallachian could impose upon himself.”<sup>149</sup> Patriotism, here, is lobbying the right imperial actors. Alexandrescu

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<sup>147</sup> On the Czartoryski connection, see Drace-Francis, *The Making*, 140n4.

<sup>148</sup> Davison, *Reform in*, 52–59.

<sup>149</sup> I. Ghica to G. Alexandrescu, 8 February 1852, BAR: S33(2)/DCXII.

should show Alison, beyond the circles of “corruption and exaggeration,” that “we still have some enlightened men, men of sound and practical ideas.”<sup>150</sup> Nonetheless, the visit ended up brief and somewhat anticlimactic: Alison only visited the Russian consul and General Mavros.<sup>151</sup>

This brokering role is moreover evident in his letters to his wife Alexandrina during the Moldovan elections crisis in 1857. These letters, which were chatty and domestic, including instructions for home renovations and the children’s health, also contained real-time diplomatic notes. On August 4th, Ghica described dining at Canning’s on a Friday evening when the ambassador was in a “murderous mood,” having just learned that Thouvenel had issued an ultimatum demanding the annulment of the Moldovan elections and ordered the French warship *Ajaccio* to take up position in case it was needed.<sup>152</sup> The Prussian, Piedmontese, and Russian ambassadors declared that they would follow the French lead. The Sultan would change his ministry to buy time. Ghica reported all of this from within this world, witnessing these events from Canning’s dining table. This intelligence would flow to his wider network of correspondents.

The language of the correspondence itself constitutes a form of evidence. Ghica wrote in French to all of his imperial interlocutors: Ahmed Vefik, Stratford Canning, Urquhart, Alison, Thouvenel, Cor, Bouet-Villaumez, Aupick; and in Romanian to his inner circle: C.A. Rosetti, Grigore Alexandrescu, Vasile Alecsandri, Ion Bălăceanu, Mihail Kogălniceanu. The Alexandrescu and Alecsandri correspondences are revealing because it moves between the two: some letters in French, others in Romanian, depending seemingly on whether the business at hand was diplomatic (French) or domestic (Romanian). Political content, however, moved across

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> General Mavros happened to be Ghica’s father-in-law, — Ghica, *Opere*, vol.IV, 782.

<sup>152</sup> IG to AG, 4 August 1857, in Ghica, *Opere*, vol. V, pp. 261.

this linguistic divide. The same analysis of Russian danger, the same case for Ottoman-framed autonomy, and the same intelligence about diplomatic affairs appears in both languages.<sup>153</sup>

At the same time, Ghica's position in Samos gave him something no other Romanian exile possessed: an Ottoman official credential. When Ghica wrote policy recommendations to Ottoman officials or constitutional proposals for the Principalities, he was not a theorist but a sitting Ottoman governor with practical experience of the problems he described. In this way, his title held significance: to Ottoman officials, it demonstrated administrative competence within their own system; to British and French diplomats, it confirmed Ghica's status as a serious figure rather than another émigré pamphleteer; and to Romanian correspondents, it was proof that the philo-Ottoman strategy could deliver real positions of authority. Yet, this credential also had limits. Writing to Alexandrescu in January 1857, Ghica reckoned candidly with the fact that the coalition of boyar families would never accept him as caimacam or prince of Wallachia. They understood, he wrote, that once he came to power the system of abuses would end: "every employee would be reduced to his lawful pay and the donkeys would no longer be the coachmen and the men, horses"<sup>154</sup> The principles he named, "abolition of abuses in the courts" and "replacement of incompetence with capacity" were the same as what he had enacted in Samos. This record was proof beyond mere words of what he would do, and it was this that made the boyars coalesce against him

Moreover, from Samos, Ghica maintained his correspondence network and continued to receive diplomatic intelligence through the Constantinople connections he had cultivated. When the Principalities' unification question intensified in 1858, he resigned the governorship and

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<sup>153</sup> The exile politics of 1849–1859 have been reconstructed by Jianu, *A Circle of Friends*, whose account centers on the radical wing. This thesis examines the complementary but distinct strategy of a figure like Ghica, who operated from within the Ottoman system rather than from the exile networks of Paris and London.

<sup>154</sup> I. Ghica to G. Alexandrescu, 6 January 1857: BAR: S33(4)/DCXII.

returned to Wallachia, carrying the authority of a man who had actually governed under Ottoman sovereignty. In September 1859, he wrote to Alecsandri with practical advice: change as few officials as possible and avoid a ministry of too radical a political ideology. It was quite similar to the advice in his letter to Alexandrescu in 1850. Yet Ghica also reported that he had witnessed a potential “massacre” averted by the spirit of nationality, and drew from this that nationalism was “the bridle with which one will be able to lead these people.”<sup>155</sup> Nationalism, here, is a tool for managing a volatile population. This was consistent with Ghica’s broader program: nationalism was not a “mystical communion” with the “volk” but a reality to be achieved through the right networks and in the right rhetoric.

### **Conclusion**

The Ion Ghica who arrived at Brăila in November 1858, decorated with the medal of the Mecidiye and arriving at “the capital of intrigue” with eight horses, was still the nationalist active in the tight circle of Romanian liberal intellectuals. The philo-Ottoman nationalism articulated in his letters to Ahmed Vefik, Rosetti, and Alexandrescu; the anti-Russian analysis that connected Constantinople to Paris to the exile communities at Brusa and London; the brokering that turned the Alexandrescu-Alison meeting into a patriotic mission; the administrative reputation earned at Samos; and the intelligence gathered at Canning’s dinner table during the elections crisis. All of this was the product of the imperial networks mapped in the previous chapter, now visible as the way through which Ghica espoused his form of nationalism.

This was, to be sure, a particular kind of nationalism — elite, cosmopolitan, and embedded in the Ottoman and European systems it sought to reshape. Ghica advocated for a nationalism of twenty well-placed agents and ardently opposed popular revolution. It coexisted with a vision of Romania as a state of nine million, stretching from the Dniester to Timișoara, a

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<sup>155</sup> I. Ghica to V. Alecsandri, 26 September 1859, Ghica, *Opere*, vol.IV, 520–21.

vision pursued through lobbying, constitutional proposals, and diplomatic positioning rather than popular uprisings. As Davison's account of this period makes clear, this strategy was a bet on a real reform process, one that was contested and uncertain but that offered, for the brief window of the 1850s, a plausible path to autonomy within the Ottoman framework. That the path ultimately led to independence rather than reformed suzerainty should not diminish the coherence of the strategy at the time it was formulated.

It is thus evident that Ion Ghica, throughout this exile and despite actively joining the ranks of the Ottoman state, did not simply put aside or forget the nationalist sentiment that had animated him in 1848 and before. Moreover, to simply characterize Ghica as a Romanian nationalist in exile during this time period would be a gross misdescription. Indeed, it was through these imperial networks, covered in Chapter Two, that he would push the nationalist policies of the future of the Romanian Principalities. It was in 1859, when he returned to Wallachia, that he expected he would finally enjoy the fruits of his labor.

## Conclusion

Upon Ghica's return to Wallachia in 1858, the sight of the country, he wrote, produced "a painful sensation."<sup>156</sup> A few weeks later, writing from Târgoviște, the pain had become disgust: corruption at every level of society, a veneer of diamonds and luxury covering "rottenness and misery," a political situation dominated by the prospect of Bibesco's return and the apparent impracticability of the Paris Convention.<sup>157</sup> "I suffer horribly," he told Alexandrina, "to see my poor country in this state."<sup>158</sup> He had been away for a decade, and he had governed an Aegean island, dined with ambassadors, received honors from the Sultan, and hunted pirates with French warships. And now, in a cold Wallachian December, the country for which all of it had ostensibly been done looked worse than he had feared.

And yet, within three months, Alexandru Ioan Cuza was elected prince in both Principalities. Ghica, writing to Alecsandri on 5 February 1859, declared the session of the Assembly "one of the happiest pages of our history" and announced that "the most difficult part is done."<sup>159</sup> By October, writing from Bucharest, the tone had shifted to a cautious excitement: "Our beautiful dream is almost realized."<sup>160</sup> The man who had written those despairing letters from Târgoviște was the same man who had spent the preceding decade building the networks, the credentials, and the political arguments that helped make this outcome possible. The question this thesis has tried to answer is how.

The answer, as traced across three chapters, runs against the dominant grain of Romanian nationalist historiography. Ghica's career between 1848 and 1859 reveals the porousness of the boundary between empire and nation in mid-nineteenth-century southeastern Europe. Romanian

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<sup>156</sup> IG to AG, 4 November 1858, in Ghica, *Opere*, vol. V, pp. 262–63.

<sup>157</sup> IG to AG, 7 December 1858, in Ghica, *Opere*, vol. V, pp. 264–65.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> I. Ghica to V. Alecsandri, 5 February 1859, Ghica, *Opere*, vol.IV, 519.

<sup>160</sup> I. Ghica to V. Alecsandri, 26 September 1859, Ghica, *Opere*, vol.IV, 520–21.

nationalism, as Ghica articulated and enacted it, was not built in opposition to the Ottoman imperial framework but through it.

