

## GHEORGHE DUCA AND THE DETHRONEMENT OF ANTONIE RUSET, PRINCE OF MOLDAVIA (1675 – 1678)

Constantin BURAC\*

**Abstract.** The purpose of this paper is to prove the fact that the dethronement of Antonie Ruset was prepared step by step, during almost three years, by the Wallachian prince Gheorghe Duca. Through great ability and perfidy, the later succeeded in attracting part of Moldavia's boyars such as the great chancellor Miron Costin, the hetman Alexandru Buhuș, who was his brother-in-law and others as well. Wallachia's ruler also used every opportunity he could in order to create Antonie Ruset an unfavourable image in the eyes of the Ottoman dignitaries, which brought his dethronement.

**Keywords:** Gheorghe Duca, Antonie Ruset, Wallachia, Moldavia, Axinte Uricariul, Miron Costin, Ion Neculce, Alexandru Buhuș, Cara Mustafa.

Antonie Ruset's rule does not abound in events; this explains the parsimony of historical information on this period, since throughout their history the Romanians have also seen short but quite dense reigns, so rich in events with deep implications on international level that it is rather difficult to exhaust the sources. See, for instance, the epoch of Dimitrie Cantemir.

As concerns Antonie Ruset's rule on Moldavia, the most disputed and still not entirely clarified aspect refers to the persons who organized this voivode's dethronement, as well as their reasons. Without exception historical sources characterize Antonie Ruset as a "good and forgiving"<sup>1</sup> ruler, "just", "Christian" and "merciful with the common people"<sup>2</sup>. Axinte Uricariul even asserts that during his reign "Boyars were spoilt with voyages and entertainments"<sup>3</sup>, as if the chronicler himself admits the contradiction between the pleasures of prince Antonie's reign and the causes which led to his removal from Moldavia's throne.

Actually, what puzzles is the contradiction between the chroniclers' positive recordings concerning Antonie Ruset's epoch and his brutal dethronement after

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\* PhD., Police Academy "Al. Ioan Cuza", Department of Archives History.

<sup>1</sup> Ion Neculce, *Opere. Letopisetul Țării Moldovei and O samă de cuvinte*. Study and critical edition by Gabriel Ștrempel, 1982, p. 247.

<sup>2</sup> *Cronica anonimă a Moldovei. 1661 – 1729 (Pseudo – Amiras)*, Study and critical edition by Dan Simionescu, București, 1975, p. 50, further referred to as *Cronica anonimă a Moldovei*.

<sup>3</sup> Axinte Uricariul *Cronica paralelă a Țării Românești și a Moldovei II*, critical edition by Gabriel Ștrempel, București, 1994, p. 142.

three years' reign with no grievance, neither of the gentry nor of the Ottoman Porte.

From the beginning we must underline the fact that up to now there is no study that would analyse this topic in its full intricacy. Actually, it has been scarcely approached in Romanian history syntheses. In his work entitled *Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiana (History of the Romanians in Trajan Dacia)*, A. D. Xenopol asserts that, when the vizier Kara Mustafa returned after the conquest of Cehrin Fortress (1678), part of the country's gentry, the hetman Alexandru Buhuș and the great chancellor Miron Costin among others, "concocting against him with all kind of complaints", this added to Șerban Cantacuzino's machinations in Wallachia – destined to overthrow prince Duca and led to "Antonie Ruset's dethronement"<sup>4</sup>.

In his work, Constantin C. Giurescu agrees with the timing and the gentry's involvement, but only partly with the fact that their complaint would have provoked Ruset's dethronement. He points out that its main cause was "the reign change in Wallachia, Șerban Cantacuzino being named there, whilst prince Duca was transferred to Moldavia"<sup>5</sup>.

