

“AL. I. CUZA” UNIVERSITY”

FACULTY OF HISTORY

**EUROPEAN CONSULAR REPRESENTATIVES IN GALAȚI, IN
THE FIRST HALF OF THE XIXTH CENTURYE**

– SUMMARY –

SCIENTIFIC COORDINATOR

GABRIEL CORNELIU-BĂDĂRĂU

Ph.D. CANDIDATE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION/5

HISTORICAL TRADITION OF COMMERCIAL CITIES. THE FOREIGNERS' RÉGIME /14

Beginnings/14

Foreigners' Régime in Antiquity and Medieval Times /15

The Régime Applied to Foreigners in the Ottoman Empire/17

THE ORIENTAL MATTER AND THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CONSULAR RÉGIME WITHIN THE ROMANIAN PRINCIPALITIES /24

Towards the Passarowitz and Kuciuk-Kainargi/24

The Beginnings of the Consular Régime within the Romanian
Principalities/28

Consequences. Regulations Regarding Foreigners in the Principalities/41

GALAȚI. STRATEGIC, COMMERCIAL AND POLITICAL POINT ON THE GREAT ROUTES OF EUROPE/51

History and Development/51

Galați after the Organic Regulation. Administrative-territorial Changes /
55

Consequences. Foreigners Coming to Galați/62

RUNNING THE CONSULAR POSTS OF GALAȚI, IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE XIXTH CENTURY/76

Consular Hierarchy. Consuls, Vice-consuls and Agents in Galați/76

Stages of Appointing a Consular Representative/77 Consular Acts/79

Consular Staff/82 Consular Titles/83 Consular Correspondence/83

Advantages and Rations/84 Releasing Consuls from Office/85

Prohibitions/86 Consular Protection and Assistance/87

Consular Circumscription/88

FROM GALAȚI TO IAȘI. FROM IAȘI TO GALAȚI. DATA REGARDING THE FRENCH CONSULAR ACTIVITY IN GALAȚI/90

Intentions and Proposals. The First Appointing Initiative of a French Representative Consular in Galați/90

“Sub-commissioner and Commissioner for Trade Relations”. Méchain/93

From Sub-commissary to Vice-consulate. Martin/94

A Tumultuous and Uncertain Period. 1812 – 1846/98

Duclos’s Activity in Galați. 1846 – 1850/100

From Vice-consulate to Consulate. Gardera (1852 – 1855)/103

THE BRITISH-IONIC “CONDOMINIUM” OF GALAȚI. DATA REGARDING THE BRITISH CONSULAR ACTIVITY IN GALAȚI/110

The First British Consuls in the Principalities. Protectors of Galați?/110

Consular Law, Misdemeanor, and Fraud. From the Activity of the British Vice-consul Charles Cunningham in Galați (1835 – 1861)/115

The Development of Navigation. Sulina Canal Issue/119

An Informant in Galați. Cunningham and the Exile of the Moldavian Revolutionaries (1848)/120

Galați Quarantine/123

Cunningham and the Crimean War/129

Support and Protection/130

THE ESTABLISHMENT, FEATURES AND BUSINESS OF THE SARDINIAN CONSULATE OF GALAȚI/136

The Historical Context of the First General Sardinian Consulate
Establishment in Galați/136

Reasons for Founding the First General Sardinian Consulate
Establishment in Galați/137