The Samos governorship, examined in Chapter One, gave Ghica something no other Romanian exile possessed: professional administrative credentials earned inside the Ottoman system. The engineering formation he had acquired in Paris, the habit of quantifying, measuring, and making systems accessible, shaped an administrative practice built around fiscal transparency, institutional construction, and a rhetoric of civilization that spoke to both Ottoman ministers and European diplomats. The budget surplus, the crime statistics cited, and the Pythagorean gymnasium named for the island's most famous mathematician was the work of a governor who understood that his performance on Samos would be important to the people who mattered for Romania's future.

Those credentials, as Chapter Two showed, circulated through the trans-imperial social networks centered on Constantinople. Stratford Canning's embassy, Édouard Thouvenel's drawing room, and the Ottoman ministerial offices: Ghica inhabited all of these worlds, and his correspondence moved comfortably between them. The networks themselves were not national but imperial in structure. Access to British, French, and Ottoman power required the kind of social networks that Ghica had created across a decade of service and sociability. When the diplomatic crisis over the Moldavian elections erupted in the summer of 1857, Ghica was dining at Canning's on the very evening Thouvenel issued his ultimatum. He was at the table, literally, of the great-power politics that shaped Romania's future because the networks of the preceding years had placed him there.

Chapter Three traced the political vision that Ghica deployed through these networks: a philo-Ottoman nationalism that presented Romanian autonomy as compatible with, and even

beneficial to, Ottoman sovereignty, directed above all against Russian domination. Writing to Ahmed Vefik, he imagined Romanian patriots marching “at the vanguard of the Ottoman armies.”<sup>161</sup> The Ottoman Empire was the framework within which Romanian national development could most safely proceed, and the boundary between serving the empire and building the nation was, for Ghica, not a boundary at all.

What does this case tell us beyond Ghica himself? The dominant narrative of Romanian national history, from Xenopol and Iorga through Hitchins, Pop, and Bobango, treats the period between 1821 and 1859 as one of progressive liberation from Ottoman suzerainty. Ghica’s correspondence reveals a world in which that teleology had not yet been determined, and in which an intelligent, well-connected, and still patriotic Romanian could sincerely believe that the Ottoman framework was the best available vehicle to national development. Recent scholarship, such as Philliou on Ottoman governance and Zanou on transnational patriotism, has complicated the empire-to-nation teleology for similar cases.<sup>162</sup> This thesis has tried to do the same for the Romanian one, using a figure who sat at the intersection of these histories: an Ottoman governor who was also a Romanian nationalist, but also a Paris-trained engineer who governed an Aegean island.

But this thesis also complicates the counter-narrative of pure imperial persistence. Ghica was not a Phanariot dynast who happened to serve the empire and whose national commitments were merely nominal. He was an 1848 revolutionary who had risked his life for the Wallachian constitution, who had spent years in exile pressing the Romanian cause on anyone who would listen, and who would, from the moment of Cuza’s election, throw himself into the work of building the united Principalities. Ghica’s case is historically significant not because he chose

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<sup>161</sup> I. Ghica to Ahmed Vefik, 1851, BAR: A3126, f.240–244

<sup>162</sup> Philliou, *Biography of an Empire*; Zanou, *Transnational Patriotism*; Iordachi, *Liberalism, Constitutional Nationalism*.

empire over nation or nation over empire, but that for a sustained and consequential period, the two were not in opposition. The imperial structures enabled the national project; the national project, in turn, was articulated in terms that the imperial structures could accommodate. The porousness ran in both directions.

Nevertheless, this thesis has clear limitations. It relies overwhelmingly on Ghica's own correspondence, and the picture that emerges is therefore inevitably one-sided: we see the Ottoman imperial framework as Ghica perceived and narrated it, but we do not hear the voices of the Ottoman reformers themselves. Figures like Reşid Pasha, Ali Pasha, or Ahmed Vefik Pasha appear in these pages largely in their connection to Ghica rather than as actors with their own evolving conceptions of imperial reform and the place of the Principalities within the Ottoman Empire. A fuller account of this would need to reconstruct the other side of these conversations: how Ottoman statesmen understood and responded to the claims of figures like Ghica. That, however, is a different project, one that would require sustained work in Ottoman-language archives and a different set of priorities. The goal of this thesis has been more modest: to recover, from Ghica's own papers, a political trajectory that the dominant historiography has obscured, and to show that the boundary between empire and nation was, for at least one consequential actor, far more porous than the standard narrative allows.

“Our beautiful dream is almost realized,” Ghica wrote in September 1859, “if we conduct ourselves with prudence while maintaining a dignified and firm attitude and showing our teeth when necessary.”<sup>163</sup> Ghica's emphasis on prudence and dignity was a fair summary of the preceding decade. Understanding how figures like Ghica navigated between empire and nation with conviction and pragmatism is essential to understanding how the transition from empire to nation actually worked in nineteenth-century East-Central Europe. This boundary was a terrain

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<sup>163</sup> I. Ghica to V. Alecsandri, 26 September 1859, Ghica, *Opere*, vol.IV, 520–21.

to be traversed, and Ghica, for all his seeming contradictions and perhaps because of them,  
traversed it as well as anyone.

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### Appendix of Selected Letters

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## I — Ion Ghica to Alexandrina Ghica

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### Français

*Thérapie, le 21 novembre 1855*

Chère Mie,

Je suis depuis quatre jours à Thérapia. Cette fois-ci je suis logé à l'hôtel. Je vais à l'ambassade aux heures des repas pour causer avec l'ambassadeur. Le soir, il ne vient personne d'étranger, excepté Lady George Paget, charmante jeune femme qui habite Thérapia pour être plus près de la Crimée et pour causer par télégraphe avec le général, son époux. En attendant, le lord ambassadeur en perd la tête au point de rendre Mylady jalouse comme une chatte anglaise ; il y a même des scènes cocasses.

La grande préoccupation politique du moment c'est l'affaire Turr. Voici cette charmante histoire. J'ai connu ce jeune officier transylvain chez le général Klapka. Bel homme au possible, il a été admis il y a deux mois comme major dans le contingent turc et envoyé à Silistrie pour des fournitures ; de là, Ismaïl pacha a cru devoir l'envoyer à Bucarest pour la remonte des chevaux. Dès que le général Coronini a su sa présence en Valachie, il a envoyé un officier et deux soldats qui l'ont arrêté, l'ont dépouillé de l'uniforme anglais et l'ont expédié à Arad, sous le prétexte qu'en 1848 il aurait déserté le drapeau autrichien pour passer aux Hongrois. Colquhoun l'a réclamé, mais le général Coronini a répondu qu'il briserait son épée plutôt que de le rendre. Le télégraphe joue toute la journée pour cette affaire, ce qui n'a pas empêché le pauvre diable d'être pendu. Cette nouvelle n'est pas encore officielle, mais j'ai tout lieu de croire qu'à l'heure qu'il est, la sentence a été exécutée. Le lord est furieux.

Le soir, après avoir épuisé les différents chapitres de la question moldo-valaque, qu'on traite en ce moment pour avoir l'air de faire quelque chose plutôt que pour la résoudre réellement, nous nous mettons deux à deux à des tables de jeu. Je gagne toujours Lady Stratford au trictrac. Le lord, lui, a toujours la chance de se trouver à la même table que Lady George. Puis commence la musique, dans l'ordre suivant : Miss Catturian chante *Anniversary*, puis *Heart and Home*, puis un morceau de bravoure sur un magnifique piano neuf, tout cela dans le même ton et avec la raideur qui caractérise une jeune miss de six pieds. Suit le jeune Russell, nouvel attaché, assez beau garçon avec une agréable petite voix de ténor, chantant — tenez — *L'anello ti dono*, *Una furtiva lacrima*, *Di pescatore ignobile*, avec des paroles allemandes. Puis Lady Stratford avec Miss Canning jouent la *Prière de Moïse*, l'*Ouverture d'Egmont*, et le tout couronné par *La Dernière Pensée* de Weber, jouée par Mylady avec chaleur et toute la passion de son âme, les yeux tournés vers l'inflexible mari qui lance des flammes du côté de la jeune Lady George.

Hier, à table, il s'est passé une scène curieuse. Un des attachés a voulu tenter la cruelle beauté et a essayé de lui faire une déclaration à coups de pied. La jeune beauté, de l'air le plus calme, s'est adressée à lui et lui a dit : « Je vous prie, Monsieur X, de chasser ce petit singe qui s'est mis sur mon pied. Je n'aime pas cela. »

Je n'en finirais pas si je voulais vous mettre au courant de toutes les jolies histoires des jeunes Anglaises qui ont suivi leurs héros de maris.

On veut ici me faire prendre part à tout ce qui se fera pour les Principautés. J'en suis bien aise et très flatté, mais cela a l'inconvénient de me tenir séparé de toi plus longtemps que je ne le pensais. Je le disais hier à Lord Stratford, qui m'a dit : « Mais vous feriez bien de faire venir Madame Ghica. » Qu'en penses-tu ? Je verrai dimanche Aali pacha et je lui demanderai ce que je dois faire.

*Ton affectionné,*

Ion Ghica

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**English**

*Thérapia, 21 November 1855*

My darling,

I have been at Thérapia for four days now. This time I am lodged at the hotel. I go to the Embassy for meals, to talk with the Ambassador. In the evenings, no outside guests come, except Lady George Paget — a charming young woman who lives at Thérapia in order to be closer to the Crimea and to converse by telegraph with the General, her husband. In the meantime, the Ambassador is so bewitched by her that he has made Mylady jealous as an English cat; there are even some comical scenes.