Nicolae Iorga formulated his opinions on the matter in accordance with his much larger amount of data and mostly with a new and by far more comprehensive image on the period and the circumstances. Thus, in his *Istoria literaturii române în secolul al XVIII-lea (1688–1821) (History of Romanian literature during the 18<sup>th</sup> century (1688–1821))*, he affirms that Antonie Ruset "was done away with mainly due to Miron's intrigues" and mentions that one of the plaintiffs was Alexandru Buhuș, whose deeds are blamed by the historian, since "they do wrong to prince Antonie and bring about his fall and misery"<sup>6</sup>. At the same time he specifies, maybe under the influence of Axinte Uricariul<sup>7</sup>, that in fact this event was nothing but the devil's work, expressed by the "misfortunes that overwhelmed Antonie Ruset's family"<sup>8</sup>.

In his great synthesis on Romanian's history, Nicolae Iorga suggests – in a way that lays a stress on his deep knowledge of such a tormented epoch – that even since Antonie Ruset was called to the throne events were following the predictable course of political trends evolving in the struggle for power between

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<sup>4</sup> A. D. Xenopol, *Istoria românilor din Dacia Traiana*, vol. IV, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. text settled by Maria Simionescu and Nicolae Stoicescu. Notes, commentaries, index, illustrations and afterword by Nicoale Stoicescu. Note on the edition by Maria Simionescu, București, 1983, p. 251.

<sup>5</sup> Constantin C. Giurescu, *Istoria românilor, III, Part one, De la moartea lui Mihai Viteazul până la sfârșitul epocii fanariote (1601 – 1821)*, București, 1942, p. 146.

<sup>6</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria literaturii române în secolul al XVIII-lea (1688 – 1821)*, vol. I *Epoca lui Dimitrie Cantemir. Epoca lui Cezarie de Râmnic*, edition by Barbu Theodorescu, București, 1969, p. 207.

<sup>7</sup> Axinte Uricariul, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

<sup>8</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

the two Romanian countries. This is a time when gentry groups confronting each other in order to gain control over princes were trying to influence the Porte's options. On a long term the princes' alternative transfer from one side of the river Milcov to the other has an unexpected consequence: the unification – although not total – of their institutions and manner of choosing their future allies, the suzerain power being unaware of it. To the end of this era of major changes in international relations, greatly influenced by the 30 Years War and the Ottoman offensive towards Central Europe, up to the Phanariot rules the Romanian countries began to turn their hopes to the Habsburgs and Russia. In this respect, Nicolae Iorga shows that Gheorghe Duca, succeeding, for the moment, to reconcile the two gentry groups in Wallachia, expanded his control over the country where he had already ruled twice (1665–1666 and 1668–1672) and overthrew Dumitrașcu Cantacuzino in order to impose Antonie Ruset on the throne, as “in-laws of Dabjoaia”, wife of Eustratie Dabija (1661–1665)<sup>9</sup>. By these actions Ruset family's “camarilla in Constantinople” aimed at founding a dynasty capable of controlling not only the economy, but also the politics of the two countries.

The great scholar accurately perceived the links between the two thrones, but mostly the trend of the Ottoman politics when he stated that “Ruset depended on Duca and Duca was relaying on Ruset's relatives in Constantinople”<sup>10</sup>. In other words the Porte wanted to have at the Lower Danube two princes who, suspecting each other, would be loyal to the Ottomans, being unable to react without their consent; or, it might as well be the Greeks' eternal dream to establish a territorial base for a future liberation movement. At the same time Iorga pointed out that Antonie Ruset was not fit for “the new series of hard years brought by the warlike Turkey's intervention in the Cossack problem”<sup>11</sup> and that indeed his rule proved to be not very long or calm.

The signs of Duca's domination over Antonie Ruset were visible quite early, at less than one year since the latter's ascension to the throne, the former creating an unfavourable image of the Moldavian prince before the Ottoman dignitaries. In order to gain the Ottoman's confidence, as well as his own confirmation after a three years' rule – according to the custom – the Wallachian prince did his best to be the first to “announce about the death of Köprülü”, the great vizier, the Ottoman's victory over the Poles, as well as the conclusion of the Zurawa peace (1676). The second important moment has an even more explicit connotation revealing his intention to be in control over Moldavia and also to put together a favourable gentry group able to offer him support in case he would come back to the throne. To this purpose and with Halil's Pașa assistance he

