

## JEAN-LOUIS CARRA AND THE ROMANIANS

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### **Abstract**

One of the Western travellers that went through the Romanian area during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was the French Jean-Louis Carra (1742-1793). Orignary of Burgundy (France), he travelled in Europe on several occasions. He reached Moldavia as well in the year 1775, when he came to serve the Reigning Prince Grigore III Ghica (whom he had met in Russia), as a teacher of his sons and as a secretary for the French correspondence. He remained here for a year (1775-1776), and during this period he seems to have travelled to Wallachia as well. In the spring of the year 1776, Carra left Moldavia heading to Poland. A year later, in 1777, there appeared in Buillon, not in Iași, as it is written on the title page, *Histoire de la Moldavie et la Valachie* (History of Moldavia and Wallachia), a work that was to be published in the same year in Paris as well and then in its second edition in Neuchatel, in the year 1781. Our paper aims to bring into focus Carra's works together with all the controversies it triggered in the course of time in the Romanian historiography.

**Key words:** *Jean-Louis Carra, foreign testimonies, French traveller, Moldavia, Wallachia, 18<sup>th</sup> century*

### **Introduction**

Out of the numerous foreign testimonies left behind by foreigners about the Romanians in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the most important are those of the French, which are also the most numerous. In general, the rhythm of elaboration of the writings on the Romanians, and implicitly of travelogues, is in harmony with the evolution of the French-Romanian relations in general, which are directly connected to the evolution of the French Oriental politics, with the increasingly strong interest of France in the SE European area. Out of the French travellers who wrote on the Romanians in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, we shall mention: the chevalier de Bellerive, La Motraye, Guedeville, Jean Claude Flachet, Charles de Peyssonnel, baron Damseaux, Jean-Louis Carra, Alexandre de Launay, baron Francois de Tott, count Alexandre d'Hauterive, Charles Joseph de Ligne, Roger de Damas, count de Ferriere, count de Salaberry, Emil Gaudin, Louis Joseph Parant (Oncescu, 2013: 33-38).

We estimate that, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the French writings on the Romanians might be divided into several stages: 1. until 1770-1774, they were rarer, rather occasional, as the interest of the French writers concerning the Romanians increased beginning with the time of the Russian-Turkish war of the years 1768-1774, concluded with the peace of Kuciuk Kainargi. 2. 1774-1800, when these writings and travelogues bloom on the background of the Austrian-Russian-Turkish wars of the end of this century, and also on the background of the increasing interest of France in the

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Romanian Principalities, especially after the French Revolution of 1789, substantiated in the creation of the French consulates of Iași and Bucarest (1798) - (Isar, 2005: 8; Oncescu, 2013: 36)

Among the works of French travelers about the Romanians from the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century particularly interesting are those created by Jean-Louis Carra (1742-1793), and Alexandre d'Hauterive (1754-1830) - (*Istoria Românilor*, vol. VI., 2002: XXXVIII; D'Hauterive, 1902; Oncescu, 2013: 38).

### **Jean-Louis Carra (1742-1793) - few biographical details**

Jean Louis Carra was born in Pont de Veyle, in Burgundy (France), on March 9, 1742 (*Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. X, part I., 2000: 234; Mihordea, 1939: 229). Becoming an orphan at the age of 8, as his father died, he studied at the Jesuit College in Macon. In this town, when he was 16 years old, he was accused (indirectly) of theft and, even though he had run away, he was captured and imprisoned for two years, yet without any trial (1760). He wandered afterwards in Europe, in Austria and Prussia, and in 1768, when he arrived at his birthplace, he declared to his acquaintances that he was living in Paris and he held the position of secretary for Marquis d'Argeson. He participates to the editing of the works: *Encyclopedie* and *Encyclopedie Supplements* (1770), at the recommendations of the astronomer Lalande and of Voltaire. He comes into conflict with both the editor of the first work, the bookseller Fortunato Bartolomeo Felice from Yverdon and the editor of the second work, Jean Baptiste Robinet. Beginning with 1722 he publishes a pamphlet, a philosophic novel and a brochure. It seems, according to some information, that, until 1775, Carra had been wandering again, visiting Italy, Greece, Turkey and Ukraine. It is not known for sure if these voyages were real, especially because he was a „farseur” as far as the information on the front pages of his works is concerned (London, Iassi, Constantinople), these being actually published in Bouillon or in Paris (*Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. X, part I., 2000: 234).

After three years of absence, Jean Louis Carra appears in his new phase in life as an „impartial observer” and „cosmopolitan philosopher”, having as a publicly assumed aim to contribute, with suggestions and his own combinations, to a new division of Central and South-Eastern Europe, during the dismemberment of Poland and awaiting the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. During this period he writes two more works, out of which one is referring to the Romanians and the Romanian territory: *Histoire de la Moldavie et la Valachie avec une dissertation sur l'état actuel de la Moldavie et de la Valachie*, published in Bouillon, in 1777, and not in Iassi, as it appears on the front page, and the brochure *Essay particulier de politique dans lequel on propose un partage de la Turquie européenne*, published also in Paris in 1777, and not in Constantinople, as it appears on its front page (*Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. X, part I., 2000: 234-235).

In this period of his life (1775-1777), Jean Louis Carra travelling to Russia, Moldavia, Poland and Germany, reaching afterwards Paris (France). Carra had arrived in Sankt Petersburg (1775), and there he met the former Prince of Wallachia, Grigore Alexandru Ghica. At the recommendation of the minister plenipotentiary of France, Durand, Carra this French *adventurer* arrives together with Grigore III Alexandru Ghica, who had been named Prince of Moldavia, in Iassi, being a teacher for his sons and a secretary of the Moldavian Prince for the French correspondence (*Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. X, part I., 2000: 235; Mihordea, 1939: 229; Trenard, 1983:

183; *Istoria Românilor*, vol. VI., 2002: XXXVIII).

Jean Louis Carra had lived in Iassi for one year (1775-1776), and during this period of time, according to his confessions, he also took a trip to Wallachia. It seems that he was not in cordial relations with the Moldavian Prince Grigore III Alexandru Ghica. In the foreword of his work about the Romanians, Carra is complaining that the Moldavian Prince would have refused to pay him half of the amount agreed in the contract for his services. In this context he expresses a series of defamations in relation to Grigore III Ghica and to his family, but also to the Romanians in general, whom he had not had the opportunity to know yet (Mihordea, 1939: 330).

He left Moldavia during the spring of 1776, travelling to Poland and Germany, reaching afterwards Paris (France), where he publishes the two works mentioned above: *Histoire de la Moldavie et la Valachie avec une dissertation sur l'état actuel de la Moldavie et de la Valachie*, Buillon, 1777, and *Essay particulier de politique dans lequel on propose un partage de la Turquie européenne*, Paris, 1777. After a series of attempts of joining the diplomatic service and after a short period of time when he was a secretary of the Prince de Rohan (1778-1783), starting with 1783 up to 1789, Jean Louis Carra held a position of attaché at the Royal Library of France. He then participated in the French Revolution but was guillotined in 1793 (*Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. X, part I., 2000: 236-240; Mihordea, 1939: 230-234; Trenard, 1983: 193-194; Lemny, 2000).

„The author of the work *Histoire de la Moldavie et la Valachie*, published in 1777, Jean Louis Carra, is a personality known to the researchers, to a certain extent, for he was the first to write a book meant to inform the Western public opinion in an accessible language, and also, for his participation at the French Revolution events, where he found his end”. (Mihordea, 1939: 229).