The great political preoccupation of the moment is the Turr affair. Here is the charming story. I made the acquaintance of this young Transylvanian officer at General Klapka's. As handsome a man as one could wish, he was admitted two months ago as a major in the Turkish contingent and sent to Silistria for supplies; from there, Ismail Pasha saw fit to send him to Bucharest for the remounting of horses. As soon as General Coronini learned of his presence in Wallachia, he sent an officer and two soldiers who arrested him, stripped him of his British uniform, and dispatched him to Arad on the pretext that in 1848 he had deserted the Austrian flag to join the Hungarians. Colquhoun demanded him back, but General Coronini replied that he would sooner break his sword than surrender him. The telegraph has been busy all day on this affair, which has not prevented the poor devil from being hanged. This news is not yet official, but I have every reason to believe that by now the sentence has been carried out. The Lord is furious.

In the evenings, after exhausting the various chapters of the Moldo-Wallachian question, which is being treated at present in order to appear to be doing something rather than actually resolving it, we sit down two by two at card tables. I always beat Lady Stratford at backgammon. The Lord, for his part, always manages to find himself at the same table as Lady George. Then the music begins, in the following order: Miss Catturian sings *Anniversary*, then *Heart and Home*, then a bravura piece on a splendid new piano, all of it in the same key and with the rigidity that characterises a young Miss of six feet. Then comes young Russell, a new attaché, a handsome enough fellow with a pleasant little tenor voice, singing — what do you think — *L'anello ti dono, Una furtiva lacrima, Di pescatore ignobile*, with German words. Then Lady Stratford and Miss Canning play the *Prayer from Moses*, the *Egmont Overture*, and the whole crowned by Weber's *Last Thought*, played by Mylady with warmth and all the passion of her soul, her eyes turned toward the inflexible husband, who darts flames in the direction of young Lady George.

Yesterday at table, a curious scene took place. One of the attachés tried his luck with the cruel beauty and attempted to make a declaration to her by means of his foot. The young beauty, with the most serene air, turned to him and said: "I pray you, Monsieur X, to remove that little monkey that has placed itself on my foot. I do not like that."

I would never finish if I were to recount all the charming stories of the young English ladies who have followed their heroic husbands here.

People here wish to involve me in everything that will be done for the Principalities. I am very glad and very flattered, but it has the drawback of keeping me separated from you longer than I had supposed. I said as much to Lord Stratford yesterday, who replied: "But you would do

very well to send for Madame Ghica." What do you think? I shall see Aali Pasha on Sunday and ask him what I ought to do.

*Your affectionate,*  
Ion Ghica

## II — Ion Ghica to Alexandrina Ghica

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### Français

*Péra, le 3 janvier 1856*

Ma chère femme,

Avant-hier soir j'avais arrêté mon départ pour aujourd'hui ; j'en avais parlé à Lord Stratford, qui avait consenti, lorsque survint Fuad pacha, auquel je communiquais ma détermination, et qui me dit que ma nomination aurait lieu immédiatement. Ainsi, comme tu vois, nous pouvons considérer la chose comme faite. Lord Stratford m'a envoyé la lettre ci-jointe en guise de la tienne. Il faut savoir que je fais autorité dans la question des Principautés, que les deux ambassadeurs sont très contents de moi — en un mot, ma position est en ce moment excellente, et Dieu aidant, nous serons quelque chose par nous-mêmes.

Lundi soir j'ai fait le réveillon à l'ambassade de France. L'ambassadeur, qui est un homme tout à fait supérieur par l'esprit et le caractère, a été tout le temps charmant pour moi. Il s'est joint à Laurent, qui buvait avec moi à ta santé. Il faut que je te dise que Laurent est toute la journée avec nous — quand je dis nous, c'est Alecsandri, Negri et moi. Une fois la soirée terminée, nous sommes venus chez moi et, dans le salon de Negri, nous avons entamé un nouveau réveillon de buverie qui a duré jusqu'à quatre heures. Il y avait Cretzulesco, qui vient d'arriver, Baligot, Pietri, Tordex et Ralet. Laurent a chanté avec un talent digne du grand théâtre.

Mardi soir, grand bal chez Lord Stratford. Lady Canning était resplendissante de diamants. Lady George Paget resplendissante de beauté. Mademoiselle de Wildenbruck était charmante dans une mise simple et de bon goût ; elle était la seule jeune fille du bal — toutes les autres avaient l'air de femmes plus ou moins jeunes à la recherche d'un mari. Beaucoup d'uniformes rouges, beaucoup de Turcs. Je portais mes décorations.

Je suis disposé à être de très bonne humeur, mais tu ne sais pas comme cela me fait de la peine de ne pas passer les fêtes avec toi. Patience.

Je suis toujours sans lettres de toi. Souhaite la bonne année de ma part aux enfants ; fais-moi savoir si tu as reçu les joujoux, la cuisinière et les autres objets que je t'ai envoyés. Il y avait une paire de vases peints et un timbre pour toi.

Souhaite la bonne année à Gandon, à Monsieur Dorré et à tous les officiers de bord.

Mille baisers pour toi.

Ton affectionné,  
Ion Ghica

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### English

*Péra, 3 January 1856*

My dear wife,

The night before last I had fixed my departure for today; I had spoken of it to Lord Stratford, who had agreed, when Fuad Pasha arrived. I communicated my decision to him, and he told me my appointment would be made immediately. So, as you can see, we may consider the matter settled. Lord Stratford sent me the enclosed letter in lieu of yours. I should tell you that I now carry some authority in the question of the Principalities, that both ambassadors are very pleased with me — in a word, my position at this moment is excellent, and God willing, we shall be something by our own merits.

On Monday evening I spent New Year's Eve at the French Embassy. The Ambassador, a man altogether superior in intellect and character, was charming to me throughout. He joined Laurent, who was drinking your health along with me. I must tell you that Laurent is with us all day long — and when I say us, I mean Alecsandri, Negri, and myself. Once the evening at the Embassy was over, we came back to my rooms, and in Negri's salon we embarked on a fresh round of drinking that lasted until four in the morning. Present were Cretzulesco, who has just arrived, Baligot, Pietri, Tordex, and Ralet. Laurent sang with a talent worthy of a great theatre.

On Tuesday evening, a grand ball at Lord Stratford's. Lady Canning was resplendent in diamonds. Lady George Paget was resplendent in beauty. Mademoiselle de Wildenbruck was charming in a simple and tasteful gown; she was the only unmarried girl at the ball — all the others had the air of women more or less young, in search of a husband. Many red uniforms, many Turks. I wore my decorations.

I am in very good spirits, yet you cannot know how much it pains me not to spend the holidays with you. Patience.

I am still without letters from you. Wish the children a happy new year on my behalf; let me know whether you have received the toys, the cook, and the other objects I sent you. There was a pair of painted vases and a seal for you.

Wish a happy new year to Gandon, to Monsieur Dorré, and to all the ship's officers.

A thousand kisses for you.

Your affectionate,  
Ion Ghica

### III — Ion Ghica to Alexandrina Ghica

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#### Français

*Constantinople, le 7 février 1856*

Chère Mie,

Jeudi prochain j'espère partir, ou du moins t'annoncer officiellement ma nomination et te désigner le jour de mon départ. Calimachi a été ou sera nommé d'ici à la fin de cette semaine ambassadeur à Paris ; il doit partir lundi soir avec Aali pacha pour signer les préliminaires de paix à Paris. C'est l'*Ajaccio* qui doit les porter jusqu'à Marseille. Laurent est aux anges. [...]

Le carnaval est fini. Le bal de jeudi à l'ambassade anglaise était magnifique. Lady Stratford a su faire une réception royale au sultan, qui est arrivé à huit heures et demie et s'est retiré à dix heures ; on lui a présenté Mme Bazaine et quelques autres péronnelles. Le sultan avait l'air assez ennuyé ; il a pris une limonade, un biscuit, et s'est esquivé. Une fois ce premier pas fait, il a dû assister au bal de M. Thouvenel ; il y est arrivé à sept heures et demie et s'est retiré à neuf heures et demie. À l'ambassade de France, on s'apercevait bien de l'absence d'un artiste capable de mettre les bougies en ordre à leur place. C'était moins bien qu'au palais d'Angleterre, mais on a fait plus d'honneurs militaires, davantage de troupes, et la cour a été très bien éclairée au moment du départ du sultan. Lorsque je serai avec toi, ce que j'espère ne tardera plus, je te raconterai toutes les toilettes de ces différents bals.

Embrasse les enfants.

*Ton affectionné,*

Ion Ghica

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#### English

*Constantinople, 7 February 1856*

My darling,

I hope to depart next Thursday, or at least to announce my appointment to you officially and to name the day of my departure. Calimachi has been, or will before the end of this week be, appointed ambassador to Paris; he is to leave on Monday evening with Aali Pasha to sign the peace preliminaries in Paris. It is the *Ajaccio* that is to carry them as far as Marseille. Laurent is overjoyed. [...]

