

The Karadja Family in the History of Romania

In the 5th century the Roman Empire divided, but even from the early 4th century Constantin the Great had moved the centre of the empire towards the East, creating Constantinople, the new Rome. By binding two continents, the Byzantine Empire could be maintained for more than a thousand years. It was only in 1453 that the new Rome was conquered and the Ottoman Empire installed its capital there. Most part of the inhabitants remained there, others spread beyond the borders.

By taking the place of the Byzantine emperor, the conquering sultan seized dimensions of the stake well. He was ready to dominate the huge empire whose inhabitants were mainly Christians. Consequently, he designated a new patriarch and recognized his role. The head of the Orthodox Church had a seat reserved at the table of the sultan and could pay visits to him. He also obtained not only substantial incomes, but he was also tax exempt, besides the right to appear alone in front of the sultan and to wear a beard¹.

Around the patriarchate a Christian district developed, the Phanar, inhabited by those being part of the patriarchal court, but also by the Greeks who penetrated the structures of the Empire. The dragomans, due to the fact that the Ottoman dignitaries did not have command of many European languages, being men of culture and experience in the public administration, were recruited by the Ottomans out of the Phanariotes. It has been remarked that "Byzantium was not more than a simulacrum of past splendors, but this show served to maintain the flame of remembrance".² At the same time, the positions of great dragomans and dragomans of the fleet, who were responsible in a great measure of the foreign politics of the sultans, were assigned to the Phanariotes, consequently increasing their role.

Since the beginning of the 18th century, the Ottomans, infringing the autonomy of the principalities of Walachia and Moldavia as well as the historical compromise of several centuries already, imposed Phanariote princes on the thrones of the Romanian states. Since 1711 in Moldavia and 1716 in Walachia, 31 princes ascended to the throne until 1821, many of them in both states alternatively. They represented 11 families, some of them of Romanian origin"³. Among these princes we registered the presence of two

¹Mihail Dimitri Sturdza, *Grandes familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople*, [Great Families in Greece, Albania and Constantinople], Paris, 1983, p.134 and Alexandre A. C. Stourdza, *L'Europe orientale et le rôle historique des Mavrocordato*, [The Oriental Europe and the Historical Role of the Mavrocordates], Paris, 1913, p. 28, 38-39.

² Mihail D. Sturdza, *op. cit.*, p.146.

³ Dan Berindei, Fanariotische Herrscher und rumänische Bojaren in den rumänischen Fürstentümern (1711-1821), in "Revue Roumaine d'Histoire", XXIII (1984), no 4; Idem, Liaisons généalogiques roumaines des princes phanariotes de Moldavie et de Valachie, dans *Genealogica et Heraldica*. [Romanian genealogical relationships of the Phanariote

representatives of the Caradjas (Karadjas), Nicolas and Jean. As for the origins of this family, it is obvious that there could not be established a clear connection with the Ottoman Caradja (Karadja) family of Muslim Phanariote dignitaries of the 15th and 16th centuries.⁴ Nicolas Caradja reigned in Walachia from January 5th, 1782 until July 6th, 1783 and Jean Caradja from August 27, 1812 until September 29th, 1818.⁵ Previously, they had been, together with other members of the family, dragomans of the fleet or grand dragomans, which is a proof of this family's place in Phanar.⁶ Simultaneously, the Karadjas, considered present in the Byzantium Empire since the time of Alexis Comnen, came to Walachia, where they occupied the positions of dignitaries, even before the fall of Constantinople, taking part in the princely divan in the 17th century.⁷ At the same time, there is another Constantin Caradja from 1560 who could stand with certitude for the ancestor of a genealogical tree of this Phanariote family.⁸

What is important concerning the theme of this communication lies in the connection between the Caradjas (Karadjas) and the Romanian Countries, obviously close during the Phanariote period in the 18th century. At this point, for the Phanariote protipendada (the higher class), the supreme dignity which could be obtained was that of a reigning prince in one of the principalities. At the same time, the autonomy of the Romanian principalities offered large possibilities of enrichment for the Phanariotes. Some of them settled there, they contracted marriage with daughters of Romanian boyars and made fortunes. It was what occurred to the Karadjas as well.