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<sup>9</sup> *Idem, Istoria românilor*, vol. VI, *Monarhii*. Volume edited by Ștefan Andreescu, București, 2000, p. 242.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 243.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.

imposed as hetman of Moldavia his own brother-in-law, Alexandru Buhuș<sup>12</sup> who had recently been replaced by Gavril Costachi<sup>13</sup>. The Moldavian prince's action to remove Alexandru Buhuș from this high dignity was meant to prevent Gheorghe Duca from keeping the Moldavian gentry – supposedly with the help of the Ottoman Porte that was aware of the existence of a strong philo-Polish group – under strict supervision, mainly since the dignity in question was his relative<sup>14</sup>.

The goal of all these actions was to induce to the Ottoman elite a negative image of suspicion over Antonie Ruset<sup>15</sup>, an image justified by Nicolae Iorga through the Moldavian prince's "incapacity" of ruling the country which eventually caused his dethronement. To conclude, the great historian claims for the first time that "to this ruin an essential contribution had Duca, who was happy to return to the country where he has been living his entire life and where he has all kind of connections, without the difficulties created in Wallachia by the fierce party fights"<sup>16</sup>.

A document of November 16, 1676<sup>17</sup> seems to attest this desire. The act shows that Gheorghe Duca was purchasing a house in Jassy, placed on the Russian Lane, between the house belonging to Cârstoiaia – the Governor's wife – and that of Enache Munteanu, rector Constantin's son-in-law – for 500 lei and a bale of thick cloth, in the presence of the following witnesses: priest Neofit, Superior of Sf. Vineri, Iane Hadâmbul, former seneschal and other citizens of Jassy borough.

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<sup>12</sup> Ion Neculce, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

<sup>13</sup> In documents Alexandru Buhuș is mentioned as a hetman up to March 29, 1677 and Gavril Costachi was invested with this high dignity on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1677, therefore shortly after the removal of Gheorghe Duca's brother-in-law. (Nicolae Stoicescu, *Dicționar al arilor dregători din Țara Românească și Moldova. Sec. XIV–XVII*, București, 1971, p. 380-381).

<sup>14</sup> Gheorghe Duca, a Greek from Rumelia, came to Moldavia as a child, served in the Court of Vasile Lupu and other princes; afterwards he married Nastasia, daughter of Dafina and Dumitru Buhuș, Alexandru Buhuș's father (Nicolae Stoicescu, *op. cit.*, p. 355).

<sup>15</sup> It seems that until the summer of 1678 the Ottoman Porte completely trusted prince Antonie Ruset. The year 1678 in turn was under the sign of "the covetous devil" (Axinte Uricariul, *op. cit.*, p. 140), as Nicolae Iorga put it. As concerns the changes in Ottoman dignitaries' attitude towards prince Antonie, Axinte Uricariul shows that during that year "they summoned to the Porte prince Alexandru, son of prince Antonie, who was a good rider and a great lecher" (Axinte Uricariul, *op. cit.*, p.141), as a hostage even if the assertion is not explicit. We only find this piece of information in Axinte Uricariul's *Cronica Paralelă (Parallel Chronicle)*, which proves that the author sensed its importance in judging the circumstances of Moldavian prince's dethronement. We also wonder whether the Ottomans did not suspect prince Antonie of a rapprochement to Poland; however there is no historical data in this respect. What we mainly affirm is that – maybe feeling this suspicion – the Moldavian ruler removed Miron Costin, a well-known philo-Pole, from the dignity of great chancellor (Nicolae Stoicescu, *op. cit.*, p. 387). We think that not by accident Antonie Ruset's action against the chronicler coincides with his son being summoned to the Sultan's court.

<sup>16</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

<sup>17</sup> ANR, Cetățuia Monastery, XI/21.