Carnival is over. Thursday's ball at the English Embassy was magnificent. Lady Stratford contrived a royal reception for the Sultan, who arrived at half past eight and withdrew at ten; Madame Bazaine and a few other ladies of no great distinction were presented to him. The Sultan appeared rather bored; he took a lemonade and a biscuit, and slipped away. That first step taken, he was obliged to attend Monsieur Thouvenel's ball as well; he arrived there at half past seven and withdrew at half past nine. At the French Embassy one very much felt the absence of a skilled hand to arrange the candles properly. It was less fine than at the English palace, but there were greater military honours — more troops — and the courtyard was very well lit when the Sultan departed. When I am with you, which I hope will not be long now, I shall describe to you all the gowns at these various balls.

Kiss the children.

*Your affectionate,*

Ion Ghica

#### IV — Stratford Canning to Ion Ghica

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##### Français

*Constantinople, le 5 avril 1855*

À Son Excellence le Prince Ghika, Samos

Mon cher Monsieur Ghika,

Il ne fallait que mon long silence envers vous pour donner la mesure des ennuis qu'une position entourée d'embarras et d'exigences ne cesse de m'imposer depuis quelque temps. La dernière lettre que vous avez bien voulu m'adresser reste constamment sous mes yeux sans que je puisse trouver le loisir nécessaire pour y répondre de la manière que vous méritez de ma part.

À présent même que je me voue à l'exécution de ce devoir, je crains que quelque chose ne survienne pour le faire suspendre encore une fois — et cette appréhension m'engage à perdre de vue les détails pour ne pas exposer l'ensemble à trop de risque.

Soyez bien persuadé que, malgré les lacunes de ma correspondance, je n'ai pas manqué de prendre un intérêt constant à vos travaux, d'en suivre le cours avec satisfaction, et de faire ce qui dépendait de moi pour rendre apparent aux ministres de la Porte — et surtout à Rechid Pacha — l'estime que je fais de vos principes et de vos succès.

Il n'est pourtant que juste d'avouer que vous n'aurez pas besoin de mes éloges. Vos rapports et les résultats de votre système administratif n'ont pas été méconnus par ceux qui sont appelés d'office à en prendre connaissance ; et si j'ai eu le devoir d'y ajouter mon suffrage, c'était plutôt pour m'associer au crédit de votre réussite que pour vous donner un appui dont vous n'aviez pas besoin.

La satisfaction que m'en a exprimée Rechid Pacha, les avis qui me parviennent de M. Mare, et l'absence de toute plainte de la part de vos administrés, concourent à me fixer dans la conviction qu'en recommandant votre nomination à Samos, j'ai fait également une bonne œuvre pour la Porte et pour l'île.

Ce ne sont pas là des phrases. J'ai vu les résultats positifs de votre administration — juste, loyale, éclairée — tels que je les entends, c'est-à-dire : le rétablissement du bon ordre, l'éloignement des brigands, la répression de la piraterie, la mise en équilibre des revenus et des dépenses publiques, et le maintien de la loi sans corruption et sans arbitraire.

Après avoir donné de si bonnes preuves de vos principes ainsi que de votre savoir-faire dans leur application, vous n'avez fait que ce qui était fort raisonnable en témoignant le désir de vous éloigner pour quelque temps de l'île avec la permission de la Porte. J'en parlai dans le temps à Rechid Pacha et je le trouvai parfaitement bien disposé.

Ce qui arrêta la chose à une simple déclaration de bon vouloir, c'est d'abord que vous ne désiriez pas un congé avant le printemps, et ensuite que vos amis ici annoncèrent de votre part l'abandon de cette première intention et sa remise à une autre époque.

Plus tard, je me suis adressé à Rechid Pacha pour l'engager à vous donner quelque témoignage de satisfaction de la part de Sa Majesté le Sultan. Son Altesse n'a pas hésité à me promettre que la décoration de l'ordre impérial du Nichan-Mechidié vous serait accordée.

Restait à savoir de quelle classe la décoration devait être. On parlait de la quatrième, d'après le règlement ; moi j'insistais pour la troisième, comme plus honorable pour vous et plus digne de vos services. C'est à quoi on s'est finalement arrêté, et M. Visan m'assure qu'on prépare la décoration et le diplôme.

En attendant, je serai bien aise d'avoir un aperçu de votre situation actuelle et de votre avenir envisagé par rapport à vos moyens de maintenir sans secousse le bon ordre local que vous

avez conquis, et d'ouvrir à vos insulaires la perspective d'améliorer leur condition matérielle sans avoir recours au crime et à la corruption.

La rentrée dans l'ordre de la Grèce hellénique et la mort du malheureux Grand Homme que la Russie vient de perdre pourraient avoir une certaine influence sur les Samiens.

Je vous prie de me rappeler au bon souvenir de Madame Ghika, et d'agréer l'expression très sincère de mon estime et de la plus parfaite amitié.

*Stratford de Redcliffe*

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**English**

*Constantinople, 5 April 1855*

To His Excellency Prince Ghika, Samos

My dear Monsieur Ghika,

It required only my long silence toward you to convey the measure of the vexations that a position beset with difficulties and demands has not ceased to impose upon me of late. Your last letter has been constantly before my eyes, yet I have been unable to find the leisure necessary to reply to it in the manner you deserve from me.

Even now that I am devoting myself to the discharge of that duty, I fear that something may arise to interrupt it once more — and this apprehension leads me to pass over the details so as not to put the whole at too great a risk.

Be well assured that, despite the gaps in my correspondence, I have not failed to take a constant interest in your labours, to follow their course with satisfaction, and to do what lay within my power to make apparent to the ministers of the Porte and especially to Rechid Pasha my appreciation of your principles and your successes.

Yet it is only fair to acknowledge that you will have no need of my praises. Your reports and the results of your administrative system have not gone unrecognised by those whose official duty it is to take note of them; and if I had an obligation to add my voice, it was rather to associate myself with the credit of your achievement than to furnish a support you did not require.

The satisfaction expressed to me by Rechid Pasha, the reports that reach me from Monsieur Mare, and the absence of any complaint from your subjects, all combine to fix me in the conviction that in recommending your appointment to Samos, I did good service equally to the Porte and to the island.

These are not mere phrases. I have seen the positive results of your administration, just, loyal, enlightened, as I understand such a thing: the restoration of good order, the removal of brigands, the suppression of piracy, the balancing of public revenues and expenditures, and the maintenance of the law without corruption and without arbitrariness.

Having given such good proof of your principles and of your skill in applying them, you did nothing but what was very reasonable in expressing the desire to absent yourself for some time from the island, with the Porte's permission. I spoke of it in due course to Rechid Pasha and found him perfectly well disposed.

What reduced the matter to a mere declaration of goodwill was, first, that you did not wish for leave before the spring, and then that your friends here announced on your behalf the abandonment of this first intention and its postponement to another occasion.

Afterwards, I approached Rechid Pasha to urge him to give you some mark of satisfaction on behalf of His Majesty the Sultan. His Highness did not hesitate to promise me that the decoration of the Imperial Order of the Mecidiye would be conferred upon you.

It remained to determine the class of the decoration. There was talk of the fourth, according to the regulations; I myself pressed for the third, as more honourable for you and more commensurate with your services. That is what was finally decided upon, and Monsieur Visan assures me that the decoration and the diploma are being prepared.

In the meantime, I should be very pleased to have an account of your present situation and of your prospects with regard to your means of maintaining without disturbance the good local order you have established, and of opening to your islanders the prospect of improving their material condition without recourse to crime and corruption.

The return to order of Hellenic Greece, and the death of the unfortunate Great Man whom Russia has just lost, might well have some influence upon the Samians.

I beg you to present my respects to Madame Ghika, and to accept the very sincere expression of my esteem and most perfect friendship.

*Stratford de Redcliffe*

## V — Ion Ghica to Ahmed Wefik

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### Français

*Constantinople, 1851*

J'ai reçu votre charmante lettre et vous remercie mille fois pour l'intérêt que vous me témoignez. Quoique peu mérité, j'en suis tout fier, si fier que je ne puis m'empêcher de prendre un ton tout doctoral et sentencieux en commençant, comme tous les grands publicistes, pour le moins depuis le déluge.

Depuis vingt ans, la conduite des princes, des boyards et du consulat de Russie faisait que le pays avait jeté ses espérances complètement en dehors de la sphère d'action de ce polype dont les mandibules étaient mises en mouvement par des instructions émanées de Saint-Pétersbourg. Tout ce qu'il y avait encore de bon et d'intelligent dans le pays portait ses regards du côté de Constantinople, malgré que les Principautés étaient devenues quelque chose d'indéfini et d'oublié pour la Porte, que notre génération ne connaissait que par tradition et par quelques firmans tout à fait contraires aux droits du pays et aux intérêts de l'Empire. Mais il n'y a rien de tel que l'instinct de conservation d'un peuple pour deviner le côté d'où peut lui venir le salut.

Ces dernières années, le mal était si grand et la mesure si pleine que l'explosion n'attendait qu'une occasion. Après tant de nuances, on ne se posait plus que le problème de savoir comment chacun s'en emparerait pour son compte. Le prince voyait le moyen de se faire un titre à la reconnaissance de la Porte en s'en rendant maître ; il n'aurait pas manqué de représenter toute action comme hostile à l'Empire ; il voyait au bout d'un soulèvement étouffé par lui le moyen de se perpétuer au pouvoir par l'hérédité.

