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THE NETWORKS OF A WALLACHIAN
PRETENDER IN CONSTANTINOPOLE: THE CON-
TACTS OF THE FUTURE VOIVODE MIHAIL
RADU 1654–1657*

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Research on the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the Voivodates of Wallachia and Moldavia has enjoyed a renaissance in recent decades. New studies have unearthed hitherto unknown documents, presented new interpretations of the tributary status, described the structure of the voivodes' diplomatic representation at the sultan's court and discussed the intersections of power structures in the two countries and with those of the Sublime Porte.¹ The task of the researcher engaging with the Constantinopolitan networks of the rulers and pretenders of Wallachia and Moldavia is nevertheless hardly easy. The correspondence of the voivodes, which must have included a plethora of information on the topic, is irrecoverably lost: the remaining fragments, a handful of letters, are also quite frustrating. They offer only unrelated glimpses into the everyday workings of a mostly unknown system, referring to people unknown from other sources and pursuing ongoing discussions the substance of which was explicated elsewhere, and which therefore remain incomprehensible for the modern reader.² There is thus noth-

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¹ To name but a few of the important authors, see Mihai Maxim, *L'Empire Ottoman au nord du Danube et l'autonomie des Principautés Roumaines au XVI^e siècle* (Istanbul, 1999); idem, *Romano-Ottomanica: Essays & Documents from the Turkish Archives* (Istanbul, 2001); idem, *Noi documente turcești privind Țările Române și Înalta Poartă* [New Turkish documents concerning the Romanian Principalities and the Sublime Porte] (Brăila, 2008); Viorel Panaite, *The Ottoman Law of War and Peace: The Ottoman Empire and Tribute Payers* (Boulder, 2000); Ion Matei, *Reprezentanții diplomatici (capuchehăi) ai Țării Românești la Poarta Otomană* [The diplomatic representatives (*capuchehaias*) of Wallachia at the Sublime Porte], ed. Nagy Pienaru and Tudor Teoteoi (Bucharest, 2008); Radu G. Păun, "La circulation des pouvoirs dans les Pays Roumains au XVII^e siècle: Repères par une modèle theorique," *New Europe College Yearbook 1998–1999*: 263–311; idem, "Enemies Within: Networks of Influence and the Military Revolts against the Ottoman Power (Moldavia and Wallachia, Sixteenth-Seventeenth Centuries)," in *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth–Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Gábor Kármán and Lovro Kunčević (Leiden, 2013), forthcoming.

² See for instance the reports of Constantin Iulian, or Neagoe Logofăt and Gheorghe to Gheorghe Ștefan, voivode of Moldavia (Constantinople, 21 August 1655, respectively 24 January 1656) in

ing else to do than to refer to foreign sources; however, these too have their specific problems.

The Voivodates of Wallachia and Moldavia were not the primary focus of information-gathering for any major power that had representatives at the Sublime Porte; therefore, the information about them remains rather limited. Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Romanian historians, by a huge effort, collected valuable material, primarily from the archives of Venice and Vienna: both the Serenissima and the Habsburg Empire had a well-developed information-gathering system, and also some political interest in events concerning the Danubian Principalities.³ Nevertheless, even these sources are only interested in extraordinary situations, changes of ruler, wars or the risk of impending military conflict; they do not offer insights into the everyday running of the various Romanian political agents' networking activities. Even if these diplomats did have contacts with Romanians in Constantinople, they hardly felt necessary to inform the court at home about them.

A very telling example is that of Mihnea, protagonist of this case study: when he was granted the throne of Wallachia in January 1658, Simon Reniger, the Habsburg ambassador, wrote to Vienna that he had already been in close contact with the new Wallachian ruler earlier. He proved this by pointing out in his report that the voivode visited him at the night of his inauguration and took farewell in a half-an-hour-long conversation. Reniger also noted that Mihnea had also been well acquainted one of his predecessors, Johann Rudolph Schmid zum Schwarzenhorn, who resided in Constantinople

Sándor Szilágyi, ed., *Erdély és az északkeleti háború* [Transylvania and the Northeastern war], (Budapest, 1890–1891), vol. 1, 553–554, respectively vol. 2, 214–216.

³ Venetian materials have been published in Ioan Slavici, ed., *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor culese de Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki* [Documents for the history of the Romanians collected by Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki] (henceforth Hurmuzaki, *Documente*), vol. 5, part 2, 1650–1699 (Bucharest, 1885); also vol. 8, 1376–1650 (Bucharest, 1894); and vol. 9, part 1, 1650–1747 (Bucharest, 1897). Recently, new sources have been discovered by Cristian Luca, see among others his *Dacoromano-Italica: Studi e ricerche sui rapporti italo-romeni nei secoli XVI–XVIII* (Cluj-Napoca, 2008). From the Viennese material, Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki published résumés: *Fragmente zur Geschichte der Rumänen*, vol. 1–5 (Bucharest, 1878–1886). Valuable material has also been published from the papers of the French embassy in Constantinople, see Grigore George Tocilescu and Alexandru I. Odobescu, ed., *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor* [Documents for the history of the Romanians], Supplement, vol. 1, part 1, 1518–1870 (Bucharest, 1886); Nerva Hodoş, ed., *Documente privitoare la Istoria Românilor culese de Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki* [Documents for the history of the Romanians collected by Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki], vol. 16, *Corespondență diplomatică și rapoarte consulare franceze (1603–1824)* [French diplomatic correspondence and consular reports] (Bucharest, 1912). On the information gathering of the Habsburg embassy, see István Hiller, “A tolmácsper” [The interpreters' lawsuit], in *Perlekedő évszázadok: Tanulmányok Für Lajos történész 60. születésnapjára*, ed. Ildikó Horn (Budapest, 1993), 147–186; Dóra Kerekes, “A császári tolmácsok a magyarországi visszafoglaló háborúk idején” [The Imperial interpreters during the expulsion of the Ottomans from Hungary], *Századok* 148 (2004): 1189–1228; eadem, *Diplomaták és kémek Konstantinápolyban* [Diplomats and spies in Constantinople] (Budapest, 2010). On the Venetian service: Paolo Preto, *I servizi segreti di Venezia: Spionaggio e controspionaggio ai tempi della Serenissima* (Milano, 1994), 197–234.

during the 1640s and who by this time, in 1658, was serving Leopold I as a member of his Court War Council (*Hofkriegsrat*). Schmid also acknowledged the existence of his contacts to Mihnea in another note.⁴ Nevertheless, this was the first time Mihnea had ever been mentioned in the Habsburg ambassadors' reports to Vienna: and the information revealed by them remained a very short summary. Even if the Wallachian pretender had earlier been a good contact for consecutive Habsburg ambassadors, his person was simply considered not important enough to be reported upon in dispatches: the *Hofkriegsrat* was in any case overburdened with a massive amount of information from Constantinople, and would have been very unlikely to be interested in the struggles of a Wallachian pretender.

Quite the opposite was the situation with another group, whose reports are usually overlooked in respect to this topic due to the language they were written in: the diplomats of Transylvania. As direct neighbours to the Wallachian and Moldavian Voivodates, the princes of this Ottoman tributary state had a keen interest in following developments in Constantinople: for them, it was necessary not only to know who the current voivodes were, but also who the next ones might be – and sometimes they even tried to interfere with the selection procedure. This attention was strongest when the princes' own affairs in Transylvania were otherwise well-ordered, so that they could concentrate not only on maintaining their international political position, but also in attempting to enlarge their spheres of influence. This was the situation in the mid-seventeenth century, under Princes György Rákóczi I and II (1630–1648 and 1648–1660 respectively, with interruptions). Thanks to the gratifying survival of the princely family's archives, it is from exactly this period that we have the most numerous, and also the most detailed reports from the Constantinople embassy.⁵ One should not imagine a series of documents similar to the Venetian reports: even from the best years, only a maximum of 40% of dispatches have survived, so that much information has been lost; however,

⁴ Simon Reniger's report to Leopold I (Adrianople, 13 February 1658) Österreichische Staatsarchiv Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (henceforth HHStA) Türkei I. Kt. 129. Fasc. 64. Conv. A. fol. 74–75. The memorial of Schmid from August/September 1658 is published by Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente*, vol. 3, 244.