The same author who took care in the Romanian historiography of Carra's biography, Vasile Mihordea, states that he spent his life keen on adventure and extraordinary facts, and it was in order to satisfy this thirst that he had traveled to Europe (Germany, Switzerland and England). These trips were taken, according to Carra's testimony, to quench his thirst of knowledge and to collect information on the form of government of these States to make himself useful to the French State by the experience gained (Mihordea, 1939: 229).



**Jean Louis Carra (1742-1793)** - (Portrait from the collections of the National Library of France)  
- [https://data.bnf.fr/11895291/jean-louis\\_carra/](https://data.bnf.fr/11895291/jean-louis_carra/)

**Jean-Louis Carra: *Histoire de la Moldavie et la Valachie* (Istoria Moldovei și a Țării Românești)**

The work of the French traveler Jean Louis Carra, *Istoria Moldovei și a Țării Românești* (The History of Moldavia and of Wallachia), first edition (published in French and printed in Bouillon, in the year 1777), has as major parts: *the historical part* and *the dissertation*. The historical part of this work is not without importance, yet the information about the history of Moldavia has been taken over almost totally from Dimitrie Cantemir, and the information about the history of Wallachia from other contemporary authors of his time (especially since it seems that in Wallachia he had not even traveled and had not known it directly). Thus, after a small historical introduction about Wallachia and Moldavia (Carra, 1777: 3-5), Carra dealt with the history of the two Romanian Principalities approaching in parallel diverse aspects structured under the form of chapters such as: *Despre Moldova* (About Moldavia) (old geography, enthronement of the reigning princes)-(Carra, 1777: 6-26), *Despre Țara Românească* (About Wallachia) (old geography, recognition of the Turkish dominion, reigning princes' authority)-(Carra, 1777: 27-60), *Familia Cantemir* (Cantemir Family)-(Carra, 1777: 61-86), *Familia Ghica* (Ghica Family)-(Carra, 1777: 87-92), *Familia Petriceicu, Duca și Cantacuzino* (The Family Petriceicu, Duca and Cantacuzino)-(Carra, 1777: 93-100), *Continuarea istoriei Moldovei și Țării Românești* (Continuation of the History of Moldavia and Wallachia)-(Carra, 1777: 101-110), *Familia Mavrocordat* (The Mavrocordatos) (who reigned sometimes in Wallachia, sometimes in Moldavia, up to this point)-(Carra, 1777: 111-137), *Familia Brâncoveanu* (The Brancovan Family)- (Carra, 1777: 136-148), *Urmarea istoriei Moldovei și Țării Românești* (Sequel to the History of Moldavia and Wallachia) - (Carra, 1777: 149-161).

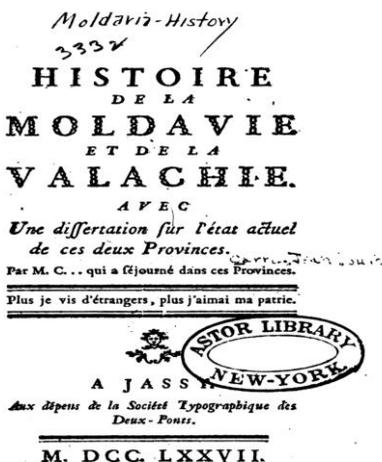
Beside these historical aspects, in the second part of this work, entitled *Disertație asupra stării actuale a Moldovei și a Țării Românești* (Dissertation on the Present State of Moldavia and Wallachia), Carra presents, beside other information (population and habits, governance and justice, princely dignitaries, about the character of the Moldovians and the Wallachians, political reflections), also some observations regarding the physical-geographic particularities of Moldavia and Wallachia (their delimitation, their physical-geographic position, their vicinities, the main rivers, their climate, soil, flora and fauna), and significant details about agriculture and the rural economy, accentuating in this context the rich economic resources of the Romanian Principalities (Carra, 1777: 162-187; Cernovodeanu, 2004: 11).<sup>1</sup>

Thus, *Disertația* (The Dissertation) was divided by the author into several chapters and subchapters presenting and dealing with: *Geografia modernă* (Modern Geography)-(Carra, 1777: 162-164), *Clima* (Climate)-(Carra, 1777: 166-167), *Solul* (Soil)- (Carra, 1777: 168-171), *Populația și obiceiurile* (Population and Customs)- (Carra, 1777: 172-178), *Agricultura, economia rurală, negoțul și artele* (Agriculture, Rural Economy, Trade and Arts)-(Carra, 1777: 179-187), *Venituri* (Revenues)-(Carra, 1777: 188-189), *Cârmuirea și dreptatea* (Governance and Justice)-(Carra, 1777: 190-197), *Dregătorii domnului* (Măreția Curții sale) (The Reigning Prince's Dignitaries. The Greatness of His Court)-(Carra, 1777: 198-208), *Despre firea Moldovenilor și a Valahilor* (About the Character of the Moldavians and the Wallachians)-(Carra, 1777: 209-219), *Reflecții politice asupra Moldovei și a Țării Românești* (Political Reflections about Moldavia

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<sup>1</sup> See Annex - Jean-Louis CARRA, *Disertație asupra stării actuale a Moldovei și a Țării Românești* (Dissertation on the Present State of Moldavia and Wallachia).

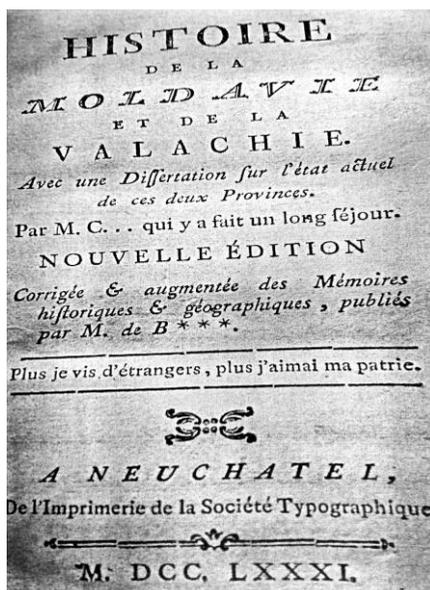
and Wallachia)-(Carra, 1777: 220-223). The work of the French traveler Jean Louis Carra, *Istoria Moldovei și a Țării Românești* (The History of Moldavia and of Wallachia) has, beside these constitutive, essential elements (the historical part and the dissertation) a Dedication (*Epistolă închinătoare*)-(by which this work is dedicated to Prince Louis de Rohan)-(Carra, 1777: V-VIII), and a Preliminary Discourse (*Discours preliminar*)-(Carra, 1777: X-XXX), followed by Contents (*Cuprins*)- (Carra, 1777: XXXI-XXXII).



Cover of the work of Jean-Louis Carra, *Histoire de la Moldavie et de la Valachie*, avec une dissertation sur l'état actuel des ces deux Provinces, Iassy, 1777 (first edition 223 p.)

As we have already mentioned, *Istoria Moldovei și a Țării Românești*, was published in several editions in French (Paris-1778, Neuchatel-1781) and had several translations in German and Russian (1789, 1791, 1821). There are also translations in Romanian of Carra's work: one realized in the year 1857 by N. T. Orășanu, published in Bucharest, and a more recent one, of the year 2011 by Veronica Grecu published in Iași (Carra, 2011, 197 p). Fragments of Carra's work, especially of his dissertation, were translated in Romanian as well in the corpus dedicated to the foreign travelers about the Romanian countries (*Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. X, part I., 2000: 242-255), and his dissertation appeared in French in the same monumental work (*Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. X, part I., 2000: 1369-1379).