The great historian subscribes Antonie Ruset's removal to the general changes in the Ottoman Empire's internal politics. Nicolae Iorga asserts that the newly-named dragoman of the Empire, Ienachi Porphyrita, was a powerful adversary "who was now raising against the influence exerted – up to that moment – by the Ruset family exclusively"<sup>18</sup> over the Romanian countries. Both Gheorghe Duca and Antonie Ruset ascended to the thrones in Bucharest and respectively Jassy with the aid of this "Constantinople camarilla"<sup>19</sup>. It seems that the Ruset family imposed Antonie as Moldavia's ruler with the purpose of initiating their own princely dynasty in this country<sup>20</sup>; this possibility is suggested by some documentary sources. Thus Alexandru, Antonie Ruset's son, is presented as being a member of the princely council<sup>21</sup>, immediately after the prince, before the great chancellor. As the prince's son, he allowed himself, among other things: to write (May 12, 1676)<sup>22</sup> to the inhabitants of Ciurbești to obey to Bârnova Monastery, following the Superior's supplication about the villagers' working not for the monastery, but for the princely court; to command to the servants in Tecuci county to gather folks at Fântâna, in order to work the princely vineyards being exempt from other taxes, except for those recorded in the princely act and to order that the chief magistrates should not bother them at all; even to give confirmation documents to the monasteries of Barnovschi<sup>23</sup> and Trei Ierarhi<sup>24</sup> for some Gypsy villages offered by Măricuța, daughter of hetman Gheorghe, at her death, which had been brought by her father from Năbădaico. All these data lead us to the conclusion that prince Alexandru, Antonie Ruset's son was prepared to follow his father on the Moldavian throne.

But the family was not bearing in mind the fact that Kara Mustafa, a friend of the chancellor Șerban Cantacuzino would help the latter to obtain Wallachia's throne. They also ignored that the new Ottoman élite's political options had changed, with unavoidable repercussions on the Romanian countries. Consequently, to hit the family, the Ottomans sacrificed Antonie Ruset who, as a result of the Wallachian prince's machinations, was no longer trusted. Prince

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>19</sup> It is known that, in his ascension to the Moldavian throne, Gheorghe Duca was supported both for his first and for his second reign by the old Cupariu Ruset, the one with "great abilities" and "great money" (Ion Neculce, *op. cit.* p. 205–206; *Istoriile domnilor Țării Românești*, by Governor Radu Popescu. Introduction and critical edition by Constantin Grecescu, București, 1963, p. 135, further referred to as *Istoriile Țării Românești*).

<sup>20</sup> Nicolae Iorga shows that this family settled in Moldavia "where they could impose a prince from their own blood, such as Antonie, who was hoping to found a dynasty for his own two sons" (Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria românilor*, VI, p. 203).

<sup>21</sup> ANR, Ms. Nr. 628, f. 218 – 220; f. 632 – 633; *idem*, nr. 629, f. 429 – 433, 436; *idem*, nr. 1364, f. 102, Peceți, nr. 213.

<sup>22</sup> *Idem*, Bârnova Monastery, III/6.

<sup>23</sup> *Idem*, Sf. Sava Monastery, Jassy, XXXV/31.

<sup>24</sup> *Idem*, Ms. nr. 578, f. 380.

Gheorghe Duca fully contributed to these intrigues, providing – by means of his captain, Matei Cărămidă – untrue information on the Ottomans' battles with the Poles in 1676, which the Moldavian prince transmitted to the Porte, being considered a “șeher – aglan, a liar”<sup>25</sup>; in addition, Antonie was accused for removing Alexandru Buhuș from the position of commander of the Moldavian army – after March 29, 1677<sup>26</sup>, Buhuș being highly appreciated by the Ottomans for his heroism during the fight against the Poles and the Cossacks, therefore for his loyalty to the Empire, while his substitute was in no way praiseworthy. These could be some of the reasons – recorded in documents – that decided Antonie Ruset's destiny.

Historical sources give support to Nicolae Iorga's ideas that it is the Wallachian prince Gheorghe Duca who, by small, apparently unimportant, but permanent deeds, determined the Ottomans' decision to dethrone Antonie Ruset.