Les boyards à leur tour y voyaient un changement de personnel gouvernemental, et quelques-uns l'espoir d'arriver à la place suprême. La Russie elle-même y trouvait son intérêt, car elle pouvait ainsi motiver une occupation qui lui donnât le moyen d'agir, soit sur l'Autriche, comme elle l'a fait en Hongrie, soit sur la Turquie, comme elle espère encore le faire. Les Valaques qui mettaient le salut du pays dans une solidarité avec le reste de l'Empire espéraient eux aussi pouvoir dominer le mouvement et lui donner la direction qui leur convenait. De sorte que gouvernement, particuliers et influence étrangère, tous ont poussé au mouvement et, loin de chercher à l'arrêter, s'en sont tous rendus coupables. On peut le dire : tout le monde était dans la conspiration.

Le prince et les boyards auraient perdu à ce jeu, et la Russie aurait été matée incontestablement du premier coup, si la Turquie avait voulu profiter de la circonstance et si elle avait pu alors avoir de la confiance dans les hommes et les choses ; en Europe, les faits ultérieurs ont donné en quelque sorte raison à cette défiance. Jusqu'ici l'avantage est resté en apparence à la Russie et aux boyards, mais je soutiens — et la suite le prouvera — que l'avantage réel sera au pays et à la Porte, à moins de fautes impardonnables. Malheureusement, je ne suis pas sans inquiétude de ce côté : nous en avons souvent été victimes des négligences de la Porte.

Il y a vingt-sept mois, on a purgé le pays des hommes qui avaient visé un peu plus haut que les boyards et le prince. On a mis de côté ceux des Valaques qui s'étaient permis d'aspirer à changer la situation politique et à faire rentrer le pays dans l'état normal et légal. Les affaires ont été remises entre les mains de la faction russe.

Je passe par-dessus les deux dernières années pour arriver à ce qu'il en est aujourd'hui et à ce qui peut en être dans l'avenir.

En Moldavie, un prince intelligent, intègre, d'un passé irréprochable, chevaleresque même, suppléant facilement à un manque d'énergie par un grand désir de faire le bien. Malgré sa

phanariotomanie qui lui passera, j'en suis certain, on peut hardiment lui confier le pays sans crainte. La Valachie n'a pas été aussi bien partagée. Aujourd'hui, par un hasard providentiel, on empêche presque tout le mal qui aurait pu être fait, et même je dirai qu'il se fait presque bien. Sans vous flatter, vous en êtes la cause. Je puis vous le dire d'autant plus librement que c'est là l'opinion générale, soit dans le pays, soit au dehors. Et on ne peut abandonner le pays à lui-même sans de graves inconvénients. Car la position que la Porte a prise et son attitude très digne à l'égard de l'état des pays tiennent à l'homme. S'il disparaît de la scène, tout retombe dans l'ancien tourbillon, le prince de Valachie retourne à ses premières amours. Mais un jour ou l'autre, soit que vous ne puissiez plus longtemps vous résigner à cette position fatigante et désagréable, soit que vous soyez appelé à une position plus élevée ou à une mission plus importante, soit enfin que la Russie transige pour se débarrasser de votre présence et que la Porte accepte des avantages apparents qu'on ne manquera pas de lui faire un jour ou l'autre, vous serez à Constantinople, à Paris ou à Londres.

Alors, que devient la question des Principautés ? Il faut donc aviser à un moyen pour que tant d'efforts et tant de sacrifices ne soient perdus ni pour le pays ni pour la Porte, que l'un ne soit de nouveau compromis et que l'autre ne perde une position avantageuse. Il est impossible que vous n'ayez pensé à quelque chose de stable et de fixe, à une constitution. Si la Russie s'y oppose, il faut que le pays sache ce que vous voulez ; d'ailleurs la Russie sera obligée de céder, comme dans la question des quarantaines, comme dans toutes les questions, lorsqu'on veut fortement et dignement. La querelle des Allemands est une occasion très favorable pour la Porte d'imposer ses conditions, et si l'on juge le moment opportun, tout chétifs que nous en avons l'air, nous saurons entraîner le pays. Et quoi qu'en disent mes compatriotes de Paris, je puis leur assurer que ce n'est pas avec des phrases creuses et mystiques que l'on mène un peuple ; on peut tout au plus l'agiter. Si Dieu le veut, à l'avant-garde des armées ottomanes nous reprendrons tôt ou tard ce que nous avons perdu depuis un siècle. Vous trouverez ces idées *in extenso* dans le mémoire ci-joint de M. Urquhart. Ce mémoire a été remis au ministre, et il compte le remettre au sultan lui-même. Je compte rédiger un règlement organique sur les bases posées dans cet écrit. Si vous en approuvez les principes qui y sont indiqués, je vous transmettrai les chapitres au fur et à mesure que je les aurai terminés. Toutefois, avant de commencer ce travail, j'attendrai vos observations.

Le second mémoire est de votre serviteur ; je l'ai fait à la demande de Son Excellence, qui m'a dit un jour que le gouvernement russe manquait de délicatesse et que l'occupation russe était déloyale. Je viens de recevoir en ce moment vos reproches. M. Noguez m'a remis votre lettre très tard et je ne l'avais pas encore reçue lorsque je vous ai envoyé le mémoire de M. Poujade. Si je n'ai pas répondu plus tôt, la faute en est au mémoire en question, car j'ai dû attendre que l'auteur y ait mis la dernière main.

M. Urquhart voit actuellement beaucoup le Grand Vizir et Aali pacha, il voit plus souvent M. Vogoridès, mais aussi il sait à quoi s'en tenir sur le compte de ce faiseur, et surtout dans la question des Principautés, il comprend qu'il ne doit souffler mot devant lui.

Urquhart a son portefeuille rempli de projets, entre autres le canal de Küstendce, l'abolition du port et un entrepôt de blés à Kadıköy, un moulin à vapeur à Hasköy. Et — à propos de projets — j'aurai quelque argent produit de la vente d'une forêt ; je compte entreprendre une exploitation agricole dans la Dobrogea ; à cet effet j'aurais désiré avoir votre avis et savoir si vous croyez que je puisse sans inconvénients m'adresser au gouvernement pour lui demander une concession de terrain avec l'engagement de tenir une école d'agriculture.

Vous savez sans doute comment et pourquoi Czaïka est remplacé ici par M. Kostielski. Le général La Hitte avait il y a quelque temps répondu à M. Kisselev que le gouvernement français s'empresserait de retirer sa protection à Czaïka dès que le différend avec l'Angleterre serait arrangé. Aussi on n'a pas manqué de satisfaire à la promesse : aujourd'hui il est Mohamed Sadyk efendi. Cette détermination de sa part fait grand bruit dans le monde diplomatique et ne manquera pas de devenir l'objet de quelques notes de la part de M. Titov, quoique le droit de la Porte soit incontestable et bien déterminé. L'ambassadeur ne le voit pas, mais ne le contrarie pas dans ses démarches ; il n'est pas très content aujourd'hui du ministère de la Porte — on dit qu'il s'exprime assez ouvertement.

Les officiers polonais ont reçu 4 000 piastres chacun et la plupart sont déjà partis par Malte. Les Hongrois seront aussi rétribués ces jours-ci à raison de mille piastres par tête et s'embarqueront pour Liverpool.

Madame Ghica me charge de vous remercier pour le bon souvenir que vous lui conservez et de vous dire qu'elle suivra en tout vos conseils comme sincères et salutaires.

## English

*Constantinople, 1851*

I have received your charming letter and thank you a thousand times for the interest you show me. Little as it is deserved, I am all the prouder for it — so proud that I cannot refrain from adopting a thoroughly doctoral and sententious tone as I begin, like all the great publicists since at least the Flood.

For twenty years, the conduct of the princes, the boyars, and the Russian consulate had caused the country to cast its hopes entirely beyond the sphere of action of that polyp whose mandibles were set in motion by instructions emanating from Saint Petersburg. All that was still good and intelligent in the country looked toward Constantinople, even though the Principalities had become something undefined and forgotten for the Porte — a relationship our generation knew only through tradition and through a few firmans utterly contrary to the rights of the country and the interests of the Empire. But there is nothing like the instinct of self-preservation of a people for divining whence its salvation may come.

In recent years, the evil was so great and the measure so full that the explosion awaited only an occasion. After so many nuances, the only question being posed was how each party would seize matters for its own account. The prince saw in it the means of earning a claim on the Porte's gratitude by making himself master of the movement; he would not have failed to represent any action as hostile to the Empire; he saw at the end of a rising suppressed by him the means of perpetuating himself in power through hereditary right.

The boyars in turn saw in it a change of governing personnel, and some of them the hope of reaching the highest position. Russia itself found its interest there, for it could thus justify an occupation that would give it the means of acting, either against Austria, as it did in Hungary, or against Turkey, as it still hopes to do. The Wallachians who placed the salvation of the country in solidarity with the rest of the Empire hoped as well to be able to dominate the movement and give it the direction that suited them. So that government, private individuals, and foreign influence all pushed the movement forward, and far from seeking to arrest it, all made themselves guilty of it. One may say: everyone was in the conspiracy.