We shall remind here that Jean-Louis Carra's work *Histoire de la Moldavie et de la Valachie. Avec une dissertation sur l'état actuel des ces deux Provinces*, second edition, published at Neuchatel in the year 1781 has included in its composition also *Mémoires historiques et géographiques sur la Valachie* (*Historical and Geographic Memoirs about Wallachia*) of the German Friedrich Wilhelm von Bauer (Carra, 1781: 203-368). Similarly Bauer's *Memoirs* can be found included also in the Romanian translation published in Iași in the year 2011 (Carra, 2011: 109-197). The French man's work does not represent a history, as its title suggests, and neither is Jean Louis Carra a historian or even an encyclopedist (in the more general sense of the term), yet this work has been in the attention of those who have been and are interested in the image of the Romanians, as it appears delineated by the foreign travelers (Carra, 2011: 7).



Cover of the work of Jean-Louis Carra, *Histoire de la Moldavie et de la Valachie. Avec une dissertation sur l'état actuel des ces deux Provinces*, Neuchatel, 1781 (second edition 368 p.)



Cover of the work of Jean-Louis Carra, *Istoria Moldovei și a Țării Românești*, translation by Veronica Grecu, notes by Veronica Grecu and Ligia Livadă-Cadeschi, foreword by Ligia Livadă-Cadeschi, European Institute, Iași, 2011, 197 p. (translation into Romanian of the second edition of Jean Louis Carra's work published at Neuchatel in the year 1781)

The merit of this work, which is not, as we have just stated, a history, is that it represents the first *history* written in a language of international circulation (French) and which makes known and accessible to all, its information about Wallachia and Moldavia during an epoch when they were little known in Europe and in the World and arousing at that moment the interest of more and more European powers. The too short time that he spent in the Romanian area (1775-1776) did not permit Jean Louis Carra to know the Romanians well enough and this is why his work represents a compilation, especially in its first part, where it is devoid of originality. It is not an erudite work, but just a work of a French traveler who passed through and lived a short while in Moldavia and was not able to understand deeply the Romanian realities, the triggers of an area situated at the boundary between two fundamentally opposite worlds, the Western one and the Eastern one (Carra, 2011: 8, 12, 14).

### ***History of Jean Louis Carra in Romanian historiography***

The work of Jean Louis Carra, *Istoria Moldovei și a Țării Românești*, as a whole, his life and activity, in general, his presence in the Romanian area, diverse aspects related to the taking over of the historical information from Dimitrie Cantemir, the criticism of his work benefited of increased attention from the Romanian and foreign historiography throughout time (Șadoveanu, 1910: 328-332; Mihordea, 1939: 239-234; Pascu, 1940: 1-80; Iorga, 1981: 379-381; Trenard, 1983: 183-193; Iorga, 1995: 32-35; *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. X, part I., 2000: 234-242 (*Critical observations*), 255-259; Isar, 2005: 12-14; Carra, 2011: 8-14; Lemny, 2000).

A quite objective criticism of Jean Louis Carra's work came especially from the Romanians' greatest historian, Nicolae Iorga. The Romanian historian admits the special importance of the French who arrived as teachers (preceptors) or princely secretaries in Moldavia and Wallachia, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, their special role in spreading the European civilization and culture, the French language and civilization. However, among these French preceptors taking care of the education of the Romanian rulers' sons, there was also one who wanted to take revenge on those who - according to his own testimony - had not rewarded him enough for his services and so he wrote, following his experience in Moldavia (1775-1776, in the service of the reigning prince Grigore-Alexandru Ghica (1774-1777), a work entitled *Istoria Moldovei și Țării Românești* (The History of Moldavia and Wallachia), appeared in the year 1777. This French man, who later on was one of the contributors and pamphleteers of the 1789 Revolution and ended up on the scaffold, an episode putting an end to an agitated and discontent life - shows Nicolae Iorga, was called Carra. Thus, the author of the *History...*, according to the opinion of the Romanian historian, believed himself an erudite, making appreciations and observations about the history and ethnography of the Romanian lands, without knowing anything more but the Iași (the capital of Moldavia) and the roads leading to this city. The French traveler showed that that the Wallachians and the Moldavians, even though they believed they had Italian blood in their veins, this was actually only the blood of some Italians deported for their crimes and who, consequently, had left as heritage to their followers only vice and cowardice (Iorga, 1995: 31-32).

„The author believes himself an erudite concerning the history and the ethnography of these lands out of which actually he only knows the Moldavian capital, Iași, and the great roads leading to it. He consequently speaks about the Dacians and about the Romans; he affirms that, if the poor Wallachians have Roman blood in their veins, they owe it to some miserable Italians who, like the mine convicts of the Antilles and Cayenne, had been deported for their crimes and had left as a heritage to their lineage vice and cowardice.” (Iorga, 1995: 31-32).

Nicolae Iorga shows in this context all the mistakes of Jean Louis Carra, mentioning that he took over without discrimination the geographic information from Dimitrie Cantemir, from *Descriptio Moldaviae*, without checking them, taking over, in this context, also the errors and the mistakes, which are therefore accentuated by his ignorance, the history of Moldavia being known to the French author only from a manuscript of an incomplete chronicle of Miron Costin dating from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and from some anecdotes circulating during the period contemporary to him, and that of Wallachia from the information taken over from Bauer. Other aspects noticed by the Romanian historian in Carra's work are related to the disproportion of certain chapters, appreciating that the work as a whole represents a pamphlet that could only lead to the formation of a *strange idea* about the Romanians' history. Nicolae Iorga does not overlook either the mistaken comparisons and the negative appreciations made by the French author regarding the Romanian villages and towns, the social realities in Moldavia and Wallachia, the way of living and the life, all these being, evidently, completely different from the Western ones; the French author actually does not understand the state of affairs existing in the European East, which had been for a long time under Ottoman dominion, he does not understand the fact that here, in the Romanian area, there were frequent conflicts between Russia, Turkey and Austria, which troubled and affected the normality of life. The Romanian historian shows, in this way, that often the offenses expressed by Carra against the Romanians are unfounded and unjustified.

The French traveler does not like the Romanian dances, which seem to him naive, the dancers' costumes, which seem ridiculous to him, the Romanian music which he does not understand, the language which, despite having Latin resonance, is *barbarian*, the peasants whom he considers *lazy and unsociable*, without knowing their true problems. Carra criticizes in the pages of his work, according to Nicolae Iorga's opinion, which is partly true, almost the entire Romanian world, reproaching to it the Eastern despotism of the ruler, the boyars' traffic of influence, the judges' venality, expressing severe criticisms regarding the institutions, the boyars' lack of culture, not understanding actually the Romanian tradition, the Romanian customs, not understanding the fact that, here, there was another world, continually submitted to exterior pressures and to the will of others and a part of these defects of the society were present in the West as well. Moreover, the French traveler shows that these Romanian provinces should rather belong to Austria or Prussia. The Romanian historian shows, in this context, that actually a personal problem that the French traveler Carra would have had with the ruler of Moldavia who had hired him and to whom he had answered with ingratitude, triggered consequences on a whole people (Iorga, 1995: 32-34).

