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Pamukkale Üniversitesi
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PERCEPTION OF THE ROMANIAN-OTTOMAN RELATIONSHIPS IN THE ROMANIAN HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

Gheorghe Calcan *

Abstract

The Romanian history evolved under the influence of the Ottoman Empire for a long period. Wallachia and Moldavia were under the domination of the Ottoman Empire for about four centuries and a half, and Transylvania for one century and a half. This strongly influenced the historical evolution of the Romanian people. The whole history of the Romanian people in the mediaeval period was a continuous fight for defending autonomy and obtaining national independence.

The continuous fight of the Romanian princes permanently made the status of the Romanian countries become a special one. The Romanian Countries were never changed into a pashalac. This fact was reflected in the history textbooks and in the Romanian mentality.

RUMEN TARİH KİTAPLARINDA ROMANYA-OSMANLI İLİŞKİLERİNİN ALGILANMASI

Özet

Romanya tarihi uzun bir süre boyunca Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun etkisi altında gelişme göstermiştir. Yaklaşık 450 yıl ve 150 yıl boyunca Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun egemenliğinde kalmıştır. Bu da Romanya halkının tarihsel gelişimini önemli ölçüde etkilemiştir. Bu dönemde Romanyalıların tüm tarihi, özerkliği savunmak ve ulusal bağımsızlığı elde etmek için süreklilik arzeden bir mücadeleyle geçmiştir.

Romanyalı prenslerin sürekli savaşı, Rumen devletlerinin statüsünün daimi olarak özel bir konu olmasını sağlamıştır. Rumen devletleri asla bir paşalığa dönüşmemiştir. Bu gerçek, tarih kitaplarında ve Rumenlerin zihninde yansıtılmış ve çizilmiştir.

1.INTRODUCTION

The Romanian history evolved under the influence of the Ottoman Empire for a long period.

The Romanian people was formed at the beginning of the 7-th century, as a consequence of a long process of intermingling between the local Dacians and the Roman conquerors. The Dacians are the oldest ethnic ancestors of the Romanian people. They lived in the Northern parts of the Balkan Peninsula, in an area bordered by the Carpathian Mountains, the lower part of the Danube River and the Black Sea coast. At the beginning of the 2-nd millennium BC the Dacians detached from the Thracians and became an independent people. Their civilisation was genuine and precious. From the 1-st century BC until the 1-st century AD, Dacia reached the climax of its development, under the reigns of the Kings Burebista and Decebal. In 106 AD the Romans conquered Dacia, after two long wars. This moment marked the mingling process between the Dacians and the Romans. Later on, the migratory peoples came to the same territories. Some of them settled here and they also brought their contribution to form the Romanian people.

As it has been stated above, the Romanian people was formed through the mixing of the Dacian and the Roman populations. In this long process the Romans imposed their language, as well as their administrative organisation. In addition to these, they also brought their army to the new colony. Therefore, the local population was compelled to learn both the Latin language and the Romans' habits. That is why the Romanian people is considered to have the same Latin origins as the French, the Spanish or the Portuguese.

In 602 AD many Slavs came to the South of the Danube River. They settled for a while on

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the territories of ex-Dacia. Most historians consider that this is the moment when the Romanian people and the Romanian language were accomplished. For six-seven centuries the Romanians were organised in specific administrative and political systems, such as rural assemblies or popular communities (according to the Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga), as well as in cnezate, waivode or county formations.

In the 13-th and 14-th centuries the feudal countries in the Central and Western Europe were organised in small divisions. The feudal Romanian countries of Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldavia were formed in accordance with the same pattern. During the feudal epoch all these three countries were under Romanian rule and organisation. At the middle of the 19-th century (1859), Moldavia and Wallachia united and so Romania was formed. In 1878 the Dobruja province joined Romania. It was only in 1918 that the other provinces under foreign rule, namely Basarabia, Bucovina and Transylvania, united with Romania.

THE ROMANIAN - OTTOMAN RELATIONSHIPS

It is generally acknowledged that since the 14-th century, when the feudal Romanian countries were formed, until the end of the 19-th century when Romania proclaimed its independence (1877), the country was under the influence of the Ottoman Empire.