The prince and the boyars would have lost at this game, and Russia would have been checked incontestably at the first blow, had Turkey been willing to seize the opportunity and had it then been able to have confidence in the men and the situation. In Europe, subsequent events

have in some measure borne out that distrust. Until now the advantage has remained in appearance with Russia and the boyars, but I maintain — and what follows will prove it — that the real advantage will be with the country and the Porte, barring unforgivable errors. Unfortunately I am not without anxiety on this score: we have all too often been victims of the Porte's negligences.

Twenty-seven months ago, the country was purged of the men who had aimed a little higher than the boyars and the prince. Those Wallachians who had allowed themselves to aspire to changing the political situation and bringing the country back to its normal, legal condition were set aside. Affairs were handed back to the Russian faction.

I pass over the last two years to come to what the situation is today and what it may become in the future.

In Moldavia, an intelligent, upright prince, of an irreproachable past, chivalrous even, easily compensating for a lack of energy by a great desire to do good. Despite his phanariotophilia, which will pass, I am certain — one may boldly entrust the country to him without fear. Wallachia has not been so well served. Today, by a providential chance, almost all the evil that might have been done is being prevented, and I would even say that almost good is being done. Without flattering you, you are the reason for it. I can say so all the more freely in that it is the general opinion, at home and abroad. And one cannot abandon the country to itself without grave consequences. For the position the Porte has adopted and its very dignified attitude toward the condition of the countries depend on the man. If he disappears from the scene, everything falls back into the old whirlpool, and the prince of Wallachia returns to his first loves. But sooner or later — whether you can no longer resign yourself to this tiring and disagreeable position, or whether you are called to a higher position or a more important mission, or finally whether Russia makes terms in order to rid itself of your presence and the Porte accepts the apparent advantages that will not fail to be offered to it one day or another — you will be in Constantinople, in Paris, or in London.

Then what becomes of the question of the Principalities? One must therefore consider a means by which so many efforts and so many sacrifices should be lost neither for the country nor for the Porte, that the one should not again be compromised and the other should not lose an advantageous position. It is impossible that you have not thought of something stable and fixed — a constitution. If Russia opposes it, the country must know what you want; besides, Russia will be forced to yield, as in the quarantine question, as in every question, when one wills firmly and with dignity. The German quarrel is a very favourable occasion for the Porte to impose its conditions, and if the moment is judged opportune, slight as we may appear, we shall know how to carry the country along. And whatever my compatriots in Paris may say, I can assure them that it is not with hollow and mystical phrases that one leads a people; one can at most agitate it. God willing, at the vanguard of the Ottoman armies we shall sooner or later reclaim what we have lost over the past century. You will find these ideas *in extenso* in the accompanying memorandum of Monsieur Urquhart. This memorandum has been submitted to the minister, and he intends to submit it to the Sultan himself. I intend to draft an organic regulation on the bases laid out in this document. If you approve the principles indicated therein, I will transmit the chapters to you as I complete them. Before beginning this work, however, I shall await your observations.

The second memorandum is by your servant; I wrote it at His Excellency's request, he having told me one day that the Russian government lacked delicacy and that the Russian occupation was disloyal. I have just received your reproaches. Monsieur Noguez delivered your letter very late, and I had not yet received it when I sent you Monsieur Poujade's memorandum.

If I have not replied sooner, the fault lies with the memorandum in question, as I had to wait for the author to put the finishing touches to it.

Monsieur Urquhart is at present seeing a great deal of the Grand Vizier and Aali Pasha; he sees Monsieur Vogorides more often, but he also knows what to think of that schemer, and above all in the question of the Principalities he understands that he must not breathe a word before him.

Urquhart has his portfolio full of projects: among others, the Küstendce canal, the abolition of the port and a grain entrepôt at Kadıköy, a steam mill at Hasköy. And — on the subject of projects — I am to receive some money from the sale of a forest; I intend to undertake an agricultural venture in the Dobrogea, and to that end I should have liked your advice and to know whether you think I can without inconvenience approach the government to ask for a land concession with the undertaking to maintain an agricultural school.

You doubtless know how and why Czaïka has been replaced here by Monsieur Kostielski. Some time ago, General La Hitte had replied to Monsieur Kisselev that the French government would hasten to withdraw its protection from Czaïka as soon as the dispute with England was settled. The promise has duly been fulfilled: today he is Mohamed Sadyk Efendi. This determination on his part is causing a great stir in the diplomatic world and will not fail to become the subject of several notes on the part of Monsieur Titov, although the Porte's right is incontestable and well established. The ambassador does not receive him, but does not obstruct his endeavours; he is not very pleased with the Porte's ministry today — it is said that he expresses himself rather openly.

The Polish officers have each received 4,000 piastres and most have already left by Malta. The Hungarians will also be compensated these coming days at the rate of a thousand piastres a head and will embark for Liverpool.

Madame Ghica asks me to thank you for the kind remembrance you preserve of her, and to tell you that she will follow your advice in all things, as sincere and salutary.

## VI — Ion Ghica to C. A. Rosetti

**Română**

*Constantinopol, 12/24 martie 1850*

Frate Ruset,

Să-ți trăiască Ion, și de n-oi putea să viu să-l țin în brațe, apoi când s-o face mare, îi voi da cal și arme de bătalie, cărți și condei ca să-și lumineze nația, de va fi liberă. Spune mă-sii că-i urez fericirea d-a-l vedea în primejdii pentru patria lui adoptivă. C-ai scos burletu de la capul fetitii, bine ai făcut ; și bine ai face încă să nu crezi că eu port cialma, sau că m-am băgat la stăpîn ; numai locotenența nu poate trăi fără stăpîn și slujașete totdeauna în condiții proaste și degradatoare ; să bagă la stăpîn, căci, ca în trecut, nu are, nici nu va avea vreodată credință. Slugi bune și credincioase ale absolutismului și ale opresiei și ale corupției, puteau ei să fie dătători de libertate ? Acum i-ai însemnat în frunte cu un fier ars, și semnul nădăjduiesc că rumânii îl vor vedea întotdeauna. Dar să lăsăm pe păcătoșii nepocăiți.

Eu cred în politica turcească și aș vrea să mă rezem pe dînsa, căci avem trebuință de un punct de reazăm. Arhimede zicea : „*Dați-mi un punct de reazăm...*” Negreșit că dacă învățatul siracuzan ar fi găsit punctul ce căuta în fundul vreunui fes, s-ar fi grăbit a-l întrebuița și pămîntul s-ar fi mișcat poate d-atunci. Tu vezi că noi nu avem norocirea d-a fi făcut destul, ca diplomația Europeii să ne bage în seamă pentru noi numai, și nu ne ascultă decît dacă ne înfățișăm sub formă turcească. Capriciu sau calcul politic al guvernelor, trebuie să ne înclinăm necesității, ca să putem dobîndi o acțiune spre scopul dorit, care este o Românie de nouă milioane din Nistru pînă-n Temeșvar.

Dar să zică unii că sunt ambițios și că nu lucrez decît pentru ca să fiu domn sau prezident : atît mai bine ; cine nu este ambițios nu este om. Și de ce să nu lucrez a mă face capul neamului, dacă eu mă știu bun ? Urez țării mele de a fi guvernată într-o zi de un om ca mine. Dorința mea este o Românie de nouă milioane ; aceasta nu este un vis de azi. Bălcescu îți poate spune că la 1848, cînd a venit el aici ca deputat, după ce i s-a declarat de însuși Fuad efendi, lămurit și fără înșălătorie, drumul politic ce era tras comisarului împărătesc, ideea mea a fost să ne facem datoria, să ne ținem de programă, să ne batem — *fais ce que tu dois, arrive que pourra*. Cel dintîi succes era al nostru, nu este îndoială ; atunci, de vedeam că turcii persistă în sistemă de silă, ceea ce nu cred, să fi proclamat un imperiu rumân cu un vicar ; de cădeam, rămînea un precedent istoric, un monument, un steag strănepoților noștri, pe care poate că ei l-ar fi știut face să triumfe. Ideea pare nesocotită și nebunească, dar cînd mă gîndesc la probabilitățile de izbîndă ce am fi avut, îmi vine turbare de necaz.

Să lăsăm trecutul și să vorbim de viitor, să venim la mijloacele ce am putea întrebuița ca să ajungem la scopul nostru ; dar trebuie mai întîi să considerăm puțin starea Europei și împrejurările ei politice.

La 1848, popoarele au făcut o opinteală mare și nu cred că gloatele să fie în stare a se mișca mult timp. Revoluțiile n-au izbutit, fiindcă nu era o idee îndreptătoare, lipsa principiul acela care să se poată face general și să electrizeze deodată ; și pînă acum încă, acea idee, acel principiu nu le văd nicăieri. Cu toată deziluziunea mea asupra francezilor, cu toată decadența lor morală, dar tot d-acolo poate să iasă într-o zi acea făclie care să lumineze omenirea în haosul în care s-a cufundat și să-i arate a pune piatra edificiului social. Ideea generalizătoare a lipsit și de aceea am văzut revoluțiile luînd deosebite forme după popoarele la care se întindea : democratică și socială în Franța, a ajuns națională și de neatîrnare în Posen și în Ungaria. Lehi și maghiarii voiau a fi lehi, maghiari mai-nainte de a fi cetățeni ; revoluția a avut două forme, două idei care

s-au neutralizat și s-au luptat între dînsele. Acele idei combinate și aliate ar fi putut dezrobi Europa și realiza toate dorințele liberalilor.