„This was the condition of the poor Danubian countries described by Carra; this was their horoscope made by him for them, but this is not just because he takes pride in his revolutionary liberalism, but because he was trying to take revenge on Grigore Ghica, a Phanariote with a rather Romanian education who had used his Moldavian rule to try some reforms in the sense of the Western philosophy, a patriot who fell victim to the Austrian politics because he tried to prevent the abduction of Bukovina. Carra spares no accusation at the address of his former master: according to him, Ghica is the creation of the king of Prussia, who indeed had recommended him in order to be appointed, who lets himself be corrupted and overpasses smilingly proved corruption acts; he is a mean thrifty man who hides his silverware and tablecloths putting in front of his guests broken glasses and dirty napkins; he is unable to give laws to protect the artists as his neighbor of Wallachia, Alexandru Ipsilanti, does; he boasts to have founded a secondary school where he called the best Greek teachers and he only uses there but two or three ignorant monks. But maybe, in order to be able to appreciate with impartiality the merits of those whom you have served, you need to start by not being ingrate to them.” (Iorga, 1995: 34-35).

Other historians and researchers have shown, in time, even before Nicolae Iorga, the defamatory character of Jean Louis Carra's work but also the despising words uttered, consequently, against the Romanians (Sadoveanu, 1910: 328-332; Mihordea, 1939: 239-234; Pascu, 1940: 1-80; Trenard, 1983: 183-193; *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. X, part I., 2000: 234-242, 255-259; Isar, 2005: 12-14; Carra, 2011: 8-14).

### Conclusion

Among the works of French travelers about the Romanians from the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century particularly interesting are the one elaborated by Jean-Louis Carra (1742-1793), coming from Burgundy (France), a novel writer with philosophical preoccupations who worked for the Moldavian reigning prince Grigore III Alexandru Ghica in the year 1775-1776, and who wrote *Histoire de la Moldovie et de la Valachie* (printed in Bouillon and not in Iași, as it appears on the title page), in the year 1777, with new editions respectively in Paris, 1778, and Neuchatel, 1781, and German translations printed respectively in Frankfurt and Leipzig in 1789, and Nürnberg, 1821, and a Russian one, in 1791.

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Fragments of Carra's work, especially of his dissertation, were translated in Romanian as well in the corpus dedicated to the foreign travelers about the Romanian countries, and his dissertation appeared in French in the same monumental work.

We shall remind here that Jean-Louis Carra's work *Histoire de la Moldovie et de la Valachie. Avec une dissertation sur l'état actuel des ces deux Provinces*, second edition, published at Neuchatel in the year 1781 has included in its composition also *Mémoires historiques et géographiques sur la Valabique* (*Historical and Geographic Memoirs about Wallachia*) of the German Friedrich Wilhelm von Bauer. Similarly Bauer's *Memoirs* can be found included also in the Romanian translation published in Iași in the year 2011. The French man's work does not represent a history, as its title suggests, and neither is Jean Louis Carra a historian or even an encyclopedist (in the more general sense of the term), yet this work has been in the attention of those who have been and are interested in the image of the Romanians, as it appears delineated by the foreign travelers.

The merit of this work, which is not, as we have just stated, a history, is that it represents the first *history* written in a language of international circulation (French) and which makes known and accessible to all, its information about Wallachia and Moldavia during an epoch when they were little known in Europe and in the World and arousing at that moment the interest of more and more European powers. The too short time that he spent in the Romanian area (1775-1776) did not permit Jean Louis Carra to know the Romanians well enough and this is why his work represents a compilation, especially in its first part, where it is devoid of originality. It is not an erudite work, but just a work of a French traveler who passed through and lived a short while in Moldavia and was not able to understand deeply the Romanian realities, the triggers of an area situated at the boundary between two fundamentally opposite worlds, the Western one and the Eastern one. A quite objective criticism of Jean Louis Carra's work came especially from the Romanians' greatest historian, Nicolae Iorga.

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Annex - Jean Louis Carra, *Dissertation the current state of Moldavia and Wallachia (1781)*

### Modern Geography

The neighbor provinces, Moldavia and Wallachia are situated between the coordinates 41 and 47 degrees Eastern latitude and 44 and 49 degrees Southern longitude. Siret River divides and cuts these two provinces from north-west to south-east. Nistru River, Podolia and Polish Pocuția delimitate Moldavia to the north-east, Bessarabia and Danube to the south-east, and Wallachia and Transylvania to the south-west. Wallachia has to the south and south-east Danube River and Bulgaria, to the north-west Transylvania and to the north-east Siret River and Moldavia. The extension of these two provinces is almost equal in length and width. Wallachia can have around eighty French leagues in length on seventy in width.

Moldavia has almost the same. The Prut River known by the antiques under the name of Hierasu, is the greatest river of Moldavia, which divides this province in two, from north-west to south east, going to discharge in Danube, at a few miles from Reni, city of Bugeac or Bessarabia. Wallachia has a greater number of rivers, mostly all of them coming from Transylvania's mountains, cross the Principality, also from north-west to south-east, and go to discharge, some of them in Danube, others in Siret. Iassi, situated on the river banks of Bahlui, which discharges in Prut six miles far from it, and not on the Prut River, as all the geographers had considered before, is the capital of Moldavia and the residence of the Prince. Bucharest, situated on river banks of Dâmbovița, which discharges in Danube, is the capital of Wallachia and also the residence of the Prince. Grigore Ghica, fifty years old and who was first the ruler of Moldavia, by will of God and Prince of Persia, still rules over this country. Alexandru Ipsilanti, almost thirty-five years old and who was made ruler by clemency of God and his own money rules over Wallachia. These submitted rulers come from Greek families. Both of them were great dragomans or translators of the Porte. We shall talk about the intrigues at their courts and about everything that can help form a clear and correct idea about the ruling of the two provinces. Let us start by knowing the climate, the soil, inhabitants, customs, agriculture, rural economy, trade and the present state of the physical things from this almost unknown part of Europe.

### Climate

The climate is almost similar as in Burgundy or Champagne, but slightly colder in winter and warmer in summer. The air has no either that flexibility, nor the strength that defines our Western climates. You can understand this from the melancholy and lethargy of the inhabitants. The multitude of moors and standing waters from plains and vales, the thickness and depth of the forests, the natural humidity of so many uncultivated lands, that are all the time covered with the dried and putrid grass of the past year, are other causes that damage the air in these types of climate. The main causes come from the position of the country which faces the sun, that makes the difference between the customs, dispositions and tastes of the peoples living in a clement region or who are closer to the poles or the equator.

### Soil

The plains 'and vales' soil is, usually, composed of of black and clayey soil, less fertile than the ones from Ukraine, Poland or Russia, therefore being good for grains, especially for the wheat culture. (...). The hills', flanks'and mountains' soil is generally turning to grey, this meaning a greater mixture of saltpeter and sand, being less rocky; it is arid only on the mountains which hide inside them minerals; all over in other region, the land's surface is covered with herbs, flowers and little trees. In the region near Bessarabia and Transylvania there are flanks covered with hornbeams, roses, plum trees, apple trees, cherry trees, pear trees, malberry trees and wild grape vines, mixed randomly, and plains covered with thousands of flowers, mainly marigolds, pasque flowers, basil and so on. This diverse and indefinite mixture of so many riches, the simple and bright aspect of the

wild nature inspires a deep regret to the sensible traveler: the one to see this beautiful country in the Turks' hands; the Prut river banks offer an enchanting view, because they are almost all adorned with tall trees; endlessly looping, either alongside the banks, or through the middle of a deep and thick forest, the river seems that he comes back all the time, as if doesn't want to leave these wonderful places. I have seen almost all the Europe's regions, but, truly, I do not know any other region in which the division of the plains, hills and mountains to be so good for agriculture or with such a view like in Moldavia or Wallachia. The nature is greater and more grandiose in Switzerland, but here is sweeter, more beautiful, if this phrase can be used. There can be seen very few pines or fir trees, an endless ornament of the Russia's and Moscow's plains, where nature has a wild and sad face. Forests are full of wild strawberries and violets, of nut trees and blackthorns; here there are a lot of high trees, good for ship building; the alder, the maple tree, the elm, the field ash and the oak are very often seen here; the majority of the woods situated in the plain have from place to place clearings where the gypsies live, kind of wanderers who live in tribes like Tatars. Among the mountains that shelter minerals, the ones that separate Transylvania from Moldavia and from Wallachia are the richest, but the Turks do not allow to be exploited. The Motru and Bistrița rivers have tiny gold wires which the gypsies look for, an occupation that facilitates their annual tax pay.