It is also well-known that at the middle of the 14-th century (1354)[1], the Ottomans started invading different parts of Europe. The confrontations between the Romanians and the Ottomans began at that time, too. The first armed conflict took place in 1369, when Vladislav Voicu, the ruler of Wallachia, ordered some of his military contingents to join the armies of the Hungarian king Louis in his battle against the armies led by the Sultan Murad I[2] . In 1371 the Romanian army took part in the battle from Cirmen with the purpose of stopping the advance of the Ottomans in the Balkan Peninsula.

Nevertheless, the systematic and direct conflicts between the Romanians and the Ottomans took place when Mircea cel Bătrân reigned in Wallachia, between 1386-1418. The history textbooks insist on the most important battles. For instance, in 1389 Mircea cel Bătrân's army joined the Serbian one in their battle against the Ottomans at Câmpia Mierlei (Kossovopolje). Other events dealt with in the history textbooks are those from 1394 or 1395 when the battle from Rovine, on the Wallachian territory or from 1396, when the Romanian king joined the anti- Ottoman crusade from Nicopole, in Bulgaria.

The documents of the time mention the fact that the Ottoman army which was involved in the battle from Rovine consisted of 40,000 soldiers led by Baiazid Ilderim, whereas Mircea cel Bătrân's army had 10,000 men. Yet, Mircea defeated the Ottoman army and was triumphant. The Romanian textbooks describe this battle and offer passages quoted from Byzantine chroniclers like Moxa or Laonicus Chalcocondylas who praise both the important role of the Romanian leader and the bravery of his soldiers[3]: " Baiazid was severely defeated and lost approximately 30,000 Turkish soldiers" ; " Ilderim could hardly save himself and many of his men perished"[4]. Mircea cel Bătrânn's role is positively presented in the battle from Nicopole, although this time the Ottomans vanquished.

Mircea cel Bătrân played such an outstanding part in defending his country that Mihai Eminescu, the greatest Romanian poet drew on both the battle from Rovine and on that from Nicopole and wrote a famous poem in the Romanian literature, entitled " The Third Letter "[5]. The poem is included in all the textbooks of Romanian literature.

The international position of the Romanian king strengthened considerably at the beginning of the 15-th century when Timur Lenk was victorious in the battle from Ankara, in 1402. After this battle Baiazid was taken captive. Mircea cel Bătrân got involved in the fights between Baiazid's two sons

[1] Mustafa Ali Mehmed, *Istoria Turcilor*, Editura Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică, Bucureşti, 1976, pp.120-122.

[2] The data of this battle (Sirpsindigi) isn't so precise, varying between 1364 and 1371 (Mehmed, 2008, p. 123). Istoria Românilor, vol. IV, Editura Enciclopedică, Bucureşti, 2001, pp. 276-177.

[3] Constantin Daicoviciu, Miron Constantinescu, Ştefan Pascu (coordinators), Istoria Românilor, Manual pentru anul IV licee, Editura Didactică si Pedagogică, Bucureşti, 1973, p. 83.

[4] Mihai Manea, Adrian Pascu, Bogdan Teodorescu, Istoria Românilor, Manual pentru clasa a XI-a, Editura Didactică si Pedagogică, Bucureşti, 1992, pp. 222-224.

[5] Mihai Eminescu, Opere, Poesii, vol. I, Editura Cultura Naţională, Bucureşti, [1938], pp. 132-142.

to take over the Ottoman throne, supporting both Musa and Mustafa[6]. In 1415 Musa became Sultan and the part played by the Romanian king was undeniable[7]. Mohamed's coming to the throne in 1413 brought hostility to the Romanian king again. In 1415 the Romanian province of Dobruja fell under Ottoman rule and it remained as such until 1878. In the same year, 1415, Mircea cel Bătrân accepted to pay a tribute of 3,000 ducats to the Ottoman Sultan in exchange for the peace of his country.