Numai printr-o confederație generală a tuturor puteau izbuti popoarele. Numai sistemul de state unite ale Europei după modelul Statelor Unite ale Americii putea scăpa Europa de naufragiu.

Votul universal pe care îl arătau democrații Franței ca o panacee universală — deși nu sunt dintr-acei ce profită de trista experiență a Franței — tot socot că votul universal nu poate avea efectele sale decît după petrecerea a cîtorva generații. Trebuie să treacă una pînă ce Camera va deschide ochii că trebuie o altă sistemă de învățătură pentru a pregăti pe fiecare a se face bun alegător. De aci încolo cîteva generații pentru formarea cetățenilor și a reprezentanților ; și numai atunci poate că va pricepe acest neam că nu poate fi fericit și liber decît numai cînd și celelalte neamuri ale continentului vor fi libere.

Principiul național singur duce la o luptă crudă între naționalitățile cele apăsate și cele obișnuite a domina ; o luptă lungă și fără nici un folos pentru civilizație.

Cu unul numai din aceste principii, sau cu amîndouă dezbinat, izbînda este a absolutismului ; numai cu alianța amîndurora ideilor se poate izbuti și conjura primejdia.

Eu nu cred că popoarele au dat cea din urmă bătaie ; dar cred că trebuie cîtva timp pînă se va propaga ideea roditoare și pînă cînd va străbate ; pînă atunci orice întreprindere nesocotită sau intempestivă va fi în folosul absolutismului și al opresiei.

Pînă cînd se va propaga ideea, pînă cînd se vor pregăti popoarele printr-o înțelegere generală, nu vād alt mijloc de a salva naționalitatea noastră, o singură speranță pentru conservarea noastră, decît în sistemul echilibrului puterilor celor mari. Deocamdată este singura scînteie de lumină ce zăresc, mă iau după dînsa ; pentru noi nu este numai chestiunea de a dobîndi, ci încă de a nu pierde și ceea ce avem. Ar fi un mare punct cîștigat pentru naționalitatea rumânilor dacă am putea dobîndi unirea Principatelor ; independența acum ar fi o primejdie. Austria și Rusia o doresc : una cu nădejdea de a face peste vreo zece ani o altă Crimee, și cealaltă încredințată că va putea face o nouă Cracovie. Tu nu vei ca noi să fim pîrghiul Orientului ; poate că de ți-aș fi zis să facem Orientul pîrghiul naționalității noastre, amorul propriu și egoismul tău nu s-ar fi revoltat și nu am avea sfadă.

Iată cum înțeleg lucrurile astăzi : absolutismul a cîștigat cea dintîi bătaie împotriva democrației ; cu toată izbînda, nu are însă alt mijloc de a opri ca biruiții să nu-și adune puterile și să nu se gătească curînd de o altă luptă, decît de a se rezema pe baionetele rusești. Numai acest mijloc au de a mai putea duce tîrîș-grăpiș cîtăva vreme, pînă ce chiar și hoardele de calmîci vor deschide ochii.

Englitora, deși îi vedem adesea biruiți — una obișnuită a comanda, cealaltă împinsă de instinctul conservației — nu vor suferi ca Rusia să cîștige o preponderință care nu poate fi echilibrată prin nimic și care ar aduce-o în stare a-și pune toate planurile în lucrare. Pe de altă parte, Rusia nu poate să se lepede de preponderința ce a cîștigat asupra Austriei și asupra Turciei ; de aci o neconținută privighere și neodihnă din partea Angliei și o ură neîmpăcată care mai curînd sau mai tîrziu trebuie să se prefacă în război general între puteri grupate astfel : de o parte Turcia, Statele Unite, poate Franța silită de opinie, cu Englitora în capul lor ; de cealaltă Rusia, Austria, Germania. Acesta socot că este planul de campanie al ministeriului englez de astăzi ; căzînd însă Palmerston, lucrurile se schimbă.

Doă nădejdi pentru noi : cu lordul Palmerston, prin echilibrul european, dobîndim o poziție mai avantajoasă, fie prin război, fie prin negociații. Cea de-a doua — în ura

absolutismului împotriva Franței, din care poate ieși pentru rumâni binele cel mai mare în privirea națională, politică și socială.

În așteptarea întâmplărilor dintîi, trebuie să ne ținem legați cu Turcia și cu Englitera ; în așteptarea celei de-a doua, trebuie să căutăm a lega relații mai serioase și mai strînse cu naționalitățile cele mici și nașcînde sau reînviinde.

Iată acum organizarea care mi se pare mai cuviincioasă, mai potrivită cu scopul la care țintim : un comitet de unu sau trei membri, nu ales, nu numit de nimeni ; trei inși care să ia inițiativa de sineși și să lucreze în chipul următor : a) prin agenți politici la Constantinopol, la Londra, la Paris, la Frankfurt ; b) prin agenți politici pe lîngă membrii căpetenii ai celorlalte naționalități — polone, maghiare, italiene, sîrbe etc. ; c) prin agenți propagandiști pe la punctele cele mai însemnate ale României. Voi, douăzeci de rumâni bine înțeleși — iată ce cer.

Dacă fatalitatea nu ar fi fost de a-l avea pe Eliad, pe acel duh al răului între noi, toate aceste chestiuni de organizare nu ar fi existat ; fără zizaniile și intrigele aceluia infam nu am fi fost nici o secundă neorganizați ; cei vechi ne-am fi adunat, sau ne-am fi înțeles lesne prin scrisori, și un comitet director ar fi ieșit îndată. Astăzi, lucrurile au fost împinse atît de departe, încît între noi o înțelegere nu mai mi se pare cu putință.

Voi v-ați grămădit acolo, de faceți ceva, nu știu ; dar știu că sunt locuri unde este de făcut și unde nu este nimeni. Care este acolo misiunea ta ? Și care a Brătienilor ? Care a Goleștilor ? Și care a Bălceștilor ? Alții iarăși s-au grămădit la Brusa, pe bere și pe mîncare, de nicio putință de a-i dezlipi și a-i utiliza la ceva. Bunăvoință și atît.

Era să uit a-ți face complimentele mele pentru meritul real al pamfletului tău — fără a te cruța că te-ai grăbit puțin, căci trebuia să lași să mai treacă timp. Ca pamflet, scrierea ta are meritul acelora ale lui Paul-Louis Courier și Cormenin.

Mai trimite-mi trei exemplare prin Bălcescu, căci nu plătesc poștă.

*Al tău amic și frate, Ion Ghica*

## English

*Constantinople, 12/24 March 1850*

Brother Ruset,

Long life to little Ion — and if I cannot come to hold him in my arms, then when he is grown I shall give him horse and arms for battle, books and pen to enlighten his nation, should it be free. Tell his mother I wish her the happiness of seeing him in danger for his adopted country. You did well to pull the fool's cap off the head of the regiment; and you would do still better not to believe that I wear a turban, or that I have put myself in service. Only the *locotenenți* cannot live without a master and always serve in base and degrading conditions; let them go into service — for, as in the past, they have no loyalty and never will. Good and faithful servants of absolutism, oppression, and corruption, could they be givers of liberty? Now you have branded them on the brow with a hot iron, and I hope Romanians will always see that mark. But let us leave the unrepentant sinners.

I believe in Ottoman policy and would like to lean upon it, for we have need of a fulcrum. Archimedes said: "*Give me a fulcrum...*" No doubt if the learned Syracusan had found the point he was looking for in the crown of someone's fez, he would have hastened to use it and the world might have moved from that day. You see that we have not had the good fortune of having done enough for European diplomacy to take notice of us on our own account; they hear us only when we present ourselves in Turkish guise. Whether from caprice or political calculation by

governments, we must bow to necessity so that we may obtain effective action toward the desired goal, which is a Romania of nine millions, from the Dniester to Timișoara.

But let some say I am ambitious and work only to become prince or president: so much the better — whoever is not ambitious is not a man. And why should I not work to make myself the head of my people, if I know myself to be worthy? I wish my country to be governed one day by a man like me. My desire is a Romania of nine millions; this is no dream of today. Bălcescu can tell you that in 1848, when he came here as a deputy, after Fuad Efendi himself had declared to him plainly and without deception the political path traced for the imperial commissioner, my idea was that we should do our duty, hold to the programme, and fight — *fais ce que tu dois, arrive que pourra*. The first success would have been ours, of that there is no doubt. Had we then seen the Turks persist in a system of force — which I do not believe they would have — we should have proclaimed a Romanian empire with a viceroy. Had we fallen, there would have remained a historical precedent, a monument, a flag for our great-grandchildren, which perhaps they would have known how to make triumph. The idea may seem reckless and mad, but when I think of the probabilities of success we would have had, rage and vexation come over me.

Let us leave the past and speak of the future, let us come to the means we might employ to reach our goal; but we must first consider a little the state of Europe and its political circumstances.