### **Population and traditions**

On an area of 560 leagues, which is the total surface of Wallachia and Moldavia, there are only one hundred seventy thousand tax payers, seventy thousand in Moldavia and one hundred thousand in Wallachia. The number of inhabitants, men, women and children, in these two provinces can amount to approximately five hundred thousand. The biggest towns are not at all surrounded by walls and they barely resemble the poorest towns in France or Germany. The villages are nothing more but several cottages, put together, with a width of six or seven feet and having the same height, scattered in a valley or a forest and, usually, without a garden, a well or a yard. The houses in the town are built with beams put together with clay and cow dung and they are plastered, both on the inside and on the outside, with a sort of grey-white clay; the bigger houses, those of the boyars, especially in Iași and Bucharest are built in stone; most of them have the shape of a cross and they have only one floor with a long hall in the shape of a cross which, at each corner, has a small apartment where the owner and his family live. As furniture, they have wooden boards covering two thirds of the room, at height of one foot or one and a half foot from the ground covered with wool or straw mattresses, according to the man's wealth, coated with fabric or painted linen and with pillows from the same fabric. Some have wooden chairs or tables, but this is an European luxury, reserved for the foreigners; because the Moldavians, Wallachians and Greeks spend their day with their legs crossed on the sofa, eating around the table, with their back arched, looking like monkeys in the jungle, which is very funny to watch. Their food is usually very bad cooked, with a lot of butter and sheep grease, often sweet to the taste and not very flavoured. They almost never eat stake, except venison, which is so dry that it cannot be eaten, no matter how hungry you might be.

After they eat, they smoke their cigars and then they go to sleep. If a wedding happens to take place or it is a day of public entertainment or a day spent with the family, they get drunk, kiss, dance and fight. Their dance is very funny; they reunite in a circle, men and women, holding hands and stepping to the front; the men's long and red pants hang on their legs and their heels making them look like barred pigeons; the ladies, covered from their shoulders to their waist with fur with hairs on the outside, grotesquely pushing their bellies to the front; in this position, their arms have regulated moves, as if they were pulled by a thread from behind; their feet move to the front, to the back, to the back, to the front; their backs are crooked, their necks are stiff and their look is dumb, they follow the rhythm, from right to left, from left to right, dancing slowly and awkward like a tired mule that spins grinding censors. I confess that since the moment I saw this new type of dance, I have always wondered if Moldavians are the ones who taught the bears how to dance or vice versa.

I had the honour to see prince Repnin and a few gentlemen of the embassy when they attired in Iasi, in 1775, politely mingling with these bear dancers after a great feast. This sight made me see things and I was on the verge of believing in Ovidiu's metamorphosis. It can easily be understood that the music is as awful as their dance, some gypsies having the task to tickle their ears. The violin, the kobza and a pan-pipe, which they pull up and down in their lips, are the instruments of the country. The peasant's clothes are thick abas with a shade of grey, cut as a shirt with long sleeves. The townsfolk, the merchants and the Greek, Moldavian and Wallachian boyars wear short coats and a sort of very long caftans, with loose trousers and yellow or red shoes. Their hats are shaped like a cylinder and they are ended in four flatted corners which are decorated with small skins of Astrakhan lambs sacrificed at birth. All this shows bad taste and encourage natural laziness of these peoples and I find it very repulsive. As a matter of fact, an extremely amusing thing that the slaves in fur coats have is the fact that they consider their clothing to be the most noble and wonderful; they say that the other Europeans resemble acrobats on a rope with their short coats like acrobats on a rope. A Greek on his horse, with the iron set too high for him and the knees held like a triangle, moving his head like a plaster dummy, thinking he is the most important person. At the court of the Moldavian and Wallachian rulers it is not allowed to wear a hat having the same colour as the ruler or his sons, which is white. I saw a young Moldavian boyar sitting fifteen days in prison and enduring almost two hundred whips lashes for wearing more tasteful clothes than Grigore Ghica, while this poor slave, dressed like a prince (as field marshal Romanzov used to say) leaves homicide and theft unpunished in exchange of several hundred coins; that much did the gluttony and barbarous ignorance of these ridiculous kings spread.

#### **Agriculture, rural economy, trade and arts**

The cereals that are usually grown in these provinces are wheat, rye, barley and maize, a sort of Turkish wheat. The way in which land is chosen and worked is so much ignored that it is not a surprise the fact that the crops and the quality of the soil are moderate. At most, forty percent of the land is fallowed and made into tillable land. The peasant barely gets what he needs so that he does not starve. Poverty and idleness or better said the annihilation of the human being in this place seem to be unreal when you see that the forests, fields, pastures, rivers, ponds, mountains are shared.; it is no wonder that this happened, taking into consideration the effects of the Eastern despotism, refined by the Greeks, both slaves and tyrants. As soon as wheat is harvested, they step on it on the field with their horses and gather it in holes dug in the ground. Before the last war, the keel of wheat, the unit of the country, which weighs two hundred sixty okas, that is five hundred eighty-five pounds, as two pounds weighed a quarter of an oka, was sold for two Turkish piastre or five French pounds; a keel of rye, one and a half piastre and a keel of barley, one piastre. After the pace, all these goods doubled their value. The vine is significantly grown and traded in this country; the wines are light and watery, but they taste good. Odobești wine from Moldavia and Piatra wine from Wallachia are the best. Especially that they can be improved, because the vine grower does not know what it means to bury the vine or to hoe it up two or three times a year like it is done in Burgundy; he only raised a little bit the soil around the stump once a year and then lets grass grow all over the place. The biggest wine trade is made in Poland and Ukraine, the wine being sent even in Moscow.

Here you can also find a lot of melons, watermelons, plums, peaches, apricots and other fruits; the best are found near the villages of *Orikert*, *Zafert și Krutchna*; in Constantinople trade it is made with dried fruits. In Wallachia, tobacco is grown; the one from *Mountain* and *Berzan*, near Siret is twice as expensive as the one in Poland, an oka having a value between four and five coins, that is six or seven French livres. The sales in Turkey, the country of Tartars and Poland are significant. Flax and hemp are also grown, but only for the country. The plant called *weyd*, used to obtain blue paint, grows well in the two provinces, also the plant called sumac, which is used to prepare the

morocco, grows well here or the one known as the *yellow grass*, a sort of wild strawberry used to paint morocco in yellow. This yellow grass grows on the banks of Prut, near Fălciu, not far from the land of Tatars. Here there are also a lot of herds kept by Armenians or Jews. Almost thirty thousand cattle leave from Walachia to Bosnia and from Bosnia to Constantinople; twenty thousand cattle and five, six thousand horses leave Moldavia, passing through Poland to Silezia, Moravia and Brandebourg. The cattle, both big and small, and the horses are left in the open air, both in summer and in winter. From time to time they are lead to places with food and salt. The price of regular horses varies between twelve and twenty piastre; the one of a hussar horse is between thirty and thirty-five piastre; there aren't any big horses here.