⁵ The Rákóczi family archive is found today in the Hungarian National Archives: Magyar Országos Levéltár Magyar Kamara Archivuma E 190 Archivum Familiae Rákóczi de Felső-Vadász. On the foreign policy of the Rákóczis in the mid-seventeenth century, see: Katalin Péter, "The Golden Age of the Principality (1606–1660)," in *History of Transylvania*, vol. 2, *From 1606 to 1830*, ed. László Makkai and Zoltán Szász (New York, 2002), 101–151; Gábor Kármán, *Erdélyi külpolitika a vesztfáliai béke után* [Transylvanian foreign policy after the Peace of Westphalia] (Budapest, 2011); idem, "György Rákóczi II's Attempt to Establish a Local Power Base among the Tributaries of the Ottoman Empire 1653–1657," in *Power and Influence in Southeastern Europe, 16th–19th Centuries*, ed. Maria Baramova et al. (Berlin, 2013, forthcoming); Sándor Gebei, *II. Rákóczi György külpolitikája, 1648–1657* [The foreign policy of György Rákóczi II], 2nd ed. (Budapest, 2004); László Nagy, *A „bibliás őrálló” fejedelem: I. Rákóczi György a magyar történelemben* [The prince "standing guard with the Bible": György Rákóczi I in Hungarian history] (Budapest, 1984).

the letters show the necessary level of continuity for most information to be rendered understandable and for the holes in the sequence, created by the loss of some dispatches, to be filled in by later references in surviving letters.

Chronologically, the surviving material is far from balanced, but from the mid-1650s there are a fair number of letters from the Sublime Porte in the Rákóczi family archives, and these have been published by nineteenth-century Hungarian historians, even if the editorial process was sporadic.⁶ These letters reported in particular detail on a pretender to the thrones of the Wallachian and Moldavian principalities, with whom Transylvanian diplomats were most actively involved: Mihnea, the protagonist of this case study. He serves as the key figure in my presentation of how Transylvanian sources can be useful in understanding the strategies that Wallachian and Moldavian voivodes-in-waiting, resident in Constantinople, adopted to gain their thrones; and what kind of networks could be helpful in achieving their goals.⁷

The Wallachian pretender is found under various names in Transylvanian diplomatic reports – surprisingly, Mihnea is not one of them: this name appears for the first time in Hungarian sources which refer to him already as ruler of Wallachia; an ironic phenomenon, as by this time he had already assumed a regnal name: Mihail Radu.⁸ The multiple names were con-

⁶ Apart from Szilágyi, ed., *Erdély*, the most important collection is Sándor Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár II. Rákóczy György diplomáciai összeköttetéseihez* [Documents on the diplomatic connections of György Rákóczi II], *Monumenta Hungariae Historica. Ser. I. Diplomataria*, no. 23 (Budapest, 1874), but there are also several reports from Constantinople in Sándor Szilágyi, “Levelek és okiratok II. Rákóczy György fejedelem diplomáciai összeköttetései történetéhez” [Letters and documents for the history of the diplomatic connections of György Rákóczi II], *Történelmi Tár* 12 (1889): 326–353, 451–490, 637–677.

⁷ Earlier historiography did not devote much attention to the period of Mihnea’s life at the Porte. His first biographer summarised this period relatively briefly (Alexandru Ciorănescu, “Domnia lui Mihnea III (Mihail Radu) 1658–1659” [The rule of Mihnea III (Mihail Radu) 1658–1659], *Buletinul Comisiei istorice a României* 14 (1935): 92–97), and later analyses mostly concentrated on his rather eventful rule, see Marin Matei Popescu and Adrian N. Beldeanu, *Mihnea al III-lea (1658–1659)* (Bucharest, 1982); Andrei Pippidi, *Tradiția politică bizantină în țările române în secolele XVI–XVIII* [Byzantine political tradition in the Romanian countries in the 16th–18th centuries] (Bucharest, 1983), 211–215; Ștefan Andreescu, *Restitutio Daciae*, vol. 2, *Relațiile politice dintre Țara Românească, Moldova și Transilvania în răstimpul 1601–1659* [Political relations between Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania in the period 1601–1659] (Bucharest, 1989), 246–250; Radu G. Păun, “*Si Deus nobiscum quis contra nos?* Mihnea III: note de teologie politică” [Mihnea III: notes on political theology], in *Național și universal în istoria românilor: Studii oferite prof. Șerban Papacostea la împlinirea a 70 de ani*, ed. Ovidiu Cristea and Gheorghe Lazăr (Bucharest, 1998), 69–100; idem, “Pouvoir, Croisade et Jugement Dernier au XVII^e siècle,” in *Ius et ritus: Rechtshistorische Abhandlungen über Ritus, Macht und Recht*, ed. Ivan Biliarsky (Sofia, 2006), 213–281. His network at the Porte was addressed briefly by Radu G. Păun, “Enemies within: Networks of Influence and the Military Revolts against the Ottoman Power (Moldavia and Wallachia, Sixteenth–Seventeenth Centuries),” in *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth–Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Gábor Kármán and Lovro Kunčević (Leiden, 2013), forthcoming.

⁸ See for instance János Szalárdi’s chronicle, where the form “Minnye” is used throughout: *Síralmas magyar krónikája* [Hungarian chronicle of laments], ed. Ferenc Szakály (Budapest, 1980), 490–527. On the relevance of the name change, see Păun, “Pouvoir,” 218–219; idem,

fusing for contemporaries as well: we know of an instance when György Rákóczi II of Transylvania had to ask his diplomats who exactly they had been referring to with the term “bey” in their previous letter.⁹ This was the second most frequent name they used for him, apart from the generally used “son of the voivode Radul”, referring to his alleged descent from Radu Mihnea (four times voivode of Wallachia and twice of Moldavia, between 1601 and 1626).¹⁰ It is also clear from other sources that Mihnea was known in the Turkish environment as Çivan (“young”) Bey – which is where the Transylvanian reference came from.¹¹ It is much more surprising that a Transylvanian diplomat, Jakab Harsányi Nagy, many times called him “the man of God.” Although Mihnea played no direct role in the church hierarchy, he must have earned this respectful epithet with his expertise in theology, later proved by the ecclesiastical staging of his enthronement as well as by the synod of Târgoviște which he summoned in January 1659.¹² Harsányi had been trained in Calvinist theology at the University of Leiden, and his peculiarly positive attitude must have resulted from Mihnea’s sympathy towards the attempts to reconcile Orthodoxy with Protestantism which had some influence in the earlier seventeenth century, notably during the patriarchate of Kyrillos Lou-

“Mihnea / Mihail: Câteva note despre strategiile patrimoniale ale familiilor domnitoare din Țara Românească, secolele XVI–XVII” [Mihnea / Mihail: Some notes on the patrimonial strategies of princely families in 16th–17th century Wallachia], *Arhiva Genealogică* 6 (1999): 89–94.

⁹ See the response of Máté Balogh and Jakab Harsányi Nagy (Constantinople, 6 January 1656) Szilágyi, ed., *Erdély*, vol. 2, 213.

¹⁰ Another variant of this name was probably used only by mistake: in one letter, Harsányi called the pretender simply “voivode Radu” (Constantinople, 23 May 1655) Szilágyi, ed., *Erdély*, vol. 1, 546. On the doubts concerning the lineage of Mihnea, see Ciorănescu, “Domnia,” 88–93. Mihnea was not the only one claiming to be the offspring of Radu Mihnea; in 1653, Abaza Siyavus, Pasha of Silistria, extorted a serious amount of money from Matei Basarab, Voivode of Wallachia, before he extradited to him a pretender with a similar claim, see the chronicle of Mustafa Naima in Mustafa A. Mehmet, ed., *Cronici turcești privind țările române: Extrase* [Turkish chronicles concerning the Romanian countries: Extracts], vol. 3, *Sfârșitul sec. XVI – începutul sec. XIX*. [late 16th – early 19th century] (Bucharest, 1980), 105–106; and Voivode Matei Basarab’s letter to Prince György Rákóczi II (Târgoviște, 30 August 1653) Andrei Veress, *Documente privitoare la istoria Ardealului, Moldovei și Țării Românești* [Documents concerning the history of Transylvania, Moldavia and Wallachia], vol. 10, *Acte și scrisori (1637–1660)* [Charters and letters, 1637–1660] (Bucharest, 1938), 269.

¹¹ The full version (“Csiván bék”) can be found only once in the Transylvanian correspondence (Máté Balogh’s report, 22 July 1656 in Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 418). The Habsburg envoys also knew him under this name, both Reniger and Schmid mentioning him thus. In Hurmuzaki’s edition, we read another form, “Goian-Bey” (Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente*, vol. 3, 237–238, 240, 244), but this is a mistaken transcription, the original source reading unambiguously as “Giuan” (see note 4). The same name is used in the travel account of Evliya Çelebi, see Andrei Antalfy, “Călătoria lui Evlia Celebi prin Moldova în anul 1659 (Traducere din textul turcesc)” [The journey of Evliya Çelebi through Moldavia in 1659: Translation from the Turkish text], *Buletinul Comisiei Istorice a României* 12 (1932): 28–30.