Since 1821, the Phanariote system ended and a decade later Greece was recognized as an independent state. For the members of the Karadja family, as for the other Phanariote families, their existence was divided henceforth among three countries: Greece, the Ottoman Empire and the principalities of Walachia and Moldavia that is, after their union, Romania. The Caradjas (Karadjas) acted as diplomats successively or simultaneously in the three countries.

It was the case of Jean Caradja (Karadja)⁹, who should not be taken for the reigning prince as he was his grandson, separated from him by two generations. The father of the second Jean, the son of the reigning prince, occupied the diplomatic position of a Minister of the Ottoman Empire in The Hague. Jean, in his turn, after having served as Ottoman consul in Brindisi and Tiflis, became Minister Plenipotentiary in Stockholm and The Hague. After his first marriage with Caroline Durand, he married the Swedish

princes in Moldavia and Wallachia in *Genealogica et Heraldica*], Helsinki 1984. Report of the 16th International Congress of Genealogy and Heraldry in Helsinki, 16-21 1984, Helsinki, 1986, p. 57-76.

⁴ Constantin Karadja's point of view in *Sur l'origine des Karadja*, [On the Origins of the Karadjas], Vălenii-de-Munte, 1938.

⁵ See chronology in *Istoria românilor*, [The History of the Romanians], Bucharest, 2003, vol. VI.

⁶ See genealogical tree of the family: Mihail Dimitri Sturdza, *op. cit.*, p. 257, 259.

⁷ *Ibidem*

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 258

⁹ See details on the Caradjas (Karadjas) in the genealogical tree mentioned above.

Mary-Louise Smith in Stockholm in 1887. Seven years later Jean Karadja died in July 1894.¹⁰

Constantin, a little orphan of father, remained with his mother in Sweden where he attended high-school. In 1908 he went to London where he studied law for two years, becoming a barrister. But, just like his father, he gave up this statute to enter the Ottoman diplomatic service. He became an attaché in 1910, then secretary of legation only in October 1912, when he resigned. Again in Sweden, he worked in Sveriges Privata Centralbank until 1915. A year later, in 1916, at 27 years old, he decided to come to Romania, where he married Héléne Mercelle Caradja (Karadja), whose father Aristide was Constantin's second cousin.¹¹

Constantin Karadja was appointed, in 1916, Consul of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, although he obtained his Romanian citizenship only in 1920.¹² Consul in Budapest in 1921, he became Consul General in Stockholm in 1928-1930 and then from 1932-1941 in Berlin¹³, where he made ceaseless efforts to save the Jews originating from Romania and established in Germany from the Nazi repression.¹⁴ Between 1941 and August 1944 he was Head of the Consular Directorate in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Three years later, in August 1947, his rank of consul-general¹⁵ was suppressed. It happened a few months before the abdication of King Michael and the installment of the communist regime for about half a century.

I remember Constantin Karadja¹⁶ at the Romanian Academy Library at the end of the fourth decade of the 20th century. He had been elected Honorary Member of the Academy on July 30th, 1946.¹⁷ For us, young historians at the time, he was a tireless researcher and collector of documents and rare books, as well as an author of studies concerning his own discoveries. He was a strange, but interesting and attractive personality. Unfortunately, there were hard times for him and for all of us, the toughest

¹⁰ On Constantin Caradja's (Karadja) biography, see Ottmar Trașcă and Stelian Obiziuc, *Diplomatul Constantin I. Karadja și situația evreilor cetățeni români din statele controlate/ocupate de Germania în cel de-al doilea război mondial* [The Diplomat Constantin I. Karadja and the Situation of the Jewish Citizens in the Controlled/Occupied States by Germany in the Second World War], in *Yearbook of "George Barițiu" Institute of History in Cluj-Napoca*, series *Historica*, XLIX (2010), p.110.

¹¹ See genealogical tree by Mihail D. Sturdza (Mihail Dimitri Sturdza, *op. cit.*, p. 259).