The First Appointing Initiatives of a General Sardinian Consulate in
Galați/ 137

The Sardinian Consular Representatives of Galați/140

The Reports of the Sardinian Consular Representatives of Galați/140

The Duties of the Sardinian Consuls of Galați/146

CONCLUSIONS/152

REFERENCES/155

APPENDIX/163

SUMMARY OF THE PH.D. THESIS

Historiographic Incipit

The thesis we propose, “European Consular Representative in Galați in the First Half of the XIXth Century” is the first monographic work on the consular activity in the Danubian port, which, due to its geographical location, and to its situation on the border with Russia, has known a surprising development beginning with the nineteenth century. Though important as historical subject, especially as local historical topic, the subject has attracted the historians’ attention only in the Communist and Post-communist era, the period of the first issued studies (Moise N. Pacu, Gh. Munteanu Bârlad, Paul Păltănea). Nowadays, the new researches (Vasile Docea, Raluca Tomi, Ela Cosma, Constantin Ardeleanu, Oana Buțură, but also older studies, signed by Paul Păltănea) take into account the way in which foreign communities have integrated within the cultural and economic life of Galați, and in which the trade relations between the European states and the Romanian Principalities have developed due to this port-city.

Importance

Despite the mentioned works, historiographic goals exist today, which is the reason why we have decided to write this audacious paper, paper which we believe will successfully fill an important period in the

history of Galați, importance that has been and will be linked to the Danube. For that matter, Dimitrie Cantemir, in his “Descriere a Moldovei” (“*Descriptio Moldaviae*”) considered it “... a town that does not strike the eye through its beautiful architecture or size, but which is the most famous town on the Danube”. According to the ruler of Moldova, prosperity could be explained by the numerous foreign ships transiting the port of Galați, “which came from Crimea, Trebizond, Sinope, Constantinople, but also from and Egypt, and Barbaria, and which left the port loaded with Moldavian wood, oak, dogwood, pine, fir as well as with honey, wax, salt, butter, cotton fabrics and wheat, which are very useful for all inhabitants”. Since medieval times, due to this geographical determinism, but also because of the Turkish ruling over Brăila, Galați has become the main trading post of the Romanian Principalities. Over time, the city has developed rapidly, becoming, in the modern period, “the only anchor and the first pillar of the country”, as stated Mihail Sturdza, the ruler of Moldova. Therefore, we can understand why during his trip in 1834, the French consul Lucien Adrien Cochelet, saw in Galați “a lot of Greek, Genoese, and Ionian Greek sailors who thronged trade street, where you walked on crossbars, or why the Prussian consul C. A. Kuch (1836-1842), stated that: Today, Galați is the street on which the German trade moves towards the East”, a claim also strengthened by the British representative general, William Wilkinson, who considered that the town of Galați was “Galați was fair for the products of both Principalities, the only outlet for a few commerce articles” being “inhibited mainly by merchants, who, despite the severity of prohibitions, often find the means to export a certain quantity of wheat and other contraband items, but their main trade is the import trade”. He

noted “The great confluence, brought about every year by the commercial operations, gives it the appearance of a very populous city and the movement of a large commercial market”. Moreover, “if the administration took the necessary measures, the Galați port soon could soon rival all ports the in the Black Sea, even Odessa”. Therefore, the presence of these foreigners in the Danube port was the decisive factor in establishing the first consular agencies in the Danube port because the French diplomat Peyssonnel found that: “French merchants will never be able to solidly locate in Moldavia and in Wallachia, as long as the consuls will not be there to protect them. They find themselves at the ruler’s mercy, who abuses their need to get along with him, and who often compels them to sell him goods on credit, with the great risk of losing claim, if he would somehow get killed”. In these statements, we find the importance of the topic we have chosen, especially since our preoccupations, regarding the importance of the foreign element in the development of Galați, are not new, but add up to previous researches, carried out during the master studies in the Faculty of History. Upon finishing these studies, I have written the dissertation thesis entitled *Uz și abuz în dreptul capitular. Statutul străinilor și rolul lor în economia orașului Galați (Use and Abuse in the Capitulatory Rights. The Foreigners’ Status and Their Role in the Economy of City Galați)*. The main issues discussed were: the importance of the port in the economy of Moldova, laws and customs related to foreigners from the first half of the nineteenth century, the beginnings of the consular activities of the Danubian port, rather the activity of the Sardinian, British, and French representatives.