¹² On the theological aspects of the inauguration ceremony, see Păun, “Pouvoir.” On the synod of Târgoviște: Ovidiu Victor Olar, “Orthodoxie et politique: I. Le Synode de Târgoviste (janvier 1659)”, *Archævs* 11–12 (2007–2008): 177–204.

karis.¹³ This was later shown by the decisions of Mihnea's synod, where Calvinist and Lutheran baptism was accepted as valid for the Orthodox Church as well; but also proven by a story the Wallachian pretender told the Transylvanian diplomat.¹⁴ In a report by Harsányi, we read that Mihnea told him that a man had come to Constantinople secretly from the Russian Tsar, and had also visited him, inquiring whether the Orthodox church could count on any branch of Western Christianity returning to the true faith. The Romanian voivode-in-waiting allegedly encouraged the Muscovite agent not to care too much about liturgical differences, as these anyhow have no basis in Holy Scripture, "it is enough if the Lutherans and Calvinists agree with the pure Greek churches, not soiled by Papacy, in the fundamental articles of faith."¹⁵

The first documented appearance of the "son of the Voivode Radu" in Transylvanian sources dates back to 1654. In the first surviving report that mentions him, he features as the promoter of Prince György Rákóczi II's affairs at the Sublime Porte. It is however quite characteristic for the survival of source material, that neither the date nor the circumstances of his establishing contact with the embassy are known.¹⁶ One can only guess that Mihnea initiated contact after concluding from the events of the previous year that the prince of Transylvania may be a useful connection if he wanted to gain the throne in one of the voivodates. In 1653 Vasile Lupu, the voivode of Moldavia, had been deposed after an uncharacteristically long rule of almost twenty years, and although most powers in Eastern Europe were involved in the succession conflict, György Rákóczi II played a leading role in making the Sublime Porte acknowledge the new voivode, Gheorghe Ștefan.¹⁷

¹³ On Kyrillos Loukaris' contacts with Protestant European powers, see Gunnar Hering, *Ökumenisches Patriarchat und europäische Politik 1620–1638* (Wiesbaden, 1968). On Harsányi's biography, see my "A 17th Century Odyssey in East Central Europe: A Biography of Jakab Harsányi Nagy," PhD Dissertation, Central European University, Budapest, 2010.

¹⁴ On the decisions of the synod, see Mihnea's letter to Patriarch Partenios IV of Constantinople (Târgoviște, 10 January 1659) Nicolae Iorga, "Două contribuții la istoria bisericească a românilor" [Two contributions on Romanian church history], *Analele Academiei Române: Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice*, ser. 2, 38 (1916): 471–481.

¹⁵ Jakab Harsányi Nagy's report to György Rákóczi II (Constantinople, 8 November 1656) Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 495–496.

¹⁶ Letter of Jakab Harsányi Nagy (Constantinople, 7 July 1654) Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 147. The text refers to "a voivode's son of whom we have written elsewhere", that is, contact must have been established earlier, as the Transylvanian diplomat had already reported about it in a previous letter. Identification is made possible by the information Harsányi shared about the person – a voivode's son who declared himself a benefactor of Rákóczi – and its repetition in later reports which more precisely specify who this person was.

¹⁷ On the Moldavian turmoil of 1653, see Ion Sîrbu, *Matei-vodă Bășarabă's auswärtige Beziehungen (Zur Geschichte des europäischen Orients)* (Leipzig, 1899), 308–350; Petronel Zahariuc, "Prima domnie' a lui Gheorghe Ștefan (4/14 aprilie – 21 aprilie/1 mai 1653)" [The "first reign" of Gheorghe Ștefan] *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie* 21 (2003): 293–308; idem, "A doua domnie' a lui Vasile Lupu (21 aprilie/1 mai – 6/16 iulie 1653)" [The "second reign" of Vasile Lupu], in *Închinare lui Petre Ș. Năsturel la 80 de ani*, ed. Ionel Căndea, Paul Cernovodeanu and Gheorghe Lazăr (Brăila, 2003), 369–386; idem, *Țara Moldovei în vremea lui Gheorghe Ștefan*

A significant part of Mihnea's activities related directly to Vasile Lupu. The former voivode, after many vicissitudes, ended up at the Sublime Porte, and was locked into the fortress of the Seven Towers by Grand Vizier Derviş Mehmed Pasha.¹⁸ In the following years, the former voivode and his supporters pulled every string at the sultan's court to arrange for him to be placed on the Moldavian throne again, and their activities were keenly followed by the Transylvanian envoys. Former dignitaries from the two Romanian voivodates, such as Caracaş, who had been Lupu's master of the ovens (*mare pitar*, a court position) in Moldavia, and Greek circles around a certain "Csifut" (*çifit*, that is, "Jew") Demetraki, were reported to have visited various Ottoman office-holders, and according to the Transylvanian correspondence several of these received money in exchange for their support to Lupu.¹⁹ The former voivode and his supporters seem to have been able to reach several important dignitaries, among them Kapudan Pasha Zurnazen Mustafa, Abaza Sivayuş Pasha of Silistria, the kethüda bey of the janissaries and even Abaza Hasan Pasha, known as the leader of a previous revolt in Asia.²⁰ The former voivode was reported to have offered enormous sums of money to various office-holders: the kethüda bey of the janissaries, together with five other major dignitaries of the Porte, was to receive 600 purses of gold (300,000 golden florins) if he could help Lupu back to the throne; and the same sum was to go to the Sublime Porte – at least so Grand Vizier Boynuya-

voivode (1653–1658) [Moldavia in the time of Voivode Gheorghe Ştefan] (Iaşi, 2003), 104–198; Gábor Kármán, *Erdélyi külpolitika*, 237–244; idem, "György Rákóczi II's Attempt."

¹⁸ Constantin Şerban, *Vasile Lupu, Domn al Moldovei (1634–1653)* (Bucharest, 1991), 215–218; Hurmuzaki, *Fragmente*, vol. 3, 214–217.

¹⁹ On Caracaş, see Harsányi's report to György Rákóczi II (Constantinople, 22 July 1655) Szilágyi, ed., "Levelek," 669. His short biography: Nicolae Stoicescu, *Dicţionar al marilor dregători din Ţara Românească şi Moldova* [Dictionary of the high dignitaries of Wallachia and Moldavia] (Bucharest, 1971), On Demetraki: Máté Balogh and Harsányi to Rákóczi (Constantinople, 22 January 1656), resp. Harsányi to Rákóczi (Constantinople, 27 September 1656) Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 298, 474. As far as Harsányi and his colleagues knew, Zurnazen Mustafa was paid 4 purses (*kese/kise*) of akçes, that is, approximately 2000 golden florins, see Harsányi's report to Rákóczi (Constantinople, 18 November 1655) *ibid.*, 271.

²⁰ On Zurnazen Mustafa, see the report quoted in the previous note. On Sivayuş Pasha, see the letter of Gheorghe Ştefan, voivode of Moldavia to György Rákóczi II (Iaşi, 13 April 1656), Klára Jakó, "Die ungarischsprachige Korrespondenz der Woiwoden und obersten Amtsträger in der Moldau und der Walachei: Edition ausgewählter Beispiele aus dem 16.–18. Jahrhundert," *Ungarn-Jahrbuch* 26 (2004): 225–226. On the kethüda bey of the Janissaries: Harsányi to Rákóczi (Constantinople, 15 June 1656) Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 705–706. On Abaza Hasan Pasha, see Harsányi to Rákóczi (Constantinople, 23 March 1656) *ibid.*, 344. Harsányi's comment is quite characteristic: Lupu, he notes, "is a great intriguer, reaching in all directions." Lupu, whose Cossack connections seems to have remained even after the death of his son-in-law Tymish Khmelnytsky (the hetman's son), also kept contacts with Muscovy during his custody. Sources include not only many Transylvanian reports, but also documents stemming from him, see Larisa Pritsak, "A Letter of 1656 from the Former Hospodar of Moldova Vasile Lupu to Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 23, no. 3–4 (1999): 133–148.

ralı Mehmed Pasha told the Wallachian representatives, when he encouraged the voivode to pay 700 instead and stay on the throne.²¹