In his *Annals*, the chronicler Ion Neculce notes, the as well-known fact that “In those days at the Porte there were pulling the strings Prince Dumitrașcu Cantacuzino and chancellor Șerban Cantacuzino to get the throne in Wallachia, therefore to banish prince Duca, the Wallachian prince”<sup>27</sup>. Surprisingly, this piece of information was ignored by those who studied Antonie Ruset's dethronement.

Due to chancellor Șerban Cantacuzino's actions meant to remove Gheorghe Duca from Wallachia's throne – carried out during the summer and fall of 1678 – events speeded up with the battles for Cehrin Fortress – in which both Romanian princes had been drawn into – came to an end; the chronicler notes that at this point “some boyars” of Moldavia came to vizier Kara Mustafa to denounce prince Antonie, but he does not specify the reasons. However he mentions that the prince had as bosom adviser “a musaip, a bad man”, the great chancellor Alexandru Ramande, his brother-in-law, who was a “haughty Greek” wild and greedy. He cared about nobody, knew nobody, he was listened and honoured by prince Antonie”<sup>28</sup>. Actually he was not worse than others, even Moldavians, and besides this “he did not urge the prince to do bad things, nor did them himself”<sup>29</sup>. That means that he did not set up any tax that would have displeased the Moldavians. The same chronicler shows however that prince Antonie's sons were “spoilt”, they were wondering around the country together with other dethroned princes' offspring and did “lots of pastimes and sprees and orgies, since they took people's women and girls by force and abused them”, while the prince, who had found out about their behaviour, took no measures against them<sup>30</sup>. Some of the researchers

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<sup>25</sup> *Istoriile domnilor Țării Românești*, p. 168.

<sup>26</sup> Nicolae Stoicescu, *op. cit.*, p. 358.

<sup>27</sup> Ion Neculce, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 255.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 256.

who analysed Antonie Ruset's reign considered that these are the facts that caused the prince's dethronement.

Ion Neculce's narration does not make any reference to the involvement of the Wallachian prince Gheorghe Duca in Antonie Ruset's dethronement. There is a single mention on the Wallachian prince as a "plaintiff to the paşa [Halil] to appoint as hetman"<sup>31</sup> Alexandru Buhuş, his brother-in-law. For the moment we shall not give any opinion on the chronicler's reasons to throw the veil over Gheorghe Duca's involvement in Prince Antonie Ruset's dethronement. For certain Ion Neculce wrote his work "to the memory of the princes... up to old prince Duca... from some ancient papers found out here and there and from old boyars' sayings"<sup>32</sup> and maybe even from his son, Constantin Duca, one might presume that the information he got did not allow him to reveal any aspects concerning the Moldavian prince's dethronement or the memories of the "old boyars" did not confirm the data recorded in chronicles.

In order to counteract his boyars' accusations the Moldavian prince "had spent one hundred purses of ducats and more with the vizier" who confirmed his reign and let him leave for the capital, to the despair of Alexandru Buhuş and his fellows who were preparing themselves to "flee into the wide world". But the prince's joy did not last, since even before his departure for Jassy "an aga had come from the sultan for the dethronement"<sup>33</sup>, to the boyars' satisfaction.

*Cronica Țării Românești*<sup>34</sup> (Wallachia's Chronicle) shows that at the same time a delegation of Wallachian boyars – including ban Milescu, Dumitraşcu Corbeanul, Paraschiva Bolişteanul "together with «Cuciuc imbrihorul» – presented to the vizier, in Ledjina (Ladyszyn) camp, by the river Bug, to denounce Gheorghe Duca. Despite them, the Grand Vizier, who has knowledge of then Wallachian prince's ties with the sultan and most of all of his loyalty to the Porte did nothing else but to have sword bearer Lascarach arrested for "many complaints he had heard from Cantacuzinos and others"; further on the Wallachian prince would liberate him with great "expense".

*Cronica* also mentions that Moldavia's ruler was banished because some time before he "refused to give money to an aga of the vizier when he was asked for". Afterwards there came a "vizier's representative"<sup>35</sup> and we assume that in the circumstances created by the Moldavian gentry's accusations against prince Antonie, the latter, in order to avenge this offence, joined the opponents, be they in the Grand Vizier's camp near Kishinev, or in Constantinople, by Dumitraşcu Cantacuzino. It is possible that this representative of the Grand Vizier played a

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 249.