Two oxen cost between twelve and fifteen piastre, two big and fat oxen, between twenty-five and thirty piastre, and an oka of meat sells in Iasi for three or four Turkish coins.

The sheep herds are countless, but they are kept more for their milk, out of which butter and cottage cheese are made, than for their wool which is long and thick. Nevertheless, near Vlașca, in Wallachia, a sort of wool can be found which is used for the manufacture of felt with a length of thirty cubits for each piece. This felt is made in Afumați, in Wallachia, three leagues from Bucharest. Several million of sheep are sold each year in Constantinople with the price of one leu per capita. In Moldavia there are very few pigs, but in Wallachia there are many and important trade is made with Hungary. In Wallachia, trade is also made with rabbit skin with the Germans and England. The bees, which are carefully looked after, have their swarms in forests or tree trunks. Their honey, which is almost entirely white, is sold in Constantinople and the wax in Venice; but, a wonderful product of this country is a type of green wax, produced by a type of bees smaller than the regular ones. This wax is taken from a species of trees where those insects lay it. Scented candles are made from it and when they are lit they give a delightful smell. This wax is very rare, but more could be collected by growing trees from which it is collected and attracting these bees in the right places. Up to one hundred thousand boulders of salt can be extracted from the salt mines of Moldavia, each weighing approximately one hundred okas. Salt is sold in the country and in Poland and many ships with salt go to Constantinople, too. Twelve leagues from Bucharest, the salt that is sold in Anatolia and Constantinople can be found. It is transported on Danube. There are three salt mines in Wallachia and one in Moldavia; the mountains at the border are rich in pyrite out of which brimstone can be extracted and vitriol is produced. Near Bucharest there is a village where felt is made, felt that has a length of twenty-two cubits and which is generally painted in blue or grey. This village is called Afumați, the one that was previously mentioned.

The gypsies are the only blacksmiths of the country and they have a sort of smithcraft which they carry with them. Several thousands of these poor souls live on woods and make wooden plates and spoons which are sold to the merchants for their shops. They weave their own slippers with a wooden hook. There are no other foreign artisans except those who left the country; in Bucharest and Iași there are wheelwrights, tailors, surgeons and shoemakers according to the European fashion. Nitre is everywhere on the two provinces; the one in Moldavia is better than the one on Poland. The forests are full of wood taken down by the wind, but no one seems to have thought of creating a factory. The good wood for the manufacture of ships is generally used only to obtain coal which is taken to Constantinople.

Brăila, on the Danube, is the most important port in Wallachia and Galati, once having the name of Ancyre Galatium, situated on the same river, is the biggest port in Moldavia. In these two towns, trade has the most significant value.

### **Income**

The regular income of Moldavia amount to approximately three million Tours livres. The ones of Wallachia are a half bigger; each of the two rulers pays the High Porte a tribute, the first one pays one thousand bags, that is one thousand two hundred Tours livres, and the second, one thousand five hundred bags, that is one thousand eight hundred livres, without counting the gifts

that they are force to give to the high officials of the seraglio to keep their ruling. This income sometimes amounts to even bigger values, depending on the ruler's will and wit. For example, Grigore Ghica, had already had the idea to collect three taxes after peace from the inhabitants of this poor country, although that the Turks and the Russians specified in the treaty that no taxes shall be asked from the two provinces for a period of two years and the sultan did not ask anything from the ruler. Here it is, in detail, the regular income of Moldavia:

-the tax on the Odobești vine, four Turkish coins for ten okas, brings every year 140 000 Turkis piastre

-the tax on the other vines, almost 100 000

-the tax on big and small cattle approximately 200 000

-the tax on horses approximately 30 000

-the tax on bees, the other cereals and other small things 30.000

-the customs in Galați, Mohilău and Soroca, approximately 200.000

-salt mines, approximately 100.000

-annual tax 250.000.

.....  
1 050 000 piastre

### **Ruling and justice**

Anyone who knows something about Eastern despotism can imagine how the ruling that I am about to describe was; There is no point trying to make a clear impression about it; they had to be a witness of it to understand how much these practices can be refined by the corrupt and debased Greeks.

Moldavia and Wallachia and all the Ottoman Empire, have no written or printed law. All judgement is made according to the whim or interest of the prince or according to the plans of its ministers; the one who pays more to the favourite of His Highness wins. All reasoning, all fair proofs in a cause have no weight for the judges. The sentences are orally given and very rarely they are written. If somehow they are written, it does not acquire great importance, as there is no clerk or office to keep them. Seeing the same judgment started 10 times under different rulers was nothing out of the ordinary. I shall remind some examples of the sort of justice that is made at the court of Grigore Ghica. A merchant from Iasi, Nicoletti, called before the ruler one of his debtors, for the amount of six hundred gold coins, amount that was concluded and signed; with this proof, the debtor firstly receive the sentence from the ruler himself to pay the aforementioned amount. The prime minister, who protected the debtor, made the allusion that, in order to get revenge on his creditor and to erase the debt, all he had to do was to pay three hundred gold coins. This calculation concluded and signed in Mr. Nicoletti's registry was declared false by the same person who decided that it was fair. The three hundred gold coins are divided between the ruler, the first and the second minister and the poor creditor was reduced to silence so that he could keep the rest of his fortune. A second example: a young Moldavian boyar, named Balș, who travelled in the German Country and who had the misfortune of not being fair, that is as treacherous as the ruler, calls to justice one of his friends for the lease of the salt mines, for the amount of fourteen or fifteen thousand piastre which was owed to him. At the first indictment of the opposite party, Mr. Balș, without even being listened, was convicted *on his highness own authority* not to receive anything. This young conspirator who knows how the Greek justice works, goes to meet the second minister of the ruler and offers him two hundred gold coins if he can help him win the trial in which the justice, indeed, was on his side. This second minister succeeded in allowing Mr. Balș to defend himself.

His proofs convince all the judges of the Divan; the ruler himself is persuaded and orders Mr. Balș's friends to pay the amount. Then, the prime minister who protected Mr.

Balș's enemies advise them to arouse the interest of the prince's doctor, a student from Constantinople, by giving him one thousand five hundred ducats; they do this thing. The final decision is not known because he had not arrived there yet when I left these fine men. A third example: a French officer who made great favours to a Greek, his brother in law, who was living in Kronstadt, in Transylvania ever since the war, was called by this Greek in Iași, at the beginning of peace, promising him that only the best things would happen. He gives him an untitled piece of land for a period of five years for the amount of four hundred piastre per year with the right to build whatever he wanted. The gentleman himself concludes this agreement in writing for the French officer. The officer spends almost two thousand piastre to fallow, sow and build on the land. He opens a tile factory; this deserted land is transformed by the French officer, but the old Greek, his protector and so-called friend, gets sick, loses his mind and dreams that all that was made was his and that the French officer is a simple lessee. After six months he tells him to calculate the amount that he had to pay him for everything that he had done, notifying him that he would pay in good faith all the money that was going to be taken from the rural economy which had not brought him any income yet and from his factories that were opened only two months ago.