Vasile Lupu did not plan to act alone: he had several allies from among the deposed voivodes and their sons resident in Constantinople. In the summer of 1655, the name of Leon Tomşa, formerly voivode of Wallachia between 1629 and 1632, was mentioned several times, and later that of his son, Radu Leon – who eventually won the throne and ruled between 1664 and 1669 – also showed up in Transylvanian reports, as a candidate for the Wallachian throne should the pro-Rákóczi voivode be deposed.²² From the autumn of 1656 onward, another pretender, Alexandru Iliaş, appears in the diplomatic letters. This man, who had been voivode of Wallachia between 1616 and 1618, and of Moldavia twice (1620–1621, and 1631–1633) asked the defterdar personally to promote him or his son to the throne of Wallachia; as the Transylvanian diplomats commented, he did not speak of the Moldavian throne because of his good contacts with Lupu. And indeed, some months later Harsányi could report that Vasile Lupu had named Alexandru’s son, Radu Iliaş – who had also been appointed voivode of Wallachia for some months in 1632, but had never actually ruled the country – as his new candidate for the Wallachian throne, and told the ağas asking him that Radu Leon was only a fool.²³

This last piece of news came from none other than Mihnea, who had been feeding the Transylvanian embassy reports during the entire period. He frequently went to speak with various Ottoman dignitaries in order to counter Lupu’s diplomatic moves, and even promised the Transylvanians that he would arrange for “Csifut” Demetraki to be removed from the Porte – an endeavour whose success or otherwise remains shrouded in obscurity.²⁴ He also devised schemes to get rid of Vasile Lupu by making the Porte transport him

²¹ Máté Balogh’s report to György Rákóczi II (Constantinople, 19 August 1656) Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 436. On the money offered to the kethüda bey of the janissaries, see the previous note. A certain “Ismail Ağa, a former bishop who turned Turk” suggested to the defterdar that if the sultan needed money, he should change the two voivodes, and could thus easily get 800 purses of akçes, see Harsányi’s letter to György Rákóczi II (Constantinople, 18 November 1655) Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 271.

²² On the candidature of Leon Tomşa, see Harsányi’s letter to György Rákóczi II (Constantinople, 22 July 1655) Szilágyi, “Levelek,” 669. The report of Balogh and Harsányi from 22 January 1656 already mentions Radu Leon as a potential candidate, supported by Greek circles around Demetraki (Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 298).

²³ On Radu Leon, see the report of Harsányi to György Rákóczi II (Constantinople, 15 June 1656) Szilágyi, *Okmánytár*, 706. On “Voivode Alexander”, see Harsányi’s report to György Rákóczi II (Constantinople, 23 March 1656) *ibid*, 342.

²⁴ Harsányi to György Rákóczi II (Constantinople, 27 September 1656) Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 474. In another instance, Máté Balogh and Jakab Harsányi Nagy could report on 31 December 1655, that Mihnea went “as if voluntarily” to a certain Koyunoğlu Mehmed effendi to see what he could learn about Lupu’s intrigues (Szilágyi, ed., *Erdély*, vol. 1, 572). He also refuted some other attempts “in front of a very great man”, see Harsányi’s report to Rákóczi (Constantinople, 23 May 1655) *ibid*, 546.

to Rhodes, where he would be out of sight and could be assassinated more easily than in the seat of the Ottoman Empire. His suggestion was that the ağa, who usually went to Moldavia to collect the voivodate's tribute, should be approached by many people complaining to him how of Lupu had caused decline in Moldavia, and praising the rule of his pro-Rákóczi successor, Gheorghe Ștefan. Mihnea also claimed to have already made arrangements with the ağa, whose "word was credited as he had been long in the service, much like a vizier."²⁵ The plan did not really work out as Lupu stayed in the Seven Towers; however, on other (albeit lesser) issues Mihnea's cooperation with the Transylvanian embassy had more success: mobilising the support of the nakib effendi, Zeyrekzade Abdurrahman, they arranged that Vasile Lupu's mansion in Constantinople not be given back to the deposed voivode – which they would have surely seen as the first step in setting him free.²⁶

The nakib effendi – in the original Turkish *nakibü'l-esraf*, one of the most important office-holders in Islam, keeper of the registry of Mohammed's descendants and himself one of the line – points towards another significant contribution by the Wallachian pretender to the Transylvanian embassy's activities. Mihnea introduced Jakab Harsányi to the nakib, and seems to have opened his network even wider for his political partners: he also facilitated contact with two more dignitaries, a certain "Yusuf Pasha the younger" (whose office is not mentioned), and Yusuf ağa valide kihaya, representative of Turhan Hatice, the mother of Sultan Mehmed IV, one of the most important power centers in Constantinople of the 1650s.²⁷ All three served as constant reference points in Transylvanian diplomatic correspondence in the next few years, both as sources of information and as channels for attempts to influence Ottoman decision-makers. Contact was maintained even after two of

²⁵ Jakab Harsányi Nagy's report to György Rákóczi II (Constantinople, 12 May 1656) Szilágyi, ed., *Erdély*, vol. 2, 220–221. The Transylvanian diplomats had already earlier been trying to find a way to have Lupu executed, or at least transferred to Rhodes or Cyprus; see Balogh's and Harsányi's report to Rákóczi (Constantinople, 31 December 1655) Szilágyi, ed., *Erdély*, vol. 1, 570. Gheorghe Ștefan later informed Harsányi that he had made the necessary arrangements with the ağa, see his report from the 7 July 1656, Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 404.

²⁶ Harsányi's letter to György Rákóczi II (Constantinople, 22 July 1655) Szilágyi, "Levelek," 671. Harsányi's argument to the nakib was "why did this traitor have to be given back his house? If the three countries heard of it, they would be upset, thinking that he is to be set free and made a bey in one of the countries." For the identification of the nakib's person, see János B. Szabó and Balázs Sudár, "Independens fejedelem az portán kívül": II. Rákóczi György oszmán kapcsolatai (Esettanulmány az Erdélyi Fejedelemség és az Oszmán Birodalom viszonyának történetéhez) ["Independent ruler outside the Porte": The Ottoman contacts of György Rákóczi II (Case study to the history of the relationship between the Principality of Transylvania and the Ottoman Empire)] *Századok* 146–147 (2012–2013), forthcoming in two parts.

²⁷ All of them appear for the first time in Harsányi's reports from 14 August 1654 (Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 156–158). On the office of the nakib effendi, see Axel Havemann, "Nakib al-Ashrāf," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition, vol. 7, *Mif – Naz*, ed. C.E. Bosworth et al. (Leiden, 1990), 926–927. For the identification of the valide kihaya's person, see Szabó and Sudár, "Independens."

them, the valide kihaya and the nakib effendi, lost their offices in 1656.²⁸ All in all, Jakab Harsányi Nagy's description to Prince György Rákóczi II of Mihnea's relevance for the Transylvanian embassy was not much of an exaggeration: "he serves better than any diplomat or protecting patron; he is the chief representative of Your Highness."²⁹

Mihnea had good reason to help the activities of the Transylvanian embassy in all these ways. As noted earlier, he could easily conclude from the circumstances of Vasile Lupu's deposition in 1653 that György Rákóczi II could be of valuable assistance in gaining the throne of one of the voivodates. The first opportunity came in 1655, when a military revolt forced the voivode of Wallachia, Constantin Șerban, to leave his realm. Rákóczi hesitated a great deal on whether to respond to the voivode's pleas and support his return. In this situation, Mihnea turned to the topic in one of his conversations with Harsányi to whether it would be right to help Constantin Șerban back to the throne, as he is "not suitable as a voivode, he supports the Cossacks, Greeks and Muscovites; he cajoles Your Highness in his misery, but his heart belongs elsewhere." The voivode-in-waiting acted very diplomatically and did not merely recommend himself for the role – he also drew Rákóczi's attention to Preda Brâncoveanu, one of the Wallachian dignitaries who had fled to Transylvania –, but he nevertheless assured the Prince that "he would, as long as he lived, be a true well-wisher and servant of Your Highness."³⁰

The conflict was resolved shortly thereafter when the united armies of György Rákóczi II and Gheorghe Ștefan of Moldavia crushed the revolt and helped Constantin Șerban back to his throne – also actively supported by Abaza Siyavuş, Pasha of Silistria. In any case, the voivode remained unpopular in his country, which gave Harsányi an excellent excuse to start his campaign in favour of Mihnea. He regularly called his ruler's attention to the services provided by the voivode-in-waiting, his faithfulness and reliability. In one letter, Harsányi told György Rákóczi II that "Voivode Constantin could never be a help for Your Highness against any of your enemies, because his country would abandon him; I hear it said even now, that the country would not need him, but Your Highness forces him upon them." This reasoning led to the obvious solution: "But, Your Highness, if your neighbour were the son

²⁸ They are mentioned as deposed in the letters of Máté Balogh and Jakab Harsányi Nagy (Constantinople, 4 February, respectively 16 October 1656) Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 311, 484.

²⁹ Harsányi's report to the prince (Constantinople, 7 September 1656) Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 458.