In 1848 the peoples made a great effort, and I do not believe that the masses are capable of moving for long again. The revolutions did not succeed because there was no directing idea — there was lacking that principle which could be made general and electrify all at once; and even now I see that idea, that principle, nowhere. For all my disillusionment with the French, for all their moral decadence, it is still from there that one day the torch may emerge to light humanity in the chaos into which it has plunged and to show it how to lay the foundation stone of the social edifice. The unifying idea was absent, and that is why we saw revolutions taking different forms according to the peoples they reached: democratic and social in France, national and independentist in Posen and Hungary. Poles and Hungarians wanted to be Poles and Hungarians before being citizens; the revolution had two forms, two ideas that neutralised and fought each other. Those ideas combined and allied could have freed Europe and realised all the aspirations of liberals.

Only through a general confederation of all could the peoples have succeeded. Only the system of a United States of Europe on the model of the United States of America could have saved Europe from shipwreck.

Universal suffrage, which the French democrats presented as a universal panacea destined to cure all ills — although I am not among those who profit from France's sad experience to point to the president and the legislature as living arguments against the principle — I still consider that universal suffrage can produce its effects only after the passage of several generations. One must pass before the Chamber opens its eyes to the need for another system of education to prepare each person to be a good elector. Beyond that, several more generations for the formation of citizens and representatives; and only then perhaps will this people understand that it cannot be happy and free except when the other peoples of the continent are also free.

The national principle alone leads to a cruel struggle between the oppressed nationalities and those accustomed to dominate — a long struggle without any benefit for civilisation.

With only one of these principles, or with both disunited, the victory belongs to absolutism; only with the alliance of both ideas can one succeed and conjure away the danger.

I do not believe, as some do, that the peoples have fought their final battle; but I believe that some time is needed before the fertile idea propagates itself and makes its way through; until then any reckless or untimely enterprise will serve absolutism and oppression.

Until the idea propagates, until the peoples prepare themselves through a general understanding, I see no other means of saving our nationality, no single hope for our preservation, than in the system of the balance of the great powers. For the moment it is the only spark of light I can perceive; I follow it. For us it is not only a question of gaining, but also of not losing even what we have. It would be a great point gained for Romanian nationality if we could obtain the union of the Principalities; independence now would be a danger. Austria and Russia desire it: one in the hope of making in ten years' time another Crimea, the other convinced it could make a new Cracow. You do not want us to be the lever of the Orient; perhaps if I had told you to make the Orient the lever of our nationality, your self-love and egoism would not have revolted, and we should have no quarrel.

Here is how I understand things today: absolutism has won the first battle against democracy; but for all its victory, it has no other means of preventing the vanquished from regrouping their forces and preparing soon for another battle than to lean upon Russian bayonets. That is the only means it has of dragging on for some time longer, until even the Kalmyk hordes open their eyes.

England and France — one accustomed to command, the other impelled by the instinct of self-preservation — will not endure Russia gaining a preponderance that nothing can balance and that would bring it to a position where it can put all its plans into action. On the other hand, Russia cannot relinquish the preponderance it has gained over Austria and Turkey; hence England's unceasing watchfulness and anxiety, and an implacable hatred that sooner or later must turn into a general war between powers grouped as follows: on one side Turkey, the United States, perhaps France compelled by opinion, with England at their head; on the other Russia, Austria, Germany. This, I believe, is the campaign plan of the present English ministry; but should Palmerston fall, things change.

Two hopes for us: with Lord Palmerston, through the European balance, we may gain a more advantageous position — through war or through negotiation. The second hope lies in absolutism's hatred of France, from which may emerge for Romanians the greatest good in the national, political, and social respects.

In anticipation of the first eventuality, we must keep ourselves bound to Turkey and England; in anticipation of the second, we must seek to forge more serious and closer relations with the small and nascent or reviving nationalities.

Here now is the organisation that seems to me most fitting, most suited to the goal we are aiming at: a committee of one or three members — not elected, not appointed by anyone; three persons who take the initiative of themselves and work in the following manner: a) through political agents in Constantinople, London, Paris, Frankfurt; b) through political agents alongside the chief members of the other nationalities — Polish, Hungarian, Italian, Serbian, and so on; c) through propaganda agents at the most important points throughout Romania. Twenty Romanians in good understanding — that is what I ask.

If fate had not saddled us with Eliade, that evil spirit among us, all these questions of organisation would not have existed; without that infamous man's dissensions and intrigues we would not have been disorganised for a single second; we of the old guard would have gathered, or would easily have reached agreement by letter, and a directing committee would have

emerged immediately. Today, things have been pushed so far that an understanding among us seems to me no longer possible.

You have all crowded together there; whether you are accomplishing anything, I do not know — but I do know there are places where things need doing and where there is no one. What is your mission there? And that of the Brătianus? And the Golescus? And the Bălcescu? Others again have crowded at Brusa, eating and drinking, with no possibility of detaching any one of them to make use of him. Goodwill — and that is all.

I was about to forget to offer you my compliments on the genuine merit of your pamphlet — though without sparing you the reproach that you were in a little too great a hurry, for you should have let more time pass. As a pamphlet, your writing has the merit of those of Paul-Louis Courier and Cormenin.

Send me three more copies through Bălcescu, so I do not pay postage.

*Your friend and brother,*  
Ion Ghica

## VII — Discours aux Samiens à l'occasion de la lecture du firman

[Originally given in Greek, translated into French]

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### Français

*Port-Vathy, avril 1854*

Samiens,

Vous venez d'entendre l'ordre de Sa Majesté Impériale, notre Auguste Souverain. Je viens vers vous avec le désir et l'espoir de pouvoir vous guider dans la bonne voie, dans la voie de l'ordre et de la justice. Je désire ardemment user du pouvoir qui m'est conféré en faveur du développement moral, intellectuel et matériel des habitants de cette île. Je ferai tout mon possible pour que nous puissions nous montrer dignement et fièrement aux nations civilisées — et je dois vous dire que Samos se trouve encore loin des lumières des arts et des sciences qui constituent aujourd'hui la gloire de l'homme ici-bas. De ma part, je n'épargnerai aucun travail, aucune peine pour contribuer, selon mes moyens, au bien-être et à la prospérité de ce pays.

Je réclame de vous le respect et la soumission aux firmans qui vous sont conférés, aux lois et à la justice. Que chacun de vous s'occupe avec ordre et tranquillité à se procurer le plus de bien-être possible — par le travail de son champ, par l'extension de ses opérations commerciales et par la navigation. Enrichissez-vous par un travail assidu et honnête, afin que vous puissiez mériter l'affection et l'estime du monde civilisé. Soyez bons chrétiens, bons pères, bons époux, bons fils et bons citoyens. La bonne conduite de chacun est la vraie garantie de tous. Par votre conduite, donnez force à la loi, si vous voulez être respectés dans vos familles et dans vos propriétés.

Je serai prompt et désintéressé à rendre la justice dans toute son étendue et toute son intégrité, contre toute mauvaise action, contre tout abus. Je ferai mon devoir : que chacun fasse le sien, sans se mêler de ce qui n'entre point dans ses attributions. Par là, j'espère que nous arriverons à notre but, qui ne peut être autre que la prospérité et la tranquillité de ce pays.

Fidèles et dévoués à Notre Auguste Souverain le Sultan et à son gouvernement, et soumis au gouvernement de la Principauté, retournez dans vos communes respectives, proclamez avec conscience l'ordre et la volonté impériale, et faites entendre à vos concitoyens que le vrai bien, le véritable intérêt des Samiens, se trouve dans la tranquillité, le bon ordre et le travail.

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### English

*Port-Vathy, April 1854*

Samians,

You have just heard the order of His Imperial Majesty, our August Sovereign. I come to you with the desire and hope of being able to guide you along the right path — the path of order and justice. I ardently wish to use the power conferred upon me in favour of the moral, intellectual, and material development of the inhabitants of this island. I shall do everything in my power so that we may show ourselves worthily and proudly to the civilised nations of the world — and I must tell you that Samos still finds itself far from the lights of the arts and sciences that today constitute the glory of mankind. For my part, I shall spare no labour, no effort, to contribute, according to my means, to the well-being and prosperity of this country.

I ask of you respect and submission to the firmans conferred upon you, to the laws, and to justice. Let each of you occupy himself in an orderly and tranquil manner with obtaining as much well-being as possible — through the labour of his fields, through the extension of his commercial ventures, and through navigation. Enrich yourselves by diligent and honest work, so

that you may merit the affection and esteem of the civilised world. Be good Christians, good fathers, good husbands, good sons, and good citizens. The good conduct of each is the true guarantee of all. Through your conduct, give strength to the law, if you wish to be respected in your families and your properties.

I shall be prompt and disinterested in rendering justice in all its extent and integrity — against every wrongful act, against every abuse. I shall do my duty: let each of you do his own, without meddling in what lies outside his competence. In this way, I trust we shall reach our goal, which can be none other than the prosperity and tranquillity of this country.

Faithful and devoted to Our August Sovereign the Sultan and to his government, and obedient to the government of the Principality, return to your respective communes, proclaim in good conscience the imperial order and will, and make your fellow citizens understand that the true good, the genuine interest, of the Samians lies in tranquillity, good order, and work.