Amazed by such a method, the French uses his logic, invokes the gratitude that the Greek owed him, the agreement they made, the rights he had, the trust that was given to all foreigners attracted in another country and, finally, the honour, his word, all the words that were good for the Europeans, but pure sophism for Greeks; they do not know what honour is, they don't even have a word for it in their language, and they never appreciate gratitude; all was in vain for the poor French officer. He sent memoirs to the ruler against his brother in law. No one dared to interfere in this matter; I was the only one who took his side. I told his highness that if he wanted to take the factories and arrangements, he should at least be compensated with their value in money. The ruler agreed to all my proofs, but still the cause cannot be solved. Finally, suspecting that the decision was too difficult for such judges, I wrote a judgement letter which they followed as such and with which the prince consented to. So, here it is, the opposite party had to pay the French a sum of money. This judgement had no effect, though; the French officer's brother in law swore he would not pay anything and he would go to Constantinople, to reveal to the High Porte all the treachery that he had done in favour of the Russians during the last war. Then I left his highness who, in order to show his Greek gratitude, kept for himself half of the amount that he agreed to give me for the way back. After this, if Mr. Rousseau ever comes to say that the barbarian peoples are better than the civilised ones, I shall ask him to live one more year in the forests of Moldavia.

### ***The ruler's officials***

#### **The Grandeur of His Court**

The rulers of Wallachia and Moldavia have the title of Serene Highness which was given by the Republic of Venice and which, from that moment on, the other princes of Europe cared to give it to them, although that they could only be seen as simple lessees of the Ottoman Empire and not as the equals of the Italian and German princes. Their first official is called *the great court marshal* and he is a sort of prime minister. His daily job is to enter and leave incessantly the big room where the ruler is holding a big and black scepter with a silver club on top with which he makes noise. All this to-and-fro happens because it is necessary to inform the ruler on the decision of the Divan, composed by twelve boyars, which is held in a neighboring room and to inform the Divan of the ruler's decision. When he gets tired of these walks, he rests in a separate room where he receives guests and grievance. There is a second and third court marshal and they too have a scepter; but they are subordinate officials. The second minister is called *căminar*, he does not have a black scepter and he has the duty to know the political secrets of the ruler; then the great logothete or the great chancellor, without a chancellor is next. There is a second and third logothete who are a sort of

rapporteurs of the judgment causes; the great steward or the great treasurer who have the duty to pay from the treasury; there are the second and third stewards who have the duty pay from the prince's treasury the amounts of money that he approves. The great chamberer or the first chamberlain has the duty to buy fur and slippers for his highness and his family; the great and small cupbearer or the persons who pour into the prince's glasses one a year; the great equerry whose job is to take care of twenty or thirty horses that are in his highness' stables

The first and second steward are a sort of intendent of the ruler's house; the great ataman is the general of the cavalry who can use whistlers, drummers, lieutenants, officers and under-officers to twenty-seven, twenty-eight people dressed in blue; the great cavalry commander who was previously mentioned; in Wallachia, this high office is known as the great ban; he has the same honours, but a greater power. Aga or the general lieutenant of the police whose duty is to rob the merchants, the craftsmen and courtesans and to bow three times before his highness, kissing the sole of his boot when he goes to walk on his white horse. This Aga always has a regiment of the soldiers, dressed in green and another eighteen dressed in red, form together with the cavalry, an army of seventy-seven people armed with muskets, most of them without a plate and with knives and without handles. The artillery has three iron cannonballs. When the ruler goes to church or for a walk to show himself to his subjects, he is usually followed by the entire army and all his officials. Except this procession of the Franciscan monks from the great monastery in Milan, I know nothing greater and more solemn than this march of this *Goodman* of Moldavia. Except these officials of the ruler, there are two bailiffs, a sort of ushers who always have half a cubit gallon of gold attached to a small silver rod; their only duty is to take the tenth part from the litigation money which is paid or received by ruler's decision. The great and small viziers are officers of his highness' police and those who imprison and apply punishments. In the antechambers of the ruler's palace, every hour of the day there are two buffoons whose duty is to shake a silver bell, to make faces and to laugh when his highness goes from one apartment to another.

The rest of the servants in the palace are boys who serve coffee, comfiture and bring the chibouk; one has to spend a specific number of years among these boys to be able to have the function of official and state minister. The two provinces are divided in twenty-four counties, each having an administrator chosen by the ruler. All of them and the other public servants and servant from the court have no other pay the liberty to cheat and rob everything they can. Here the Greek spirit shine: when these servants do not earn enough, they make up a judgement or misunderstanding on a rich merchant or a wealthy townsman and when the victim is in their hands, the only way to get away is with money. If an unfortunate soul, who was robbed, comes to complain to his highness about one of his servants (which rarely happens), his highness laughs and then asks how much money has been taken from him; the man answers: oh well, his highness adds, he can cry whatever he wants, the money is with us. This brutal and unjust philosophy is the cause for which the merchants and townsmen give gifts to the ruler and his officials, for fear they might be punished one day to pay a bigger amount. The palace in which the ruler of Moldavia lives today is an old castle which used to be a stable and infirmary for the Russians during the war.

This ruler had the walls painted and white paper glued on the cracked windows. The apartments are very big, but only the bedroom of his highness has furniture. Household saving is so extreme in the ruler's palace that they put napkins at the table only once every fifteen days and the glasses that are set are broken; when this ruler wants to show off, (which only happens on his birthday) the tables are full of silverware and porcelain. The unusual thing about these tyrants of Moldavia and Wallachia is that all their wealth, money, jewellery, clothes and furniture are in trunks and travel chests as if they have to leave in any moment; and, actually, I am not mistaken, because they are constantly afraid that they might be relegated, kidnapped or killed. Being this cautious, their family can at least save their most valuable objects. All male

children of the ruler are called *beizadele*; they keep this name all their life, but it does not give them the right to the throne of Moldavia; only money matters to the High Porte. The destiny of these children is often sadder than the one of a craftsman; many of them are in Constantinople, in Bucharest and in Iași, poor with small allowances from the rulers that are not enough for a decent living. The city of Iași can have thirty thousand inhabitants and the Bucharest has approximately sixty thousand. These cities are not surrounded by walls and the houses are scattered. The palace of the ruler of Wallachia is not greater than the palace of the ruler of Moldavia, but the capital of the first has many churches, monasteries and private buildings. In both of them you can find Turkish cafes and shops full of textiles and troggin. Both rulers set up in each capital schools which they named secondary schools and in which two or three illiterate monks taught Latin, Greek and Religion.

The difference between the two, Alexandru Ipsilanti, the ruler of Wallachia and Grigore Ghica, the ruler of Moldavia is that the first one is interested in arts and has the desire to have a code of particular laws for his Divan and for the one of the county governors; for this, he attracted in the country several educated people and told them to draft this code which he would undoubtedly publish if the restless despotism of the High Porte stopped it.

#### **About Moldavians and Wallachians**

Moldavians and Wallachians are usually strong and tall, their clothes, which are light and loose, do not clasp their arms, legs or wrists; horse riding is the only exercise they like and often, in the summer, the young men are seen throwing spears, as the Turks did. Except learning Greek, they have no other education.

The young boyars, who are to take jobs, either at the court of the ruler, either in the country, try to learn Turkish, Latin, French and Italian; but few master foreign languages. The moral of the priests and Aristotle's philosophy are the only sources of vague ideas about vice and virtue; however, I have to confess that beyond this general and stupid ignorance which the two peoples have, there are a few talented and educated people who could join the most important of our scholars. I could name four of these whose names are worth being known: three of them live in Iasi and the fourth lives in Bucharest; the first is a famous doctor named Theodorati who speaks, writes and translates perfectly from French, Latin, Greek, Turkish and Italian; but his greatest talent is that of being very skilled at Geometry and Algebra; his smallest talent is that of being the most artful doctor in the Ottoman Empire. He knows Boerhave and Astruc as well as he knows Homer; nothing is new to him except the absurdities of the superstitions and scholastics. The second, named Saul also knows well six languages and the history of his country and knows perfectly the Turks' policy; this man is the most important person that the ruler of Moldavia has. The third is Bogdan, who comes from one of the oldest families of the country, a delightful person who is eloquent, reasonable and who also knows foreign languages and for whom the Moldavian people have the utmost respect. The fourth is *Carataja*, great court marshal of Wallachia, a man who is educated, pleasant, a great politician and very honest. It seems like fate wanted to compensate this poor country by throwing a few remarkable people in the barbarian and clumsy crowd of monks, people and boyars.