³⁰ Jakab Harsányi Nagy's letter to György Rákóczi II (Constantinople, 14 June 1655) Szilágyi, "Levelek," 668. On the conflict in Wallachia, see Lídia A. Demény, Lajos Demény and Nicolae Stoicescu, *Răscoala seimenilor sau răscoală populară? 1655, Țara Românească* [The revolt of the *seimens* or a popular revolt? 1655, Wallachia] (Bucharest, 1968) with Romanian translations of a large amount of Transylvanian source material; Lajos Thallóczy, "II. Rákóczy György és az oláh személyek" [György Rákóczi II and the Wallachian *seimens*], *Századok* 26 (1892): 449–456; Kármán, *Erdélyi külpolitika*, 254–260; Kármán, „György Rákóczi II's Attempt.” On Preda Brâncoveanu, see Stoicescu, *Dicționar*, 125.

of Radu, you could freely go to become a king [of Poland]; you could believe him as you believe your own eyes.”³¹ This diplomat – actually the embassy’s interpreter (the so-called “Turkish scribe”) – was obviously on very good terms with the Wallachian pretender, since most reports about his services to György Rákóczi II come from Harsányi’s letters. The prince’s resident envoy Máté Balogh was more reserved about the benefits of contacts with Mihnea, but his attitude probably rather stemmed from his antipathy towards his colleague than towards the voivode-in-waiting.³²

With the stabilisation of Constantin Şerban’s rule by the end of 1655, Mihnea’s hopes for speedy success with the Wallachian throne vanished, so he changed his strategy. From February 1656 on, he repeatedly offered György Rákóczi II, through Harsányi, to take an oath in front of the patriarch of Constantinople not to strive for the throne of Wallachia any more during the lifetime of the current voivode. He dropped some remarks about plans to leave the Ottoman capital, but even if he stayed, he would be ready – as Harsányi put it – “to serve His Highness [Constantin Şerban] perfectly truly, as if he were his brother”.³³ In exchange he demanded “some purses of money” (one purse (*kese/kise*) being 40,000 akçes, that is, 500 golden florins) and an oath from the voivode that he in turn would not intrigue against him. It seems that Constantin Şerban – who must have learned about Mihnea’s attempts to win his throne in 1655 – was not convinced easily: Harsányi tried repeatedly to bring about their reconciliation, but the voivode left unanswered no fewer than sixteen of his letters. From a report of the Transylvanian diplomat it seems that, on the contrary, Gheorghe Ştefan welcomed the idea that Mihnea should take an oath and promised some money for it – in exchange, the voivode-in-waiting was also reported to have started consulting with Moldavian representatives at the Porte.³⁴

This relationship was about to change during the autumn of 1656. Although Mihnea always emphasised that he sought reconciliation with the two ruling voivodes out of respect for the Transylvanian prince, it is not clear

³¹ Harsányi’s post-script to a letter signed together with Máté Balogh (Constantinople, 6 January 1656) Szilágyi, ed., *Erdély*, vol. 2, 213; as well as his letter to György Rákóczi II (Constantinople, 2 October 1655) Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 254. These maneuvers by Harsányi have remained largely unnoticed by historiography, with only Alexandru Ciorănescu mentioning the attempt to make Mihnea voivode of Wallachia as early as 1655 – although he suggested that Máté Balogh was also a supporter of the issue, see Ciorănescu, “Domnia,” 96.

³² “(...) if only this one [that is, Harsányi] would not incite him, the Bey would be a good person” wrote Máté Balogh to György Rákóczi II (Constantinople, 16 July 1656) Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 410. On the conflicts between Harsányi and Balogh, see Kármán, “A 17th Century Odyssey,” 92–101.

³³ Letter of Jakab Harsányi Nagy to György Rákóczi II (Constantinople, 23 March 1656) Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 342. See also his report from the 22nd of February the same year: *ibid.*, 320–321.

³⁴ See the letters of Máté Balogh, respectively Jakab Harsányi Nagy to György Rákóczi II (Constantinople, 19 August, respectively 7 September 1656) Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 436, 459.

whether in its first phase he put the conditions of his cooperation with Rákóczi into contractual form. In a letter from November 1656, Harsányi informed his ruler about exactly this: that Mihnea was ready to sign a certificate (*reversalis*), and promise not to seek the throne of the voivodates. In exchange he demanded that Constantin Șerban should promise in the contract to be of good intentions towards him; and that the Transylvanian prince should supply him with provision, that is: pay him a regular salary. He also pointed out that as Gheorghe Ștefan showed no good intentions towards him – that is, he did not send him the money he promised –, he was not ready to give a similar certificate to the voivode of Moldavia; but he emphasised that, out of reverence towards Rákóczi, he was not going to try and promote himself to that throne either.³⁵

Disarming Wallachian and Moldavian pretenders by taking *reversales* from them was not only used in Mihnea's case, but seems to have been a widely accepted method. The Transylvanian diplomats tried to get similar documents from Leon Tomșa and Radu Leon as well, offering them provision, clothing and money for their entire lifetime, and expecting them to take an oath not to seek the Wallachian throne as long as Constantin Șerban lived.³⁶ Harsányi dedicated much effort to convincing his prince that Mihnea would be of assistance in Transylvanian issues. He even reported a variety of alternative plans he had heard from the Romanian voivode-in-waiting about what he would do if he did not gain Rákóczi's contractual support. Some of these, with rather fantastic details, seems to have been fabricated only for the purpose of urging the prince to make a promise on his part of the deal. On one occasion, Harsányi reported that Mihnea had an opportunity to marry into the ruling family of a province in an unspecified Christian country, and be a lord there; whereas some months later he reportedly told the Transylvanian diplomat that he had good chances of becoming *sancakbeyi* in the neighbourhood of Vidin, without even becoming a Muslim. Harsányi's comment is characteristic of how much the Romanian voivode-in-waiting impressed him:

He would not turn Turk – as far as I know him and his state, intellect and God-fearing motivations – even if he were invited to become sultan; he has already had enough here and would find it a recreation to leave; Yusuf Pasha, the old valide kihaya, and many other great dignitaries would vouch for him, because even if he is loved, yet he is also feared by those who know him, due to his great intellect. There are other examples in the kanun-name of when, in

³⁵ Jakab Harsányi Nagy's letter to György Rákóczi II (Constantinople, 8 November 1656) Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 495.

³⁶ Máté Balogh's and Jakab Harsányi Nagy's letter to György Rákóczi II (Constantinople, 7 January 1656) Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 286. The diplomats mention that they were planning to invite father and son the next day, and would try to make them sign the *reversalis*. The fact that in a somewhat later letter Harsányi could still only report that Leon Tomșa had raised the theoretical possibility of signing the certificate, shows that it may not ever have been put to practice (22 January 1656), *ibid*, 299.

olden times, the title of sancakbeyi was given to such beys from great ancestry, who were confidants; but I do not think he would accept, because he says he would not want to levy huge contributions from the poor people, and he will find other ways to provide for himself.³⁷

We cannot be sure whether Harsányi's repeated pleas found an audience with György Rákóczi II, or whether – having sent him smaller sums periodically – he promised Mihnea in a contract to provide him money regularly. In any case, the prince seems to have been convinced by Mihnea's performance in his service, and to have given his full trust to his broker at Constantinople: he even asked for Mihnea's opinion about the Sublime Porte's possible reaction to his negotiations with Swedish diplomats, which he otherwise kept strictly secret.³⁸ It is quite likely that for György Rákóczi II, the question of the Wallachian voivode-in-waiting's *reversalis* was overshadowed by more pressing issues: he started his campaign against Poland-Lithuania, in alliance with the Swedish King and the Cossacks, early the following year. In any case, in the political turmoil that followed, the Transylvanian diplomats could count upon Mihnea's continuing assistance. Even if he does not appear in the relatively few surviving diplomatic letters from this period, the diary of the Swedish ambassador – who came to Constantinople in May 1657 mainly to assist the Transylvanians' cause at the Sublime Porte – shows that Mihnea still kept contact with the embassy.³⁹

It is surprising that such a pro-Transylvanian candidate was placed on the Wallachian throne in early 1658, as his predecessor, Constantin Șerban, had to be replaced precisely because of his connections to György Rákóczi II

³⁷ Jakab Harsányi Nagy's letter to György Rákóczi II (Constantinople, 7 September 1656) Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 460. On the plan to marry into a Christian ruling family, see his report from 23 March 1656 (ibid., 342). Mihnea's plans to leave Constantinople are also mentioned in the report of 22 February 1656 (ibid., 320–321), though without further details.