<sup>32</sup> *Idem*, *Predoslovie*, in Ion Neculce, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 252-253.

<sup>34</sup> *Istoriile domnilor Țării Românești*, p. 170.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*.

major part in persuading the Ottoman authorities to dethrone Moldavia's prince, since he is mentioned by the above referred *Chronicle's* author. *Cronica Țării Românești* also asserts that Prince Antonie Ruset's dethronement took place before Gheorghe Duca was transferred to the throne in Jassy. The author claims that when still in Moldavia, probably in the camp near Kishinev, the vizier urged Șerban Cantacuzino by a letter to go to Constantinople and also promised him "to appoint him as prince", sensing that the Wallachian prince's days are few. In the meantime the Sultan had decided upon the Wallachian prince's fate for the moment and "the Ottomans had dethroned Prince Antonie Ruset"<sup>36</sup>. Meanwhile Kara Mustafa arrived in Constantinople and found out that no decision had been taken yet concerning the candidate for the Wallachian throne. It is not unlikely that, when he met the Sultan to present his report on the conquest of Cehrin Fortress, he would suggest that Gheorghe Duca should be appointed to Moldavia, since he had already ruled there and knew the country well. Thus the Grand Vizier was fulfilling his promise to Șerban Cantacuzino. This was the Porte's compromise given Cantacuzino family's serious accusations against Gheorghe Duca as well as the important amount of money paid by the Wallachian chancellor to obtain the throne, but also the fact that "the Ottomans prized prince Duca too much to totally remove him from the Romanian Countries, so they transferred him in Moldavia"<sup>37</sup>. This action was also, at least for the moment, a guarantee for the Porte, since he was a prince with experience and an already checked out loyalty to the suzerain power, taking into account the aggressive politics of the Ottomans in that part of Europe.

In *Cronica anonimă a Moldovei* (Moldavia's Anonymous Chronicle) it is clearly and undoubtedly stated that Gheorghe Duca, the prince of Wallachia, "pulled the strings to dethrone" Prince Antonie Ruset "since he had schemed with the boyars, that is Miron Costin vel – chancellor and Ciobanul seneschal and other boyars of the same rank. And prince Duca urged them" – says the chronicle "to accuse him and dethrone him so that prince Duca would come to Moldavia once more, knowing that Șerban, the Wallachian chancellor pulled the strings to get Wallachia's throne and have prince Duca removed, so that he would not lose the throne as it indeed was done"<sup>38</sup>. Amongst the boyars who supported his coming back to Moldavia's throne – beside those already mentioned – there are: Solomon Bârlădanul, great chancellor, whose name appears in a note of <November> 167<8><sup>39</sup> which shows that "he had been sent by the prince away from Jassy, to Constantinople with certain tasks" was ran down and murdered in Roman following Antonie Ruset's orders; Grigore Hăbășescul, former hetman. After less

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>37</sup> A. D. Xenopol, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

<sup>38</sup> *Cronica anonimă a Moldovei*, p. 50.

<sup>39</sup> ANR, Bogdana Monastery, VII / 2 (nr. 11).



than a month since his return to Jassy Gheorghe Duca confirms, probably as a reward for his support in regaining the Moldavian throne, the former hetman's possession of the village Zberoe in Braniște<sup>40</sup>, prince Ștefan Tomșa's donation. At the same time the prince gives and confirms to Iane, second chancellor<sup>41</sup> and Constantin Grand Chancellor<sup>42</sup> as a reward for their just and devoted service, a mill-ford on the Bahlui on a free princely ground, downstream from Jassy, with mills and two millstones, as well a pen-place by Jassy, called "Parta's pens".