A quality of these peoples which the military policy can use is that of being great soldiers when discipline is imposed. The ruler approved it; the sovereign has several regiments with Wallachians in his army and these Wallachians are very skilled and quick; it is worth mentioning the fact that all peoples first learn the art of destroying and killing its people. The Wallachians' personality is more cheerful than the one of the Moldavians. They are smarter and braver; but it cannot be said that the two peoples have the tendency to steal or kill; they show respect for hospitality with a sort of gratitude; they were in a way distanced from kindness; and if the simplicity of their habits was corrupted, this can be blamed on the Greeks who, like despicable harpies that destroy everything they touch so that they can be the only masters,

come from Turkey and the islands of the Archipelago to steal from these two provinces leaving behind the marks of their vice and gluttony.

The Moldavian and Wallachian women are generally beautiful; they have white skin, but their face is pale. Few of them are blonde, but there are plenty of brunettes, with beautiful black eyes. The women from these regions have the culture of love: there have been examples while the Russian troops stayed in Moldavia and Wallachia; each soldier and officer had a mistress; girls, women, widows, all of them left their family and village to follow these defeatens of Turks. The women's clothing is a sort of long dress, without creases, which tightly covers the body from the neck down, thus showing all their shapes and roundness. They put on top of this dress a fur coat which they wear every time they go out, even in the summer. The peasant women who cannot afford silk or cotton dresses, wear an embroidered shirt and an apron which they tie like a belt on their waist from the navel to their thighs; they braid their hair in long tails or in a bun under a kerchief looking like they have a helmet. They often add feathers, diamond-like jewellery and other stones. Jewish women from these provinces, instead of adopting this hairstyle, which would not be suited for him, because they cut their hair, they embellish their hair with a string of yellow coins around their face; the peasant women braid their hair and make a wreath on their heads. The quality of the women from these provinces is kindness. Slaves of their parents, husbands and of their lovers, Moldavian and Wallachian women know no other greater law or will than the one of men; although they are free, they rarely go out and they are never alone; the deep languor and ignorance in which they live are, apparently, the causes of their faith and obedience; as a result, jealousy rarely shows its face; the husband speaks and the women kiss their hand and ask for forgiveness.

I do not think that there is a woman, not even the princess that rule today in Moldavia and Wallachia, who knows how to read and write; in this regard, Greeks claim that women should know whatever their husbands want them to know. Young girls are hidden from men until the marriage is concluded and they join them in their nuptial bed. Before this, their only occupation is to cry for the husband that they are destined to have; up until that moment, they can only imagine the pleasures of love and the madness of voluptuousness. The civil marriage contract is made before witnesses; the deed is signed in two copies by the husband's relatives or friends, without any other formality for the boyars than the signature of the ruler and the metropolitan. The ordinary people get married without a contract; all they need is the blessing of God, that is, the priest. On the day of the marriage, the bride covers herself with a veil weaved in gold and silver which falls creating large creases from the head to the waist; they decorate it with a black feather ornament, taller than the one the French ladies have. Dressed this way, four women take her by the arm and slowly take her to church as if she were a tortured wrongdoer. Once they reach the church, the priest makes her promise trust and faith to her future husband, put his hand in the hand of his future wife, then they kiss each other hands and then they sing *Kyrie* which lasts two hours. After this, being less sad, the spouses are taken home. The feast is next. They get drunk, dance all night and the wife and husband see themselves for the first time and go to bed together. With a difference of only a few words, the language of Wallachia is the same as the one of Moldavia. This language is mostly derived from Latin, for example the words bread - *pâine* - pane, tomorrow - *mâine* (mane), water - *apa* - aqua, wine - *vinum*, etc., from Slavic or Russian, for example servant - *slugă* (servitor) and from Polish like *vaivoda* (vaivode, prince). Also, a number of Turkish and Tatar words was introduced and together they make a barbarian and corrupted language which lacks energy, taste and any abstract idea. The hand written and typed letters are mostly Greek, Russian and Tatar. Ordinary Greek is the civilised language of the ruler's court and of the governors of these provinces. Italian and French are also spoken there; the ruler and several boyars of the country have books in French; the works of art of Mr. Voltaire are in the hands of several young boyars; and the French authors' books would be an object of trade in these provinces if the patriarch of Constantinople had not threatened all those who read Roman-Catholic books and especially the Voltaire's books with the wrath of God.

### Political reflections on Moldavia and Wallachia

If the success of well applied policy could pass the ruling of the two provinces to the emperor or King of Prussia, or would be easy to foresee and explain how this beautiful country might become one of the most pleasant region of Europe. The colonies that would be sent here would not nit have to fear the difficulties and misery endured by Astrakhan because the distance is not that big and they can hope to the support of civilised Europe. Thus, the difficulties to which the locations in Banat have been subjected to could be avoided by better choosing the housing land; the parts of Moldavia and Wallachia on the Danube are more favourable and the soil is richer. The only thing that has to be done is to irrigate the field and to drain the stagnant water to clean the place and to make the soil better for crops. Exploiting mines, forests, breaking up the soil , the improved ways of growing vine and fruit would be some things that, in twenty years, could make two hundred thousand families rich, exposed in another part to laziness and poverty and they would bring the ruler sixty million livres. The soil of the fields and hills has generally such good qualities that they could grow rice, tobacco, sugar, crops that are not known on our continent, but they are suited for this type of land, in this area of Europe almost all objects of trade and agriculture can be gathered. The dessert which spreads on the area between Iași and Nistru and to the borders with Podolia offers the best soil on a surface of twenty leagues in width and thirty leagues in length. This type of soil, on which wheat, barley and fruit gardens are grown, can be found only here. In this place there are no trees and the soil is covered by tall grass and rich vegetation; the land has small hills with many springs; nothing would be easier than to plant orchards and forests; everything would be great. On the other hand, these two provinces offer a new trade direction for the other nations of Europe. Bounded by the Danube and Nistru, both of them emptying in the Black Sea, their ports wait the ships on the Mediterranean which can arrive in three days from the Bosphorus of Thrace to Galați and Brăila and the boats of Bavaria, of Austria or Hungary which can descend there in a very short period of time. The foreigners did not attempt to make trade in this part with the Moldavians and the Wallachians; the Greeks and Turks were the only ones who traded up until this point, but unsuccessful. The time that brings all revolutions, must undoubtedly bring one in the two provinces whose history is described here; but does this revolution depend on the fate of the Ottoman Empire in Europe? We shall find out later in time.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The translation from English of Jean Luis Carra's *Dissertation the current state of Moldavia and Wallachia (1781)*, was made according to the translation in Romanian (from French) of the second edition of Jean Louis Carra's work published in Neuchatel in 1781 (Jean-Louis Carra, *The History of Moldavia and Wallachia*, translated by Veronica Greucu, notes by Veronica Greucu and Ligia Livadă-Cadeschi, foreword by Ligia Livadă-Cadeschi, European Institute, Iași, 2011, p. 86-108.