Therefore, in this Ph.D. thesis, our intention is to continue the

research and to analyze the way in which these consular representatives, through their countrymen, beneficiaries of the consular jurisdiction régime, but subjects to the laws of the Principality of Moldavia, have contributed to the development of trade relations between the Romanian Principalities and the European states and to the foreign capital attraction in these areas. Dumitru Agache noted that “Due to the port, a real communicating bridge with the East and the West, for the water trading, more accessible and cheaper than the onshore trading, Galați played a crucial role in the economy of Moldavia. Moreover, being located on the border with Russia and Turkey, the city of Galați was of great importance, from a strategic, commercial and political point of view”. Thus, in this paper we will try to answer the following questions: How was it possible for a second-class city to become one of the most important consular residences in Moldavia? What determined the foreigners to locate here in such a large number? What were the differences between the consular representatives’ activity from the ports and the consular representatives’ activity from the capitals? Which was the most important factor: the political or the commercial one?

Although at first sight our approach does not seem to involve the risks of “injuring” the historical reality, as a matter of fact, the differences between the *de facto* and *de jure* situation, such as the disparity between what law “says” and what archives “say” may cause certain inconveniences. Moreover, the archives reveal many conflicts between the consular authorities and the central or local authorities, conflicts on the basis of which we can see the ways the two sides established relations, and the status of the foreign consular representatives from the Danubian port, in relation to the authorities in

the Principality of Moldavia. Studying published and unpublished sources, we have noticed the ways in which the consular jurisdiction was applied within the Moldavian territories: the first fell under the heading of the legal and institutional autonomy of the Romanian Principalities, making the lawsuits between foreigners be prosecuted by the Moldavian courts, based on the laws of the country; the second, deriving from the first, consisted of the Moldavian rulers' fight against the consular immunities and privileges system, a fight which eventually led to the abolition of the consular jurisdiction regime. The disparity between the two law systems, the capitulations régime and the Moldavian system was synthesized by the lawyer Vasile Boerescu. He believed that the capitulations régime could not be applied within the Moldavian territories because two laws could not exist simultaneously: a indigenous one, which transformed Christians into foreigners and a foreign one, which transformed Christians into Muslim Turks.

In Galați, we are witnessing both an opposition of the local authorities towards the consular authorities, and a commercial competition between the foreign nations established here. The consular reports illustrate the existing frictions between the Greek and the Piedmontese merchants in the Danubian port or the conflicts between the Bench (Pârcălăbie) and the foreign consulates, which, most often, were settled at the Commercial Court of the city. Therefore, another outstanding feature of the capitulations régime was given by its extension over the merchants who traded on land. They have preferred to come under the protection of a foreign consulate, in order to benefit from the advantages of being foreign vassals. Thus, there were several categories of foreign vassals, the protégés and the Romanian inhabitants protected

by foreign powers, who benefited a special jurisdiction (*sudiții*) divided, in their turn, into: vassal Ottoman protégés, protégés of a foreign power and inland protégés. Not infrequently, these practices have made Jews have Austrian or Prussian citizenship, or foreign traders from Galați be Bulgarians, under the protection of Austria. All these irregularities have caused a lot of confusion in clarifying the relationships between the local and the foreign merchants, but also a large deficit in the economy of the two provinces. This has led to the rejection of the foreigners by the natives and to the building of a commercially competitive environment.

Historiography and sources

In studying the matter, the archive funds of the *State Secretariat of Moldova* are fundamental. After 1832, this institution has replaced the activity of the Department of Foreign Accounts.