The incrimination – so drastic and clear – of the Wallachian prince in Antonie Ruset's dethronement, as recoded in the above-mentioned chronicle might as well be a lead to follow in order to establish its author. Taking into account the fact that it was written about during the same period as the other chronicles, when some of the protagonists might have still been alive, as well as their descendants with ranks which might determine some authors' reluctance, we might suppose that the chronicle was a foreigner detached from the autochthonous gentry's involvement, probably a Greek with good knowledge of Romanian, possibly affiliated to the group of Cantacuzino's boyars or at least a follower<sup>43</sup>.

Gheorghe Duca's involvement in the Moldavian prince's dethronement is also confirmed by Axinte Uricariul in his *Cronica Paralelă (Parallel Chronicle)* where he says that the boyars who presented their complaints against prince Antonie to the Grand Vizier, on the latter's return from the campaign for the conquest of Cehrin Fortress, came "with prince Duca's support and advise"<sup>44</sup>. And more, in order to help them, "prince Duca sent some Moldavian boyars exiled to Wallachia" to confirm the Moldavian's accusations and convince Kara Mustafa to take away prince Antonie's throne. His wish was so intense that the chronicler does not fail to put down his hope in an almost intangible dream, expressed by the phrase "if he was liberated from Wallachia's reign" it would be easier for him to regain the throne in Jassy<sup>45</sup>. Obviously the prince knew what the others did not know, namely the actions he had already initiated in this respect with his protectors in the Sultan's court. At the same time the author does not mention anything about the pranks of the Moldavian prince about the fact that Grand Chancellor Alexandru Ramande, the prince's brother-in-law defies the other great Moldavian boyars asserting that the boyars' complaints to Kara Mustafa had another content. However, *Cronica Țării Românești*, which gives more precise details on the circumstances of prince Antonie's dethronement,

<sup>40</sup> *Idem*, Sf. Sava Monastery – Jassy, XXXVI / 5.

<sup>41</sup> *Idem*, Sf. Ioan Gură de Aur Monastery, VI / 1.

<sup>42</sup> *Idem*, Moldavian Metropolitan, I / 3.

<sup>43</sup> These assertions urge the idea that the author of this chronicle really is Alexandru Amiros, to whom it was ascribed in the first place.

<sup>44</sup> Axinte Uricariul, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*.

shows that the decision was taken by the sultan without consulting the Great Vizier Kara Mustafa.

On the contrary, Axinte Uricariul affirms in his *Cronica paralelă a Țării Românești* that the Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa, reaching “the village Kishinev took away the throne from prince Antonie and appointed Ghiangea governor and the hetman Sandul Buhuș as caimacans. And prince Antonie was put by the vizier in irons and taken away with him”<sup>46</sup>. One can notice that up to a certain point both narrative sources recorded the same information; afterwards the author of *Cronica paralelă* has different data and is convinced that the place of Moldavian prince’s dethronement was not the Grand Vizier’s camp and the latter had nothing to do with it. That is why Axinte Uricariul did not record these facts, considered as unimportant. What was important to him was to give some new information collected from persons that presumably took part in the event; this information reveals the boyars’ surprise on their prince’s dethronement and the fact that they were not prepared to elect a new prince. Axinte Uricariul shows that “some wanted that prince Duca would come to Moldavia, others wanted a certain Ieremia, one of the gentry; Ghica chancellor was working for himself, but quite secretly and in the open he was working for prince Duca”<sup>47</sup>. If there had been any plot against Antonie Ruset or if we thought that Gheorghe Duca would have formed, with the assistance of his brother-in-law hetman Alexandru Buhuș a group that would aim at dethroning the Moldavian prince, then, for certain, the delegation of boyars at the Grand Vizier’s camp would have proposed to the latter the prince they had been working for. This assertion however does not annul the other historical information in the narrative sources concerning Gheorghe Duca’s involvement in Antonie Ruset’s dethronement which keeps being perfectly valid. From a certain point of view this data prove the Wallachian prince’s ability to create a platform which, in case he was dethroned, could offer him a chance to come back to Moldavia, which he was longing for so badly, hoping to persuade at least a part of the gentry. In this respect a relevant a relevant moment is narrated by Axinte Uricariul in *Cronica anonimă a Țării Românești și a Moldovei*: in the summer of 1678, when he was fighting alongside the Ottomans for the conquest of the Cehrin Fortress with the assistance of the seneschal Antonie Jora, he inquired the Moldavian boyars about the prince they would prefer if Antonie Ruset was dethroned. In a conversation with Moldavia’s hetman Gabriel Costache who was his relative and therefore could not be betrayed, his dignitary found out that the hetman would unconditionally choose Gheorghe Duca<sup>48</sup>. This single note concerning the Wallachian prince’s direct involvement in Prince Antonie Ruset’s dethronement also confirms Nicolae Iorga’s above-mentioned affirmation.