The first official treaty (Capitulation) between the leaders of a Romanian country and of the Ottoman Empire dates from Mircea cel Bătrân's time. This capitulation was signed in 1391 or 1393 between Mircea and Baiazid. This document set the judicial basis of the Romanian – Ottoman relationships as long as the Ottomans ruled the Romanian countries. Among the most important rights and obligations stipulated in the Capitulation act we will mention the following:

- The king's right to rule his country according to its own laws. In addition to this, "the right to declare war or make peace" were also granted (article 1);
- The Romanian citizens were allowed to keep their Christian religion (article 2);
- The king's right to be " appointed by the metropolitan bishops and the boyards " (article 4);
- In exchange for the peace and quiet from which Wallachia benefited and as it was "shown great mercy (the king) would have to pay Our Treasury either 3,000 red coins in Romanian currency or 500 coins in Our currency, as it chooses" (article 5)[8].

Iancu de Hunedoara, who reigned between 1441 and 1456, was another Romanian King who fought to keep the country independent. He led several battles against the Ottomans, both at home and abroad. The battles from Nis and Sofia (the long campaign, 1443) were followed by a peace treaty for 10 years, signed at Seghedin. However, this treaty was infringed by the Ottomans who joined the King of Hungary in the battle from Varna, in 1444. The Ottomans were victorious in this battle. The most famous victory which Iancu de Hunedoara obtained on the batttlefield was that of Belgrad, in 1456. Then the Transylvanian King led an army of only 30,000 soldiers against the Ottoman army, led by Mohamed II, counting 100,000 men. The Romaniana managed to defeat Mohamed's warriors.

Vlad Ţepeş, also known as Vlad the Impaler, reigned in Wallachia three times. He is generally regarded as a fearless king who loved justice and who made all the efforts to ensure the independence of his country. He refused to pay the tribute owed to the Ottoman Empire, a fact which resulted in a violent reaction from the latter. The Ottomans designated Hamza-beg, the Vidin pasha at the time, to capture Vlad. But things did not go according to plan. The overcautious Romanian king caught the Ottoman representative and ordered that Hamza-beg and his subjects should be impaled not far from Tirgoviste, the capital of the country. Vlad the Impaler's act attracted the Ottomans' wrath. Sultan Mohamed II himself led the punishment campaign from 1462. Still, the Romanian king managed to obtain a special success on the moral plan on the night of 16 / 17 of June, when he organised an unexpected attack on the Sultan's tent. It is worth mentioning that Vlad the Impaler had lived at the Ottoman Court in his youth and had learned the Turkish language very well. That is why he found it easy to diguise himself in Ottoman clothes. Dressed like this he entered the Ottoman camp together with 7,000 mounted knights. Consequently, a lot of chaos and bafflement were created on the camp. The confused soldiers started fighting one another. Laonic Chalcocondil wrote in his chronicle that Mohamed II himself said that he " could not take over the country from a man who is able to do such great things"[9].

The audacity of the Romanian king became a model for the future generations. Besides, this act

[6] Hadrian Daicoviciu, Pompiliu Teodor, Ioan Câmpean, *Istoria Românilor, Antică şi Medievală, Manual pentru clasa a VII-a,* Editura Didactică si Pedagogică, Bucureşti, 1993, p. 167.

[7] Manea *et al*., 1992, p. 227.

[8] Nicoleta Dumitrescu, Mihai Manea, Cristian Niţă, Adrian Pascu, Aurel Trandafir, Mădălina Trandafir, *Istoria Românilor, Manual pentru clasa a XII-a*, Editura Humanitas Educaţional, Bucureşti, 1992, p. 32.

[9] Manea et al., 1992, p. 239. Also see Nicoleta Stoicescu, *Vlad Ţepeş*, Editura Academiei, Bucureşti, 1976.

inspired many artists in their works. For instance, Theodor Aman, a famous Romanian painter, painted "Vlad the Impaler and the Ottoman Messengers"[10]. The king is illustrated as having a majestic stature while talking to the Ottoman soldiers. It goes without saying that film makers also drew on Vlad the Impaler's life and heroism in cinema productions.

Ştefan cel Mare, or Stephen the Great, reigned in Moldavia between 1457 and 1504. He is considered one of the most famous rulers in Romanian history and many of his acts are regarded as legendary. He reigned for over 47 years and he led 36 wars, out of which he met with defeat in only 2. A remarkable fact is that after each war he ordered that a church should be built. Most of his wars were against the Ottomans. In the battle from Vaslui in 1475 Stephen led an army of 40,000 warriors which defeated Suleiman, the beylerbei of Rumelia, leading an army of 120,000 soldiers. The Ottoman losses were enormous – 30, 000 men, 40,000 horses and 15,000 prisoners. When Sultan Mohamed II heard about the disastrous result of this war he refused to see anybody for 5 days. Some people in his entourage stated that this was "the greatest catastrophe suffered by the Ottomans since the beginning of Islam"[11].