In foreign affairs, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs held correspondence with Constantinople and with the main Consuls of the country. The reports listed in this fund offer information about the existing conflicts between the foreigners and the local vassals, about the way in which correspondence between all institutions involved in resolving a conflict was carried out. The information displayed in this unpublished fund can be supplemented with the information present in two other archive funds, *England Microfilms* and *Foreign Archive Documents*, which contain the microfilmed correspondence of the British, the Sardinian, the French consular representatives with the authorities in Constantinople, Paris, London and Turin, and some copies of the decisions signed by the Bench (Pârcălăbie) or by the Quarantine Department of Galați. Excepting the brief mentions from the studies

signed by Stela Mărieș, Dumitru Agache, Vasile Docea as well as the researches within the microfilmed fund conducted by Raluca Tomi and Constantin Ardeleanu, the fund is, so far, unexplored, and the presented cases are unique. All these help us see who the main consular representatives in Galați were, and which were their main tasks.

Regarding the edited documentary sources, the Hurmuzaki document collection that contains information about the activity of the French vice-consul, Martin, both in Galați and in Iași, between 1806 – 1812 is worth noting; other data concern the activity of the French vice-consul Duclos during the revolution 1848; and, last but not least, we have data on the appointment of the first British vice-consul in Galați, lawyer Gesoz. Other documentary sources, which give us valuable information about the French consular activity in the Danubian port, are the ones edited by the historian Andrei Oțetea, in the new series of the Hurmuzaki collection. Based on these, we note the presence of a “sub-comisariat francez pentru relații comerciale” (“French trade relations sub-police station”), in Galați, in 1803, led by Méchain, also head of the “comisariatului general francez” (“French General Commissariat”) of Moldavia. Other documentary work, edited by Theodore Holban, provides information about the importance of the port in the development of the French trade, about the possibility of establishing some commercial consular posts in Galați, for Moldova and in Varna, for Wallachia, but also information about the French dragoman’s death, dragoman who had taken over Martin’s duties, after the latter’s leaving the post. In the collection of documents dating from the revolution of 1848, we find the measures taken by the Wallachian authorities to disarm the Sardinian vassals in Brăila, measures sent to the Sardinian General

Consul in Galati, but also one of the most exciting episodes in the history of the consular representatives from the Danubian port, namely the involvement of the British Vice-consul, Charles Cunningham, in exiling the 13 Moldavian revolutionaries, event extensively debated by Constantin Ardeleanu. Regarding the foreigners' importance in the economy of Galați, we mention the researches initiated by Paul Cernovodeanu, Constantin Bușe, Demetrius Bodin, Elena Siupiur, Stela Mărieș Oana Buțurcă. With the help of these researches, we can analyze the commercial contribution brought by each European country and we can identify the foreign companies that have played a major role in the economy of Galați.

In the first part of the paper, we will try to prove that the consular presence in Galați was a natural consequence of the economic importance of the port-city, but also a consequence due to the foreigners' presence in this area, which led to the establishment of the consular representatives.

Structure

In the first chapter – Historical Tradition of Commercial Cities. The Foreigners' Régime – we intend to analyze the first consular jurisdiction implementing methods, in order to see the real context and the causes and conditions in which the system has evolved since ancient times. In essence, the system exists since the period of ancient Greece, when Greek citadels began trading with other citadels, being forced to sign a number of legal acts providing guarantees and privileges to the foreign traders established in those places. Gradually, this system has evolved. If special laws or institutions have been created in antiquity,

granted by the ruler of the citadel to the vassals of other citadel, in medieval times, the sultans have issued a series of similar acts, for the vassals of the European states. From a legal perspective, this régime was based on **the personality of the law principle**, according to which foreigners were not subject to the law of the state that had received them, but to the law of the state that they came from. After the apparition of the first centralized states, this principle was replaced with the **territoriality principle**. According to it, the laws of a certain territory were applicable to all residents of that state, irrespective of nation or religion. However, in the Ottoman Empire, due to the Quran, the civil and the religious code of the Muslim world continued to apply the personality of the law principle. Essentially, the legal privileges granted to foreigners in the Ottoman Empire were particularly important. Among these, foreigners evaded the jurisdiction of the Ottoman law attesting, once again, that the capitulations régime was an exceptional legal régime. The privileges were valid during the capitulation and conditioned by the way in which the Ottoman officials applied them. After the Ottoman Empire becomes interested in the Romanian Principalities and after the generalization of the capitulations régime across Europe, the applying of the capitulations régime changes. Since the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainargi, the régime is established in the Principalities as well. With the new system, the Danubian port became the main repository of the Moldavian products, but also one of the most important consular residences. Many foreigners of different nationalities have settled here, establishing their import-export firms. These companies have contributed to the economic prosperity of the port of Galați, and to the intensification of relations between Moldova and the Western states. The emergence of these