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*.

We must not forget the good relations between Gheorghe Duca and the great chancellor Miron Costin, that had started back during the reign of Gheorghe Ștefan (1658 – 1659) and were strengthened in the time of Duca's father-in-law Eustratie Dabija (1661 – 1665). They cultivated their friendship furthermore, taking into account the great influence the chronicler was enjoying among the Moldavian gentry, as well as his credibility in relation with Ottoman dignitaries. The fruit of this friendship was afterwards the support offered by the great chancellor at the critical moment.

The spirit of the data offered by narrative and documentary sources brings us to the idea that the Moldavian prince's opponents – who were living in the Sultan's court and were probably supported by the great dragoman Ienachi Porphyrita, an enemy of Ruset family, as well as by the Grand Vizier's representative – succeeded in twisting Antonie Ruset's fate and determined his dethronement. After this play behind the stages was ended, the Porte was looking for a prince to be sent to Moldavia, but was still hesitating to give the throne to Dumitrașcu Cantacuzino once more. It seems that it was the Great Vizier Kara Mustafa who in the meantime had come back from his campaign against the Cossacks that played a decisive role in solving this political crisis between the two Romanian Countries. Supported by the Ruset family<sup>49</sup> he suggested to the Sultan that Gheorghe Duca, whom he considered to be loyal to the Porte, should be transferred to Jassy, while Șerban Cantacuzino should be sent to Bucharest. Thus the Grand Vizier fulfilled his promise to Wallachia's great chancellor to give him the throne. Solving this problem, that seemed to put the Ottoman dignitaries to a lot of trouble, was crucial, especially because it occurred in a moment when the Porte was drawn in a war against the Poles, the Cossacks, the Russians and also the Habsburgs and it was of major importance that the two Romanian Countries represent two strategic points in supporting this war and in ensuring transport routes to the battlefields. The grand vizier's solution pleased everybody for the moment. Șerban Cantacuzino saw his dream of ruling over Wallachia come true, whilst Gheorghe Duca fulfilled his wish to take Moldavia's throne once again.

For fear that his plot meant to remove Antonie Ruset from his throne in Jassy might be revealed and mainly that he might come back, Gheorghe Duca "also sent boyars from other countries to the Porte to denounce prince Antonie... and he put him to great troubles by this complaint to the Turks"<sup>50</sup>. After the appalling tortures he was put into in order to extort from him the last penny Antonie Ruset lived his last few days in deep misery.

In conclusion, we may suppose that prince Antonie Ruset' dethronement occurred unexpectedly, according to the custom and that only a small part of the

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<sup>49</sup> Ion Neculce makes here an important assertion, namely that "Cupărești were Greeks so they could not be taken from prince Duca's hand (Ion Neculce, *op. cit.*, p. 253)".

<sup>50</sup> Antonie Uricariul, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

Moldavian gentry – namely great chancellor Miron Costin, the hetman Alexandru Buhuș, the former treasurer Tudosie Dubău and seneschal Constantin Ciobanul – at Gheorghe Duca's insistence address to the Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa with complaints against their prince and ask him to bring Wallachia's prince back on Moldavia's throne. The decision was taken by the Sultan, Antonie Ruset being also accused of deeds unrecorded in documents. Internal narrative sources reveal that his dethronement was prepared step by step by Gheorghe Duca, who was longing for the tranquillity of the Moldavian throne.

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