The following year another Ottoman army, counting 150,000-200,000 soldiers and led by Sultan Mahomed II himself headed for Moldavia. But Moldavia was under siege by the Tatars from the East, so Stephen could only gather 10,000-12,000 soldiers. In the battle from Războieni, Valea Albă, the Romanians were severely defeated. As usual, Stephen ordered that a new church be build on the battlefield. On the religious inscription on this church we can read : " And, according to God's will, the Christians were defeated by the pagans and many of Moldavia's soldiers perished there"[12].

When the Tatars had been chased away Stephen managed to gather a new army. He started harrassing and pursuing Mohamed, who was forced to withdraw and to cross the Danube back in great disorder. Eventually the glorious campaign from 1476 changed into a major defeat of the Ottomans[13].

Stephen the Great's life and strong personality also inspired many artists. A ruler to be proud of, he was the protagonist of a film shot in communist years. The Romanian writer Barbu Ştefănescu Delavrancea focused on Stephen's character and deeds and wrote the theatre play "Sunset", in which the king, at the end / sunset of his life attracts respect and admiration and informs the audience about the moral legacy he will leave to his successors. The play is included in the textbooks of Romanian literature.

The fight for the autonomy and independence of the country continued in the 16-th century, too. Petru Rareş, Stephen the Great's son, fought against the Ottomans led by Soliman in 1538. Defeated, the Moldavian king took refuge in Transylvania, where he stayed until 1541. When he came back to Moldavia he had to accept to pay a higher tribute to the Sublime Porte. Radu de la Afumaţi reigned in Wallachia between 1525 and 1529, and led 19 battles against the Ottomans, with changeable results. Ioan Vodă cel Viteaz was Petru Rares's son and he reigned in Moldavia. He obtained an important victory against the Ottomans at Jilištea (Focşani) in April 1574. Shortly after that another Ottoman army plundered the country. Helped by the local boyards who were plotting against their ruler, the Ottomans won the battle and Ioan Vodă cel Viteaz had a tragic death[14].

The reign of Mihai Viteazul, or Michael the Brave, in Wallachia between 1593 and 1601 is considered an outstanding period in Romanian history. In 1600 Michael managed to unify the three countries – Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania into a unique state. His reign also had an Ottoman component. In 1594 Michael ordered that the Ottoman creditors in the country should be killed. He also fought against the Ottomans both at home and abroad, mainly in the South of the Danube River. Michael the Brave's most important confrontation with the Ottomans took

[10] Sorin Oane, Maria Ochescu, *Istoria Românilor, Manual pentru clasa a VIII-a*, Editura Humanitas Educaţional,Bucureşti, 2000, p. 89.

[11] Manea *et al.,* 1992, p. 247.

[12] Manea *et al.*, 1992, p. 247. Also see N. Iorga, *Istoria lui Ştefan cel Mare*, Editura Minerva, Bucureşti, 1978.

[13] Hadrian Daicoviciu *et al.,* 1993, p. 123.

[14] Constantin Daicoviciu *et al.,* 1973, pp. 108-120.

place at Călugareni, on the 13-th of August 1595. Michael himself went to the battlefield, giving a positive example to his soldiers. On that day he was triumphant. The Ottomans lost 7,000 warriors and Sinan-pasha, the army commander, " fell from the bridge across the Neajlov river, but considered himself lucky to be alive"[15].

However, Michael realised that the Ottoman army was by far more numerous and made the decision to take refuge high in the mountains. Sinan-pasha took hold of Bucharest. Under the circumstances, Michael received help and support from Transylvania. Between the 15-th and 20-th of October 1575 the battle from Giurgiu took place and Michael chased the Ottomans to the South of the Danube River. The Ottoman chronicler Mustafa Naima considered this battle to be " the most terrific defeat in Turkish history, exclusively due to the unfaithful and damned Michael"[16]. The fights continued for a few more years but in 1598 both sides agreed to make peace. Mohamed III acknowledged Michael as king as long as he lived and accepted that the tribute owed should be reduced by half.