commercial activity companies has created the necessary context for establishing the first consular posts in the Danubian port, true instruments of attracting foreigners in these areas, creating a veritable mercantile diaspora around them. Therefore, we can say that the positive role of the foreigners' presence in the life of Galați was felt both in the economic and in the cultural or social area. However, the entering of Western influenced goods in the Romanian economy has produced mutations, giving birth to a wide process of Europeanization and openness towards the West.

Obviously, one cannot ignore the negative aspects. In order to obtain economic, political, or commercial benefits, consular agencies initiated genuine media campaigns or tried to promote their most important members of the foreign community, to occupy important functions in the city. From this fact, arise other features of the consular régime in Galați, namely the opposition of the local authorities to the consular authorities, and the commercial competition between the foreign nations established in Galati. Numerous reports illustrate the existing frictions between the Greek and the Piedmontese merchants here or the conflicts between the Bench (Pârcălăbie) and the foreign consulates. In most cases, these conflicts were settled at the Commercial Court from here.

In the next chapter, **The Oriental Matter and the Beginnings of the Consular Régime Within the Romanian Principalities**, we will discuss the emergence of the first foreign consulates within the Moldavian and the Wallachian lands, in the beginning of the Oriental crisis context. After the Turks' failure against Vienna and the signing of Peace of Carlowitz (1699), the Ottoman Empire became increasingly

vulnerable to the foreign powers' attacks. Within a few centuries, all these foreign powers have managed to turn the exceptional capitulations régime into a normal one. Against this background, the movements within the Empire have become increasingly virulent. The treasury has been emptied, the governors have become more and more corrupt, the sultan could not conquer territory after territory, and the Turkish armies, equipped with traditional weapons, could not face the European attacks. During this period, the Romanian Principalities have come to the attention of the Great Powers. In these territories, they have seen the weak point of the Ottoman Empire so that, beginning with the eighteenth century, a number of foreign powers have disputed over the Moldo-Wallachian territory.

The first among these was Austria. On the 27th of July, 1718, with the treaty signed between Charles VI and Sultan Ahmed I, the Treaty of Passarowitz. By this treaty, Austria gained Oltenia, northern Serbia and Banatul Timișoarei, and the right to have consuls in all centers of the Ottoman Empire. The next power to gain advantages in these areas is Russia, which signs a treaty with the Ottoman Empire, on the 10th/21st of July 1774, between Russia and the Ottoman Empire at Kukciuk Kainargy, treaty that will pave the way for the collective guarantee of the Great Powers. However, through its provisions, the treaty revealed the political decay of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire saw itself forced to collaborate with Russia in organizing the Romanian Principalities and to accept its presence in this area by establishing the first Russian consulate. However, this treaty had three consequences: it created the required entering lane in this area for Russia; it revealed the imminent downfall of the Ottoman Empire and created an opposition

movement among the boyar groups. The next treaty with major consequences on the trade of the two principalities, the one liberalizing the trade of the European states with the two principalities was the Treaty of Adrianople. Through it, “Principatele Moldovei și Valahiei, punându-se sub suzeranitatea Sublimei Porți și Rusia, se vor bucura de libera exercitare a cultului, or de o siguranță perfectă de o administrație independentă și de o deplină libertate a comerțului” (“The Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, putting themselves under the suzerainty of the Sublime Porte and of Russia, will enjoy free exercise of worship, or a perfectly safe independent administration and of full trade freedom”). At the same time, Moldova and Wallachia were forever dispersed to provide grains and other consumption goods, sheep and wood that they were required to deliver them earlier. Moreover, by this treaty, the inhabitants of the Romanian Principalities got the right to travel freely through all the provinces of the Ottoman Empire.