¹² Ottmar Trașcă and Stelian Obiziuc, *op. cit.*, p.110

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 111 and the following ones

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p.110

¹⁶ On Constantin Caradja (Karadja) see also: Dan Simonescu, *Un mare bibliofil român* [A Great Romanian Bibliophile], Bucharest, 1971; *Enciclopedia istoriografiei românești* [Encyclopaedia of the Romanian History], issued and by Ștefan Ștefănescu, Bucharest, 1978, p.188-189; Dorina I. Rusu, *Dicționarul membrilor Academiei Române (1866-2010)* [Dictionary of the Members of the Romanian Academy (1866-2010)], Bucharest, 2010, p. 547.

¹⁷ Dorina I. Rusu, *op. cit.*, p. 547.

years as it was the Stalinist period. He lived until December 28th, 1950¹⁸, but in his last years he had to sell many pieces of his collection in order to live.

His wife Marcelle had a longer life, until June 1970¹⁹. Seven years later, Constantin's sister, Despina, died in England.²⁰ The couple Constantin and Marcelle had a son, Jean, and a daughter, Marie, who became a nun in Jerusalem.²¹ As for Jean he had a son-Constantin-and two daughters, whose descendents live in Germany²². Constantin Karadja's father-in-law, Aristide Caradja, was also an Honorary Member of the Romanian Academy and since August 12th, 1948, he became a Full Honorary Member. He was great grandson of Reigning Prince Jean Caradja (Karadja), born in Dresden in 1861. He studied law and natural history in Toulouse. Aristide Caradja lived his entire life at Grumazesti, the estate his family possessed in Moldavia. There he unfolded his research in natural sciences dedicated to lepidoptera. He succeeded in gathering more than 125,000 items from his expedition in Central Asia, China, Tibet, Siberia, Asia Minor etc. The collection is found today at the Museum of Natural Sciences in Bucharest.²³ Aristide Caradja's children-a son and three daughters (Marcelle was one of them)-lived in Romania all their lives.²⁴ His son, named Constantin as well, had three daughters, now deceased²⁵, one of them being the mother of a lady living in Bucharest.

To sum up, the case of the Caradja (Karadja) family is one of the most interesting. Obviously, it represents an old family, attested from the time of the Byzantine Empire integrated, like many other Greek families, in the Constantinopolitan Phanar after 1453. It was one of the noteworthy families of Phanariotes, with a grounded affiliation since the 16th century until now.

Some of its members were present in the autonomous Romanian principalities among the Greek who ascended to ranks of Romanian noblemen, boyars, in the 17th century. During the Phanariote principalities, the Karadjas obtained dignities of dragomans and two of them ascended to the throne as reigning princes of Walachia.

After 1821, when the Phanariote system came to an end in the Romanian Principalities which resumed the system of reigns of the autochthonous princes, the Caradjas (Karadjas), spent their life in the Romanian countries, in Greece and Constantinople. They served successively and alternatively Greece, after gaining its independence, Romania, after the union of 1859 between Walachia and Moldavia, and

¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁹ See genealogical tree by Mihail Dimitri Sturdza, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

²⁰ Ibidem

²¹ Ibidem

²² Information by Mihail D. Sturdza, to whom I address my thanks

²³ On Aristide Caradja, who has always used only the form of the name Caradja !: Dorina I. Rusu, *op. cit.*, p.182; C. Motaş, *O vizită la Grumăzeşti la naturalistul Aristide Caradja* [A Visit to Grumazesti to the Naturalist Aristide Caradja], Bucharest, 1942; Traian Săvulescu, *Aristide Caradja, entomolog şi filozof* [Aristide Caradja, Entomologist et Philosopher], Bucharest, 1945; *Personalităţi româneşti ale ştiinţelor naturii şi tehnicii. Dicţionar* Romanian Personalities in Natural and Technical Sciences. Dictionary], Bucharest, 1982.

²⁴ See genealogical tree by Mihail Dimitri Sturdza, *op. cit.*, p. 257).

²⁵ Ibidem.

the Ottoman Empire. Among them many diplomats were recorded. It was the case of Jean Caradja (Karadja), grandson of the homonymous reigning prince, that is, Constantin I. Karadja's father. Constantin's mother was Swedish and he spent his childhood and adolescence in Sweden. He chose his own career in the service of the Ottoman Empire, for a few years, and particularly in the service of Romania for a quarter of a century.