Needless to say, Michael the Brave is also regarded as a national hero. His achievements are presented in many works of art. The film "Michael the Brave", shot in the 1970-s was greatly enjoyed by both historians and cinema buffs.

At the end of the 17-th and beginning of the 18-th centuries the fight against foreign domination acquired other dimensions, as well. In their hope to get rid of the Ottoman supremacy many Romanian kings signed secret treaties with the neighbouring great powers. This was the line followed by Şerban Cantacuzino (1678-1788), and Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714), who reigned in Wallachia. Şerban Cantacuzino took part in the Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1681, but he secretly helped the Hasburgs. In his turn, Constantin Brâncoveanu made an alliance with the rulers of the Habsburg Empire first and then with the Russian Empire. During a conflict between the Ottomans and the Russians in 1710-1711 Brincoveanu's army bode their time. However, one of his miltary troops took an active part in the battle on the Russian side. In 1714, Mehmed Rashid stated that as the Romanian king "had accumulated enough wealth and arms to oppose the Ottomans and as he was plotting an uprising hoping to rule his country in an absolutely independent way" he was removed from kingship, imprisoned in Constantinople and beheaded together with his four children. His death was regarded as a proof of patriotism as well as a deep attachment to Christianity. According to legend the king refused to save his sons through abandoning his Christian religion and converting to Muslim religion[17].

Dimitrie Cantemir, the most educated Romanian king of all times, reigned in Moldavia between 1710 and 1711. A learned man, he wrote a lot of scientific books, still considered invaluable. He was also the author of "The History of the Ottoman Empire". Cantemir signed an alliance treaty with Peter the Great, the Tzar of Russia. In the battle from Stănileşti, on the Prut River in 1711, the Russian and Moldavian armies were confronted with the Ottomans. The latter won the battle and Dimitie Cantemir had to seek refuge at the court of the Russian Tzar, where he remained until his death.

The reigns of Constantin Brâncoveanu and Dimitrie Cantemir made the Ottomans lose their confidence in the Romanian kings. Therefore, they anointed foreign kings to the throne of the Romanian countries. Most of these king were of Greek origin and they came from Phanar, a district in Constantinople. That is why the epoch is known as the period of the Phanariot reigns. These kings used to pay for the throne. As soon as they became rulers, they had to get back the huge sums they had offered. Therefore, they imposed higher taxes on the local population[18].

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[15] Manea *et al*., 1992, p. 277.

[16] Manea *et al*., 1992, p. 278. Also see N. Iorga, *Istoria lui Mihai Viteazul* , vol. I-II, Editura Minerva, Bucureşti, 1979.

[17] Manea *et al*., 1992, p. 307.

[18] Alexandru Vulpe (coordinator), Radu C. Păun, Radu Băjenaru, Ioan Grosu, *Istoria Românilor, Manual pentru clasa a VIII-a*, Editura Sigma, Bucureşti, 2000, p. 60. A very interesting and realistic presentation of the place and the economic contribution of the Romanian Countries upon the strategy of mastering the war and the supplying of the ottoman army is realized by Associate Professor Mehmet Yaşar Ertaş from the Pamukkale Universiy of Denizli, Turkey: "The Place and Importance of Princedoms in the Ottoman Campaing Logistic", *Bulletin, Law and Social Scientes Series, Petrolium –Gas Unversity of Ploiesti*, vol.XL, no. 2/2008, pp. 197-202.

In addition to this they were usually joined by their relatives and friends who were appointed in the key positions of the state. The important jobs were sold and bought, a fact which led to a fiscal crisis. Everybody in the country was dissatisfied with the state of affairs, including the boyards who were unable to get a respectable position in the state. New taxes were introduced, the people were forced to work harder and to offer more products, the number and value of the debentures offered to the Sultan and the Ottoman civil servants increased. The reigns were short and this impoverished the country even more. The tribute was raised from 65,000 talers to 260,000 in Moldavia and from 260,000 to 300,000 talers in Wallachia[19]. We cannot deny, however, that some kings of the epoch made good changes and contributed to modernise the society. The names of Constantin Mavrocordat, Alexandru Ipsilanti and Scarlat Callimachi are often mentioned by historians.