In the third chapter, **Galați, Strategic, Commercial and Political Point on the Great Routes of Europe**, we will present the evolution of the city beginning with the historiographical mentions and until the signing of the Organic Regulations, when the entire organization of the city changes. Essentially, in this chapter will demonstrate that the apparition of the consulates in the port-city on the Danube has been a consequence of its geographical location, of its equipment with all sorts of port institutions, with shipyards, all these facilities creating the necessary framework for the foreigners’ appearance in the Danubian port.

In the fourth chapter, **Running the Consular Posts of Galați in the First Half of the XIXth Century**, we will perform a simple presentation that will clarify matters regarding the consular

representatives' consular ranks, organization, documents, titles and main functions in the Danubian port.

In the fifth chapter, **From Galați to Iași – From Iași to Galați. Data Regarding the French Consular Activity in the Danubian Port**, in the first half of the nineteenth century, we will analyze the reasons that determined the need to establish the first sub-police commercial station in the Danubian port in 1803, who the French consular representatives were and the titles they had, for the first half of the nineteenth century. Noteworthy in this regard is the absence of a French consular post and of the business management of the French vassals in the Danube port, in the headquarters of Iași, in certain periods. The main sources which we will rely on are *France Microfilms*, the Hurmuzaki document collection, the new and the old series, as well as studies signed by Andrei Oțetea, Lăcrămioara Iordăchescu, Paul Păltănea, Constantin Buse, Ștefan Stanciu.

In the sixth chapter, **The British-Ionic “Condominium” of Galați. Data Regarding the British Vice-Consular Activity in the Danubian Port in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century**, we have planned to draw the British commercial interests in the Danubian port, to present the context in which the first British Benches have been established, to analyze the British-Ionic condominium in the Danubian port, presenting the main cases of consular jurisdiction. From the analyzed data, it appears that the evolution of the British consular agency of Galați has experienced two stages: first, between 1815 – 1835, when the interests of the British vassals in the Danubian port were defended by guildmasters, and the second, after Cunnigham's coming in 1835, when part of the Ionians passed under the jurisdiction of the Greek consulate,

and the British remained under the protection of their vice-consulate. However, from the carried out analysis, we notice that the guildmasters' and the vice-consul's main responsibilities of this period have been limited to protecting the vassals in their lawsuits with the locals, issuing patents, passports, elaborating reports through which the official circles of London were aware of all that was happening in these areas.

In the last chapter, **The Establishment, Features and Business of the General Sardinian Consulate of Galați in the first half of the nineteenth century**, we will present the context in which the first Sardinian consular post has been established in Galați, the main treaties concluded between Sardinia and the Ottoman Empire, the names of the main Sardinian consular representatives and their duties, the main directions of the consular correspondence, as well as the main cases in which they have been involved. Noteworthy is the fact that the consular representative of Sardinia had distinct features in comparison to other consulates in Galați. The first and the most important feature regarded the focus of the entire consular activity in the port of Galați, where the consul was; and the second, marked by the preponderant trade role of the Sardinian consulate in Galați; and the third, of aggregating the two positions, of vice-consul and consul, which resulted from the first feature. The main sources that we will rely on are the *State Secretariat of Moldova, Italy Microfilms*, as well as the studies signed by Raluca Tomi, Constantin Bușe.

We conclude this introduction making some observations on this subject: constantly recurring in the consular reports of the time, the foreigners' issue was an eternal dispute between the local and the consular authorities who have tried, based on the capitulations system, to

abuse the position they held and to obtain many privileges for the nation they represented. In Galați, due to its function as port, the foreigners' issue has gained a purely economic character, contributing to the economic prosperity of the city.