³⁸ Mihnea's opinion was mediated with Harsányi again, see his report to György Rákóczi II (Constantinople, 16 October 1656) Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 483–484. On the very same day, Máté Balogh informed his prince that he had refuted rumours that Rákóczi would be aiming for the Polish throne – which was exactly the topic of the negotiations with the Swedish diplomats; ibid., 482. On Rákóczi's negotiations with Charles X Gustav of Sweden, see Sándor Gebei, “II. Rákóczi György szerepe a Rzeczpospolita felosztási kísérletében (1656–1657)” [The role of Transylvania in the attempt to divide the Rzeczpospolita 1656–1657], *Századok* 134 (2000): 803–848; Kármán, *Erdélyi külpolitika*, 297–346.

³⁹ Even if Claes Rålamb did not mention that the Transylvanian diplomats introduced him to Mihnea, since he was in daily contact with Jakab Harsányi, it would have been an unlikely coincidence if he had met Mihnea any other way. On Rålamb's mission, see Gábor Kármán, “Svéd diplomácia a Portán 1657–1658: Claes Rålamb és Gotthard Welling konstantinápolyi követsége” [Swedish diplomacy at the Porte 1657–1658: The mission of Claes Rålamb and Gotthard Welling to Constantinople], *Sic Itur ad Astra* 13, no. 1–2 (2001): 53–85; idem, “Främlingskapets grader: Claes Rålamb's resa till Osmanska riket 1657–1658” [Grades of alterity: The journey of Claes Rålamb to the Ottoman Empire 1657–1658], in *Karolinska Förbundets Årsbok 2008*, 40–107. See also *The Sultan's Procession: The Swedish Embassy to Sultan Mehmed IV in 1657–1658 and the Rålamb Paintings*, ed. Karin Ådahl (Istanbul, 2006).

– who in the meantime had lost his war against Poland-Lithuania, the favour of the Sublime Porte and eventually, his throne.⁴⁰ In one of the first mentions of Mihnea's name in the surviving Transylvanian dispatches, he is reported to have requested that his co-operation with Rákóczi should remain a secret.⁴¹ It is however clear that this secrecy could not last long: Mihnea not only promoted the prince's interests among his contacts at the Sublime Porte, but he also frequently received some of Rákóczi's diplomats in his own house, and even escorted them to their meetings. For anyone interested in Mihnea's political preferences at the Sublime Porte, it had to be clear by the end of 1656 that he was somehow connected to the Transylvanians. This should have excluded him from the likely candidates for the throne.

There were also other problems with Mihnea. Radu G. Păun's analysis of Mihnea's coronation ceremony has convincingly shown that his thinking must have been deeply influenced by contemporary millenarianism and by prophecies predicting the fall of the Ottoman Empire circulating in Greek Constantinople, the Swedish diplomat's notes about his meetings with the Romanian voivode-in-waiting provide the only unambiguous evidence for this hypothesis.⁴² The first time Mihnea appears in Rålamb's diary, the voivode-in-waiting shares with the envoy many of his unflattering insights about Ottoman politics:

We talked about various things concerning the Turkish government. Among other things he told me how this was no longer the old Turkish government, the sultan is stupid, all the ministers are *homines corruptissimi*, mostly renegades and are of low birth. The sultan's mother had been a slave taken from the Christians, and had been a servant of Yusuf Pasha. He also mentioned that one should talk to them with threats, because among them one cannot bring about anything, only with huge bribes or with intimidation, if they are afraid of the other's power.⁴³

On another occasion, Mihnea told him about the Tatar khan's letter to the sultan about the threat of a Swedish–Brandenburg–Transylvanian alliance against the Crimea Tatar as an arm of the Ottoman Empire, which they supposedly concluded in order to be able to deal with the Porte itself more easily later on. The Wallachian pretender commented: “they knew as well that as a

⁴⁰ On the deposition of Rákóczi and Constantin Șerban, see Péter, “The Golden Age,” 143–147; Sándor Papp, “II. Rákóczi György és a Porta” [György Rákóczi II and the Porte], in *Szerencsének elegyes forgása: II. Rákóczi György és kora*, ed. Gábor Kármán and András Péter Szabó (Budapest, 2009), 162–164; Nicolae Stoicescu, *Constantin Șerban* (Bucharest, 1990), 69–72.

⁴¹ Jakab Harsányi Nagy's letter to György Rákóczi II (Constantinople, 7 July 1654) Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 147.

⁴² See Păun, “Pouvoir;” idem, “Enemies Within.”

⁴³ Claes Rålamb, *Diarium under resa till Konstantinopel 1657–1658* [Diary on his journey to Constantinople 1657–1658], ed. Christian Callmer (Stockholm, 1963), 120.

Sultan Mehmed took Constantinople from the Christians, they will retake it in a Sultan Mehmed's time, which is this one", that is, Mehmed IV.⁴⁴

In the edited version of his diary – which he presented to King Charles X Gustav of Sweden – Rålamb dedicated a longer part to the recent history of the Ottoman Empire. This part of the text is based on excerpts from Turkish chronicles, compiled by a Polish renegade, Wojciech Bobowski alias Ali Ufki Bey; however, the last three pages of this section cannot be found in the manuscript that served as the primary source of his account.⁴⁵ This chapter interprets the preceding pages as the story of the Ottoman Empire's decay, stating that the good old habits of the Turks are gone and that only discord among the Christians hinders the fall of the sultan's state. Similar ideas are repeatedly found in Jakab Harsányi Nagy's correspondence with Prince György Rákóczi II: he also seemed to have believed that the Empire's fall was coming, and tried to convince his prince likewise. Although no remark in his surviving letters establishes a clear link between these ideas and the per-

⁴⁴ Ibid, 136. Prophecies about the fall of the Ottoman Empire, even those attributed to the Turks themselves, were in circulation in early modern Europe. In Orthodox circles, they were kept alive by Byzantine eschatological and apocalyptic writings copied and translated into various European languages, and reinterpreted according to contemporary events. See among others Astérios Argiriou, *Les exégèses grecques de l'Apocalypse à l'époque turque (1453–1821): Esquisse d'une histoire des courants idéologiques au sein du peuple grec asservi* (Thessaloniki, 1982); Kenneth M. Setton, *Western Hostility to Islam and Prophecies of Turkish Doom* (Philadelphia, 1992). The fact that Mihnea refers to such prophecies may be an indicator that he already before 1658 had contacts with his future close adviser, Paisios Ligarides, who became famous for his comprehensive anthology of prophecies. On Ligarides, see Harry Th. Hionides, *Paisios Ligarides* (New York, 1972); Tudor Teoteoi, "L'Europe confessionnelle dans l'Oracle inédit de Paisios Ligaridis," in *Nouvelles études d'histoire*, vol. 10, *Publiées à l'occasion du XIX^e congrès international des sciences historiques Oslo, 2000*, ed. Rodica Florescu (Bucharest, 2000), 91–96; idem, "La tradition byzantine de l'Oracle inédit de Paisios Ligaridis," *Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes* 39 (2001): 19–26; Ovidiu-Victor Olar, "Profetie și istorie: Note asupra câtorva manuscrise călătore prin Țările Române (Matei al Mirelor și Paisie Ligaridi)" [Prophecy and history: Notes on some travelling manuscripts through the Romanian lands, Mathaios of Myra and Paisios Ligarides], in *Manuscrise bizantine în colecții bucureștene / Byzantine Manuscripts in Bucharest's Collections*, ed. Ileana Stănculescu (Bucharest, 2009), 35–46.

⁴⁵ Claes Rålamb, *Kort Beskrifning om thet som wid then Constantinopolitanske Resan är föreluppit...* [A short account of what happened during the journey to Constantinople] (Stockholm, 1679), 67–69. See also an eighteenth century English translation: Claes Rålamb, "A Relation of a Journey to Constantinople," in *Collection of Voyages and Travels*, ed. John Churchill (London, 1732), vol. 5, 702–703. Rålamb himself identifies Bobowski's account as the basis of his work, and the source of his account on the Ottoman Empire's previous twenty years survived in a manuscript form: Kungliga Biblioteket (Stockholm), Rålamb Quarto 61. Although the table of contents of this booklet specifies only the third, Latin section of the composite volume as Bobowski's handwriting, the preceding two Italian chapters are also likely to be his translations. At least, the fact that Turkish words are transcribed according to Polish orthography ("Szaban" for Şaban, "Bektasz" for Bektaş, both in fol. 15v) and that the Polish names are spelled right, although they had to be translated from Turkish ("Stanislao Koniecpolski" fol. 11r) both point to a Polish author.

son of Mihnea, we can safely conclude that the Wallachian pretender spread such notions in conversation.⁴⁶

It seems then that Mihnea made no secret of his convictions, and was not scared to share them with various people – even if none of those whom we know about were directly connected to the ruling elite of the Ottoman capital. In any case, one would not expect that someone with such views would be so easily promoted to the throne of the Voivodate of Wallachia: yet, in the first days of 1658, when the decision was made at the Sublime Porte to change the ruler in both voivodates, Mihnea was the first to be selected, whereas there was a longer discussion about who the next ruler of Moldavia should be.⁴⁷ Considered together with his connections to the Transylvanian embassy, this all means that we should look for a very powerful support group in the background of his appointment.