Among the Caradjas (Karadjas) there were two scholars, one of them Constantin, passionate bibliophile, collector and historian, the other, his parent, Aristide, entomologist of high value, both of them descendants of the reigning prince Jean Caradja (Karadja) and both of them elected Honorary Members of the Romanian Academy. The male lineage of the Caradjas (Karadjas) is extinct.

Here is, in a few words, the eventful history of an illustrious family whose memory is worth being recalled and who, by one of its members – Constantin - reflects a connection between Sweden and Romania.

1. Mihail Dimitri Sturdza, *Grandes familles de Grèce, d'Albanie et de Constantinople*, Paris, 1983, p.134 et Alexandre A. C. Stourdza, *L'Europe orientale et le rôle historique des Maurocordato*, Paris, 1913, p. 28, 38-39.

2. Mihail D. Sturdza, *op. cit.*, p.146.

3. Dan Berindei, *Fanariotische Herrscher und rumänische Bojaren in den rumänischen Fürstentümern (1711-1821)*, in "Revue Roumaine d'Histoire", XXIII (1984), no 4; Idem, *Liaisons généalogiques roumaines des princes phanariotes de Moldavie et de Valachie*, dans *Genealogica et Heraldica. Helsinki 1984. Report of the 16th International Congress of Genealogical and Heraldic Sciences in Helsinki, 16-21 1984*, Helsinki, 1986, p.57-76

4. Constantin Karadja's assertions: *Sur l'origine des Karadja*, [On the Origins of the Karadjas], Vălenii-de-Munte, 1938.

5. See chronology in *Istoria românilor*, [History of the Romanians], Bucharest, 2003, vol.VI.

6. See genealogical tree of the family by Mihail Dimitri Sturdza, *op. cit.*, p. 257, 259

7. *Ibidem*.

8. *Ibidem*, p. 258.

9. See details on the Caradjas (Karadjas) in the genealogical tree above mentioned.

10. On Constantin Caradja (Karadja)'s biography, see Ottmar Trașcă and Stelian Obiziuc, *Diplomatul Constantin I. Karadja și situația evreilor cetățeni români din statele controlate/ocupate de Germania în cel de-al doilea război mondial*. [The Diplomat Constantin I Kardaja and the Situation of the Jews as Romanian Citizens in the Controlled/Occupied States by Germany in the Second World War], in Yearbook of the "George Barițiu", Institute of History in Cluj-Napoca", series Historica, XLIX (2010), p.110.

11. See genealogical tree by Mihail D. Sturdza (Mihail Dimitri Sturdza, *op. cit.*, p. 259).

12. Ottmar Trașcă and Stelian Obiziuc, *op. cit.*, p.110

13. *Ibidem*.

14. *Ibidem*, p. 111 and next.

15. *Ibidem*, p.110.

16. Constantin Caradja (Karadja), see also: Dan Simonescu, *Un mare bibliofil român* [A Great Romanian Bibliophile], București, 1971; *Enciclopedia istoriografiei românești*

[Encyclopaedia of the Romanian Historiography], Ștefan Ștefănescu, Bucharest, 1978, p.188-189; Dorina I. Rusu, *Dicționarul membrilor Academiei Române (1866-2010)* [Dictionary of the Members of the Romanian Academy 1866-2010], Bucharest, 2010, p.547.

17. Dorina I. Rusu, *op. cit.*, p. 547.

18. *Ibidem.*

19. See genealogical tree by Mihail Dimitri Sturdza, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

20. *Ibidem.*

21. *Ibidem.*

22. Information offered by Mihail D.Sturdza, whom I address many thanks.

23. Aristide Caradja, always used the form Caradja! : Dorina I. Rusu, *op. cit.*, p.182; C. Motaș, *O vizită la Grumăzești la naturalistul Aristide Caradja* [A Visit to Grumazesti to the Naturalist Aristide Caradja], București, 1942; Traian Săvulescu, *Aristide Caradja, entomolog și filozof* [Aristide Caradja, Entomologist and Philosopher], Buchrest, 1945; *Personalități românești ale științelor naturii și tehnicii. Dicționar*, [Romanian Personalities in Natural and Technical Sciences. Dictionary.], Bucharest. 1982.

24. See genealogical tree by Mihail Dimitri Sturdza, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

25. *Ibidem.*