During the Phanariot century the Ottomans fought in several wars against the great powers on the Romanian territories and this fact brought about a lot of damages and losses. The most painful fact was that some parts of Romania were conceded to the neighbouring empires at the end of such wars. For instance a conflict with Austria and Venetia was followed by the peace from Passarowitz (1718), through which the Ottomans conceded the Banat and Oltenia areas to the Habsburg Empire. In 1736 Oltenia is reinstated to Wallachia by the peace treaty from Belgrade. After the war between the Russians and the Ottomans in 1768-1774 the Habsburgs managed to bribe and blackmail the Ottoman civil servants and the former managed to add the North-Eastern part of Moldavia to their territory. The respective area is known as the Bucovina province. Another war between the Russians and the Ottomans, in 1806-1812, ended with the peace from Buchatest. On this occasion the Eastern part of Moldavia, situated between the rivers Prut and Nistru, known as Basarbia, was offered to the Russians[20].

The concession of these territories meant the infringement of the Capitulation act which absolutely forbade the estrangement of the Romanian territories. In 1918 these provinces united with Romania, but in 1940 the USSR took hold of them again[21]. Today, the North of Bucovina belongs to Ukraine, whereas most of Basarabia belongs to the Republic of Moldavia.

The Phanariot regime installed in Moldavia in 1711 and in Wallachia in 1716 ended after the popular uprising led by Tudor Vladimirescu in 1821. This revolution aimed at overthrowing both the rule of the Romanian noblemen and the Phanariot domination. In 1822 the Ottomans were compelled to admit Romanian sovereigns to the throne of the country.

During the first half of the 19-th century the influence of the Ottoman Empire started to decrease. In exchange, the influence of the Russian Empire started to increase. The latter became the Protective Power and the former remained the Suzerain Power. Eager to get the Romanians' goodwill the Russians forced the Ottomans to give more rights to the Romanians. The Convention from Akkerman signed in 1826 by both the Russians and the Ottomans stated the length of each reign at 7 years. Besides, the freedom of the commerce was granted in the Romanian countries as long as they were able to provide the Ottomans with everything they needed. Moreover, the Treaty of Adrianopol signed by the two powers in 1829, brought new rights to the Romanians. Thus, the Romanian kings were granted the reign as long as they lived , the freedom of commerce was total and the ex-Ottoman fortresses Turnu, Giurgiu and Brăila were conceded back to Wallachia[22].

The Romanians' national consciousness grew more mature and the programme of the revolution from 1848-1849 included demands like democracy, modernization and social emancipation. Major ideals were also expected to become reality – the unification of the Romanian countries together with the strengthening of

[19] Constantin Daicoviciu *et al*., 1973, pp. 146-147.

[20] Manea *et al*., 1992, pp. 357-359. Also see A. Boldur, *Istoria Basarabiei*, Ediția a II-a, Editura Victor Frunză, Bucureşti, 1992.

[21] *Le pacte Molotov-Ribbentrof et ses consequences pour la Bassarabie*, Kichinev Universitas, Chişinău, 1991.

[22] Mihai Manea, Bogdan Teodorescu, *Istoria Românilor de la 1821 la 1989, Manual pentru clasa a XII-a*, Editura Didactică si Pedagogică, Bucureşti, 1995, pp. 34-35.

their position[23]. The revolution was supressed by the joint forces of the Ottoman and Russian troops in Wallachia and by the Habsburg forces in Transylvania[24].

The revolution of 1848 was followed by a more intense activity to unite the Romanian countries manifested both at home and abroad. In 1856 the Congress from Paris put an end to the Crimean war between the Russians and the Ottomans. On this occasion the unification of Moldavia and Wallachia was officially dealt with. The rights of the new state were to be granted by all the seven great powers of Europe at that time. The purpose of this action was to create a kind of barrier between the Russians and the Ottomans who were often in conflict. The Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg Empire opposed this idea. Yet, the Congress decided that the Romanian people should be consulted on its future.

The Ottomans and the Habsburgs tried to obstruct the unification of the Romanian countries. In Moldavia caimacan Nicolae Vogoride helped them falsify the elections. The great powers cancelled these elections and organised new ones, which clearly proved the Romanians' wish to unite. The Conference of the great powers held in Paris in 1858 approved of the unification of the two countries which became The United Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia.