Many cases are known when contacts with foreign diplomats residing in Constantinople played an important role for Wallachian or Moldavian pretenders in their quest for the throne.⁴⁸ Apart from his Transylvanian contacts, Mihnea had – as noted earlier – good relations with another group of diplomatic representatives: he was acquainted with a number of Habsburg ambassadors. Even if they were in relatively close contact, this would however not have contributed significantly to grand vizier Köprülü Mehmed Pasha's choice of Mihnea as voivode of Wallachia. Although the Habsburg Empire was a respected enemy of the Ottoman Empire in the 1650s, with whom peace was to be kept at all costs, it is improbable that their diplomats would have acted as voivode-makers; unless we suppose the unlikely scenario that they had their personal agenda, kept secret from their own heads of state as well.

We also know that Mihnea attempted to make contact with another embassy, the Venetian. According to a report by Giovanni Battista Ballarino, secretary of the Venetian embassy, Mihnea visited him in 1655 to request financial help to start a revolt in the Peloponnese, set up an army and wage war upon the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁹ We can however exclude the possibility that this connection played any role in his appointment: it is no wonder that Mihnea raised the question of military help against the Ottoman Empire in-

⁴⁶ On the idea of the Empire's decay in Harsányi's letters, see Kármán, "A 17th Century Odyssey," 82–83.

⁴⁷ Simon Reniger's report to Leopold I (Adrianople, 12 January 1658) HHStA Türkei I. Kt. 129. Fasc. 64. Conv. A. fol. 40r.

⁴⁸ See the examples in Păun, „Enemies within.”

⁴⁹ Giovanni Battista Ballarino's letter to Doge Carlo Contarini (Constantinople, 9 October 1655) Hurmuzaki, *Documente* V/2, 22–23. Some claims about this pretender in the Venetian diplomat's letter are however irreconcilable with everything else we know about Mihnea: Ballarino estimated him to be twenty years old, and went to great lengths to explain that his hopes for the Moldavian throne were by no means threatened by the fact that he was a Muslim – whereas Mihnea was at least twice as old, and remained a Christian for his entire lifetime. However, in a report from 1659, Ballarino unambiguously identified the voivode of the time with his guest from years ago, see Hurmuzaki, *Documente* V/2, 66.

stead of political backing at the Sublime Porte, as the Republic of Venice was at open war with the Ottoman Empire during the 1650s. Mihnea negotiated with the secretary, as since the late 1640s, when Giovanni Soranzo was put in house arrest, the Republic sent no official representative to the Sublime Porte. Thus, even if Venice had welcomed the Romanian pretender with open arms (which was not the case), it would have helped him little in gaining a voivode's throne.⁵⁰ Just as little was to be expected from the Cossack connection which Mihnea vaguely mentioned in his meeting with Ballarino: even though Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky tried repeatedly to interfere in Voivodate matters, after his death in August 1657, Cossack leaders had more pressing issues on their mind than the person of the next Wallachian voivode.

Usually, when appointments to voivodes' thrones were decided in later seventeenth-century Constantinople, one does well to look for Levantine and Greek circles in the background.⁵¹ However, Mihnea's clear animosity towards the deposed Vasile Lupu and the group of Demetraki that supported him excludes this option: according to a Transylvanian report, in one meeting of the group it was explicitly said that "if the son of Voivode Radu were to become voivode, they would not be able to make a bargain with him according to their own taste, as he does not like Greeks."⁵² According to Venetian reports from the time of Mihnea's rule, another important power broker of the Greek circles at the Sublime Porte, Panagiotis Nikousios (later grand dragoman of the Porte, then chief dragoman of the Habsburg embassy) was a downright enemy of the Wallachian pretender.⁵³ We will thus have to look at Mihnea's direct contacts with the Ottoman dignitaries.

The chronicle by Georg Kraus, notary of the Transylvanian town of Schäßburg (Hung. Segesvár, Rom. Sighișoara), narrates a rather clumsy story of how Mihnea came to power; the Romanian princeling was supposedly raised by the sultan's mother and the voivodate was given to him in return for

⁵⁰ On Ballarino's report about his meeting with Mihnea, the Venetian government instructed him to cut contact with the pretender, see their correspondence in Hurmuzaki: *Documente* V/2, 24, 27. On the vicissitudes of the Venetian *bailo* in the 1640–50s, see Tommaso Bertelè, *Il palazzo degli ambasciatori di Venezia a Constantinopoli e le sue antiche memorie* (Bologna, 1932), 181–193.

⁵¹ Nicolae Iorga, *Byzance après Byzance : Continuation de l'Histoire de la vie byzantine* (Bucharest, 1935); Păun, "La circulation"; idem, "Well-born of the Polis: The Ottoman conquest and the reconstruction of the Greek Orthodox elites under Ottoman rule (15th–17th centuries), in *Türk-enkriege und Adelskultur in Ostmitteleuropa vom 16. und 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Robert Born and Sabine Jagodzinski (Ostfildern, 2013) forthcoming.

⁵² The letter of Máté Balogh and Jakab Harsányi Nagy to György Rákóczi II (Constantinople, 22 January 1656) Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 298.

⁵³ See Ballarino's reports quoted in Păun, "Enemy Within." In early 1659, Panagiotis also accused Mihnea for conspiring with György Rákóczi II, then seen as a traitor by the Ottomans in a letter sent to Ákos Barcsai, the current prince of Transylvania, see the entry of 23 March 1659 in the diary of the Transylvanian diet at Bistritz (Hung. Beszterce, actual Rum. Bistrița) published in Sándor Szilágyi, ed., *Erdélyi országgyűlési emlékek történeti bevezetésekkel* [Documents of the diets of Transylvania, with a historical introduction], vol. 12, 1658–1661 (Budapest, 1887), 188.

a promise to convert all Wallachia into Islam.⁵⁴ Among other, rather easily disproven fantastic details – such as Mihnea’s Muslim faith, clearly contradicted by a multitude of other sources – there is one which is confirmed by data from other contemporary accounts: the Romanian pretender’s connections to the family of the sultan. His own envoy to Venice, Gabriel Thomassy, told agents of the Serenissima that his lord had been in favour with the sultan’s mother and sister.⁵⁵ That he could introduce Transylvanian diplomats to the *valide kihaya*, the representative of Mehmed IV’s mother, supports this idea. Evliya Çelebi, the well-known Turkish travel-writer, is even more specific. After praising Mihnea’s manifold skills – according to him, the Wallachian voivode-in-waiting knew Persian and Greek and was a calligrapher and an erudite poet – he also mentioned that he had been brought up in the household of Atike, the sultan’s sister, wife of Ken’an Pasha.⁵⁶ The latter dignitary is also mentioned in other sources about Mihnea; in a letter on the new voivode’s inauguration, Simon Reniger mentions that he had been staying in Ken’an Pasha’s saray, and Transylvanian diplomats also identify Mihnea in rumours about a “bey’s son in the palace of Ken’an Pasha, whose wife promotes him” at the Sublime Porte.⁵⁷

There is however some confusion about the identification of “Ken’an Pasha”, as there were two high Ottoman dignitaries of this name who were active around the time of Mihnea’s enthronement in early 1658. The husband of Atike, son-in-law of Sultan İbrahim and thus brother-in-law of the current ruler, Mehmed IV – was Sarı (or Topal) Ken’an, a Russian-born pasha, who had held various high offices in the previous ten years, such as the post of third vizier, kapudan pasha, or prestigious regional governorships in Silistria and Buda. By the time of Mihnea’s inauguration it seems that he did not have any important positions, but half a year later he was appointed kaymakam (that is, deputy to the grand vizier), even if only for a month – which means he may have had the necessary influence to promote his favourite to the Wal-

⁵⁴ Georg Kraus, *Siebenbürgische Chronik*, Fontes Rerum Austriacarum, Abteilung 1, vol. 3 (Vienna 1862), 382.

⁵⁵ Pietro Valier’s report on his conversations with Gabriel Thomassy (Venice, August 1658) Alexandru Ciorănescu, “Documente privitoare la domnia lui Mihail Radu (1658–1659)” [Documents concerning the rule of Mihail Radu 1658–1659], *Buletinul Comisiei Istorice a României* 13 (1934): 28. His other information, that Mihnea had been offered an important Ottoman post if he were ready to convert, may on the other hand belong to the same category of unverifiable data as Harsányi’s stories about Mihnea’s plans in case he had to leave Constantinople.

⁵⁶ Antalfy, “Călătoria lui Evlia Celebi,” 30.

⁵⁷ Máté Balogh’s report to György Rákóczi II (Constantinople, 19 August 1656) Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 436; Simon Reniger’s letter to Johann Rudolph Schmid zum Schwarzenhorn (Adrianople, 13 February 1658) HHStA Türkei I. Kt. 129. Fasc. 64. Conv. A. fol. 114r. The latter’s information was also adopted into a Venetian newsletter, compiled on the basis of Reniger’s reports, see Hurmuzaki, *Documente* V/2, 42.

lachian throne.⁵⁸ However, Sarı Ken'an Pasha was well-known to be very ill-disposed towards the Transylvanians, and Harsányi reports that when he told Mihnea how much information he had about the pasha's machinations against his prince, Mihnea confirmed this and added even more, claiming that he heard about them from a trustee of the pasha.⁵⁹ The Transylvanians also reported that Sarı Ken'an was promoting Radu Iliaş for the throne of Wallachia.⁶⁰ It is hard to believe that Harsányi, a frequent guest of Mihnea's, would not have noticed that every time he visited the voivode-in-waiting, he was actually going to the palace of his lord's adversary.

The most important argument against the identification of "Ken'an Pasha" with Sarı Ken'an is however the account of another Ottoman chronicler, Mehmed Halife. He writes of Mihnea that "this infidel lived for more than twenty years in the saray of Gürcü Ken'an Pasha, the conqueror of Ahıska [in Georgia]."⁶¹ The name is regularly used for another pasha from the same period, also known as Gürcü Ken'an Süleyman; in fact, he succeeded Sarı Ken'an as beylerbey of Buda.⁶² Mehmed Halife however was referring here to yet another Ken'an, also of Georgian origin (thus "Gürcü"), much older than the other two, who was already a vizier in the early 1630s, commander of the Black Sea fleet and later kaymakam. After governing as pasha of Silistria and then of Erzurum, he returned to the Porte in the late 1630s, became a member of the divan, and died in 1652 as second vizier. His wife was also an Atike (known under the by-name Burnaz), daughter of a sultan, but rather than of İbrahim, of his father Ahmed I.⁶³ After the death of

⁵⁸ Later, on the night of the 16th February 1659, he was executed in Aleppo for his participation in Abaza Hasan's revolt. For short biographies, see Anton von Gévy, *Versuch eines chronologischen Verzeichnisses der türkischen Statthalter von Ofen* (Vienna, 1841), 30–31; Mehmed Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmanî* [The register of the Ottomans], ed. Nuri Akbayar (Istanbul, 1996), vol. 3, 885. On Atike, see *ibid.*, vol. 1, 6.

⁵⁹ Jakab Harsányi Nagy's letter to György Rákóczi II (Constantinople, 22 February 1656) Szilágyi, ed., *Okmánytár*, 319–320.

⁶⁰ Jakab Harsányi Nagy's letter to György Rákóczi II (Constantinople, 9 February 1656) *ibid.*, 314.

⁶¹ The quote continues: "in fine Muslim clothing and behaving like a bey or a pasha; he read Muslim religious books and claimed that he would eventually also become Muslim. Moreover, when I was içoğlan [Inner Palace servant of devşirme origin] of the mighty Ken'an Pasha, he was reading and writing there as do young men attached to the içoğlans." Lajos Fekete, "Mehmed Chalife 'Tárich'-ja az 1625–1664. évek eseményeiről" [The *Tarih* of Mehmed Halife about the events in the years 1625–1664], *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 26 (1925): 396.

⁶² He started his career somewhat later than Sarı Ken'an, in the early 1650s, and from 1655 was regional governor in Buda (a post he held four times), Rumelia, and in the 1660s of Diyarbakır and Sehrizor. For a short biography, see Gévy, *Versuch*, 31; Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmanî*, vol. 3, 885; Balázs Sudár, "A hódoltsági pasák az oszmán belpolitika forogtatagában (1657–1665)" [Pashas from Ottoman Hungary in the turmoil of the Ottoman politics 1657–1665], *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* 124 (2011): 892–893.

⁶³ Ken'an's short biography: Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmanî*, vol. 3, 885. On Atike Burnaz, see *ibid.*, vol. 1, 6. The identification is also confirmed by a Venetian newsletter from Adrianople (18

her husband, Atike married again, this time a certain Doğancı Yusuf Pasha, who was most likely the “Yusuf Pasha the younger” of the Transylvanian diplomatic letters: unlike two other Yusufs known from this period, he received his first title only in the early 1650s, by which time he was a member of the divan, without holding a further specific assignment – which may be why the Transylvanian sources always referred to him by name rather than by office.⁶⁴

These connections offer enough explanation for Mihnea’s success. The support of an influential relative of the sultan and her husband, a member of the divan, was something no other pretender to the thrones of the Wallachian or Moldavian Voivodates could boast. On top of this came his connections to Turhan Hatice sultan, at least through her representative, the valide kihaya. Although we cannot know for sure that after the valide kihaya was deposed Mihnea kept contacts with the new holder of the post (later known as Köse Ali Pasha), it seems that the relationship remained lively enough for Grand Vizier Köprülü Mehmed Pasha – who owed his power to the valide sultan – to accept the candidate of several members of the sultan’s family as the new voivode of Wallachia.⁶⁵

This feature of Mihnea’s network, that it even included members of the sultan’s family, was quite unique among the Wallachian and Moldavian pretenders in Constantinople; the Transylvanian sources’ account of Vasile Lupu’s attempts to return to his country was surely a much more typical case. In any case, study of Mihnea’s career may still offer some conclusions for a more general history of the voivodes’ contacts in Constantinople. The practice of neutralising pretenders by making them sign an oath in exchange for a regular salary must have been used in more than the three cases documented here. Further, we can assume that Mihnea was not the only pretender who could set aside his claims for a while and offer to cooperate with the ruling voivode – although Constantin Şerban’s reluctance to accept shows that this arrangement must have enjoyed only a limited popularity. Last but not least, it is worth noting how much more developed were the networks of the Moldavian and Wallachian voivodes-in-waiting in Constantinople than those of Transylvanian diplomats, many of whom spent no more than a year in the

February 1658), which claims that Mihnea stayed earlier with the deceased (“defonto”) Kin’an Pasha. Ciorănescu, “Documente,” 95.

⁶⁴ In the mid-1650s, he was for a while commander of Boğaz hisarı, and also held several military positions later, during the 1660s. In 1666/67, he became pasha of Temesvár, and died during January/February 1670. See Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmanî*, vol. 5, 1695, with the short biographies of two other Yusuf Pashas who were active in the late 1650s, both of them older than Doğancı Yusuf.

⁶⁵ On the circumstances of Köprülü’s appointment, see Joseph von Hammer, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, vol. 5, *Vom Regierungsantritte Murad des Vierten bis zur Ernennung Mohammed Köprülü’s zum Grosswesir 1623–1656* (Pest, 1829), 656–658; Nicolae Iorga, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, vol. 4, *bis 1774* (Gotha, 1911), 75–76. On Köse Ali Pasha, see Sudár, “A hódoltság pasák,” 899–901.

Ottoman capital. Only through Mihnea's mediation could György Rákóczi II's diplomats informally connect straight to the highest level of Ottoman administration, and the situation was the same with most Transylvanian princes, apart from such unique cases as Gábor Bethlen, who spent years in the Ottoman Empire – and a whole year at the Sublime Porte – before becoming ruler.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ On Bethlen's network at the Sublime Porte, see Balázs Sudár's article in this volume, as well as Sándor Papp, "Bethlen Gábor, a Magyar Királyság és a Porta (1619–1622)" [Gábor Bethlen, the Kingdom of Hungary and the Porte], *Századok* 145 (2011): 915–974. The classic study on the functioning of the Transylvanian embassy at the Sublime Porte is Vencel Bíró, *Erdély követei a Portán* [Transylvanian envoys at the Porte] (Kolozsvár, 1921). See also my "'Verdammtes Konstantinopel': Das Türkenbild der siebenbürgischen Gesandtschaft bei der Hohen Pforte im 17. Jahrhundert", in *Ein Raum im Wandel: Die osmanisch-habsburgische Grenzregion im 16.-18. Jh.*, ed. Norbert Spannenberger (Stuttgart, 2013) forthcoming; also "Translation at the Seventeenth Century Transylvanian Embassy in Constantinople", in *Osmanische Orient und Ostmitteleuropa: Studien zu Perzeptionen und Interaktionen in den Grenzonen*, ed. Robert Born and Andreas Puth (Stuttgart, 2013), forthcoming.