On the 5-th of January 1859, Alexandru Ioan Cuza was elected the ruler of Moldavia and on the 24-th of January1859, he was elected the ruler of Wallachia, as well. Thus the two countries became just one. One by one the great poweres recognised Cuza's double election at the Conference from Paris (April – September 1859). The last power to accept Cuza as the ruler of both countries was the Ottoman Empire.

In order to obtain the Ottoman acceptance Alexandru Ioan Cuza went on a visit to Constantinople in September 1860. The ceremonial with which the Ottomans met him was that of the chiefs of states[25]. Through the firman of 4/16 of December 1861 the Ottoman Porte recognised Cuza's double election. The new leader was free to rule his country and to modernize the Romanian society. The Porte interfered only in case its sense of suzerainty was in danger. For example, the Ottomans disagreed with Cuza's decision to create the National Bank of Romania, to mint the national coins or to have Romanian medals of honour made.

Cuza's dethronement on the 11-th of February 1866 shocked the great powers. The Ottoman, the Habsburg and the Russian Empires required that the unification of the country should be abolished and that Moldavia and Wallachia should go back to the previous status[26]. The Ottomans had even brought a part of their army to the South of the Danube River, ready to plunder the country, should that have been necessary. The Romanians' reaction was fast. On the 10-th of May they anointed Charles I of Hohenzollern king of Romania. Charles was the nephew of the king of Prussia. Besides, he was also related to Napoleon III, the French emperor, as well as to the queen of England. This choice ensured the support of at least three great powers of Europe. The constitutional monarchy is now installed in Romania.

Without consulting the Ottoman Empire the first Constution of the country was adopted in 1866. Moreover the name of the country was officially announced – Romania. Outside Romania until the war for independence Dobruja was under Ottoman domination. The Ottoman rule in Dobruja was quite permissive, as they allowed the local population to keep the traditional way of getting organised. Besides, they never imposed the Islam religion on the Romanians and they never transferred populatios in order to change the ethnic character of the province[27].

On the 9-th of May 1877 Romania proclaimed its national independence. This fact was made possible by several important events. On the one

[23] See Gheorghe Platon, *Geneza revoluției române de la 1848*, Editura Junimea, Iaşi, 1980.

[24] Elisabeta Hurezeanu, Gheorghe Smarandache, Maria Tatu, *Istoria modernă a României, Manual pentru clasa a IX-a*, Editura Didactică si Pedagogică, Bucureşti, 1985, pp. 52-53.

[25] Hurezeanu et al., 1985, p.78; Octavian Cristescu, Vasile Păsăilă, Bogdan Teodorescu, Raluca Tomi, *Istoria Românilor, Epoca modernă şi contemporană, Manual pentru clasa a VIII-a*, Editura Didactică si Pedagogică, Bucureşti, 1994, p. 62.

[26] Manea, 1995, p. 108.

[27] Manea, 1995, p. 104.

hand, the issue of the Orient had been brought forth again in 1875. On the other hand, in the war between Russia, Romania and the Ottomans from 1877-1878, Romania took sides with Russia. Even before the actual attack had begun, the Ottomans bombed the Romanian towns in the North of the Danube River, while the Romanians bombed back the Ottoman fortresses in the South of the Danube, mainly Vidin and Rusciuk. The Romanian troops crossed the Danube and took part in the battles from Plevna and greatly contributed to the capitulation of this powerful fortress. The Ottoman army General Osman Pasha, who was in charge of defending Plevna, surrendered to the Romanian colonel Grigore Cerchez saying : "I capitulate together with my army and I surrender to the young and brave Romanian army"[28]. Actually, the capitulation of Plevna put an end to the war. The Peace Treaty signed in Berlin in 1878 recognized the national independence of Romania. The same Treaty gave Dobruja back to Romania.

From that moment on, the relationships between the two countries improved and modernized. In 1879 they established diplomatic relationships at a legation level at in 1939 at an embassy level[29]. In 1934 Romania, Turkey, Greece and Yougoslavia signed the Treaty of Agreement Balkania and beginning 1966 the economic, political and cultural relationships improved constantly. Many Romanian tourists have visited Turkey lately[30]. In addition to this, a lot of sports people train or work at different clubs in Turkey. All these aspects greatly contribute to the strengthening of the relationships of the two modern countries.

2.CONCLUSIONS

Wallachia and Moldavia were under Ottoman domination for about four centuries and a half, while Transylvania was under the same rule for a century and a half. This fact influenced deeply the historical evolution of the Romanian people. The entire history of the Romanian people in the medieval epoch was marked by uninterrupted fights to defend the autonomy of the country and to obtain its national independence. These aspects made the Romanian countries have a special status[31]. For example, the Romanian countries were never changed into pashalac, like the other neighbouring countries- Bulgaria, Serbia or Greece. The Romanian historian Florin Constantiniu considered that the numerous conflicts between the two countries was asymmetrical, taking into account the different military potential of each country[32]. The regular fights also enabled the Ottomans to have a privileged position over the Romanian countries. Mihail Kogalniceanu, a great Romanian PM, historian and political man of the 19-th century emphasised the fact that our relationships with the Ottomans varied in accordance with the result of the rapport of the respective forces of each moment. The relationships were strong when the Romanian military forces were weak, and the other way round[33].

These perceptions are to be found in the Romanian history textbooks, too. Nevertheless, the emotional accent changed from one epoch to another. For instance, in the communist years, and especially under the government led by Nicolae Ceauşescu, the patriotic accents on education were deeper. The Romanian president imposed the exaggeration of national heroism. As a matter of fact, the hidden purpose of this attitude was to cover the serious shortages of all kinds at a material level, as well as to put a veil on the democratic defficiency, at a moral level. The whole educational system, going as far as the different festivals, film making or textbooks highlited the glorious past of the Romanian people. That is why many specialists consider that the way of presenting the national history was triumphantly altered.

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[28] Constantin Daicoviciu *et al*., 1973, p. 223; also see Keith Hitchins, *Romania 1866-1947*, Editura Humanitas, Bucureşti, 1998, pp. 25-66; *Istoria Românilor*, vol.VII, tom I, Editura Enciclopedică, Bucureşti, 2003, pp. 633-679.

[29] Horia C. Matei, Silviu Neguţ, Ion Nicolae, Nicolae Şteflea, *Statele lumii. Mică enciclopedie*, Editura Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică, Bucureşti, 1976, pp. 553-554.

[30] Diana Darke, *Turcia. Ghid de călătorie*, Editura Niculescu, Bucureşti, 2007.

[31] See also Ertaş, 2008, p. 197.

[32] Florin Constantiniu, *O istorie sinceră a poporului român*, Ediţia a III-a revăzută şi adăugită, Editura Univers Enciclopedic, Bucureşti, 2002, pp. 82-88.

[33] *Independenţa României*, vol I, *Documente şi presă internă*, , Editura Academiei, Bucureşti, 1977, pp. 86-88.

It goes without saying that the situation of a small country with influential neighbours and confronted with the great powers willing to extend their territories by taking hold of the Romanian area needed to be enhanced by an active educational tonus giving an optimistic outlook on both the past and the future of the nation.

After the communist regime was abolished the unique texbooks, influenced by the state propaganda, were replaced by alternative textbooks with greater freedom to interpret the historical events, according to their authors' perception. Unfortunately, the importance of studying history is no longer a priority in the national curriculum. The number of classes per week has decreased considerably, from the 4-th to the 12-th grade. Romania's integration in the EU also put a mark on the way of teaching history. Thus, the history of Romania is no longer presented as a particular entity, but in the historical context of the whole Europe. Moreover, the emphasis changed from the political aspects to those connected to the morals and the social environment. Consequently, the importance of the Romanian kings together with their fights for autonomy and their aspirations to get the independence of the country diminished.

It is worth mentioning, however, that the Romanian historical research has been permanently concerned with the issue of the relationships between our country and the Ottomans, considering it of utmost importance. From Nicolae Iorga to the Institute of South-East European Studies or the Centres for Ottoman studies at the University the work in the historical field has thrived. Needless to say, many Romanian historians attend the Romanian Study Center in Istanbul, making an important contribution to the booming of these relationships. Therefore, the events are better understood and the future of these relationships looks brighter.

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