

FROM MAP TO TEXT.  
THE PROSE CARTOGRAPHY OF AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY  
ADVENTURER

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The present study addresses the complex and ambiguous relationship between Enlightenment adventurers and cartography. In order to authenticate their travel experiences and to fabricate a geographical expertise, the adventurers pointed out the flaws of known maps and, simultaneously, pretended to have possession of secret, better, ones. They especially exploited the gaps in the cartographic knowledge of the regions situated at the very margins of Europe, such as the Ottoman Empire. Such was the case with the Transylvanian-Suisse charlatan Ridolfo Damiano de Brünnetz, the main character of this article. In 1716, taking advantage of the Habsburgs' interest for Wallachia, this adventurer wrote a memorandum in an attempt to impress the potential employer with his geographical knowledge of the realm. However, Ridolfo Damiano de Brünnetz's alleged expertise was an unconvincing pretence, as his description of Wallachia reveals a rather patchy and superficial knowledge. Nonetheless, at the core of his memorandum lies a detailed and systematic geographical description of Wallachia, extremely rich in place-names (no fewer than 503). The main contention of this article is that the memorandum is a pseudo-gazetteer of the 1700 map of Wallachia printed at Padua. Ridolfo Damiano de Brünnetz's prose cartography was, to a large extent, a veiled reading of this map.

**Keywords:** Enlightenment; Adventurer; Cartography; Wallachia; Habsburgs.

The archetypal Enlightenment adventurer was first and foremost a storyteller.<sup>1</sup> Giacomo Casanova, George Psalmanazar, Chevalier d'Éon, and their infamous ilk, beguiled the eighteenth-century listeners and readers with their fabulous adventures. Every now and then their narrative exploits were set in distant lands, on the edges of the map, as geographical mobility played a key role in their tales.<sup>2</sup> The journey to Russia was most commonly referred to, but some adventurers summoned Ottoman Levantine itineraries, such as Justiniani of Chios<sup>3</sup>, Radu Cantacuzino<sup>4</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> See S. Roth, *Les Aventuriers au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, 1980 and A. Stroeve, *Les Aventuriers des Lumières*, Paris, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> "Ils ne peuvent apparaître qu'aux confins de la carte politique, dans un pays au nord, à l'est ou au sud de l'Europe, là où passent les frontières de zones d'influence, où les puissances européennes tentent d'établir leur protégé", in A. Stroeve, *Les Aventuriers...*, p. 216.

<sup>3</sup> P.-Y. Beaurepaire, *L'Autre et le Frère. L'Etranger et la Franc-maçonnerie en France au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, 1998, p. 147–152.

<sup>4</sup> O. Olar, "Un aventurier al Luminilor. Prințul Radu Cantacuzino (1699–1761) și Ordinul constantinian al Sfântului Gheorghe", in R.G. Păun and O. Cristea, eds., *Istoria: utopie, amintire și proiect de viitor. Studii de istorie oferite Profesorului Andrei Pippidi*, Iași, 2013, p. 153–166.

Yūsuf Hubaysh<sup>5</sup>, or Zobby of Arabia Felix<sup>6</sup>, while a few even dared to claim more exotic experiences, such as Psalmanazar of Formosa<sup>7</sup> or Benyovszky of Madagascar<sup>8</sup>. All these adventurers, not a few claiming to be of princely descent, had to rely on their audiences' vague geographical awareness of the remote lands that served as settings for their stories. When it came to maps and cartographic knowledge, these tricksters played a double game. In order to authenticate their travel experiences and to fabricate a geographical expertise, the Enlightenment adventurers made a habit of pointing out the flaws and fallacies of the cartographic knowledge shared within the Republic of Letters.<sup>9</sup> Their input was mainly negative, as they were rather reluctant to expound on their alleged geographical expertise acquired during the travels, but more than willing to criticize others for their faulty knowledge. Most of these adventurers claimed to possess more accurate maps of the far-off regions they pretended to know so well, but they usually preferred to keep them away from the public eye. In terms of cartographical knowledge, the portrait of the Enlightenment adventurer was a puzzling one (which, of course, fitted perfectly with the character): an outspoken critic of known maps and, at the same time, a mysterious holder of secret ones.

Ridiculing cartographic errors became something of a hallmark for the eighteenth-century adventurers, who were very keen to set themselves apart from armchair explorers. Geographical expertise and cartographical criticism became an important tool in telling liars apart from truth-tellers, as proven by the debates spawned in the context of the late seventeenth-century French Polish-mania.<sup>10</sup> The Polish king, John III Sobieski, the liberator of Vienna and husband of a French-born queen, inspired numerous accounts written by French diplomats, soldiers and adventurers, categories that largely conflate and overlap. One of the most successful travel accounts was François Paulin Dalérac's *Mémoires secrets* published in 1699, which became an instant best-seller.<sup>11</sup> In order to emphasize his intimate

<sup>5</sup> T. Graf, "Cheating the Habsburgs and Their Subjects? Eighteenth-Century 'Arabian Princes' in Central Europe and the Question of Fraud", in D. McEwan and S. Hanß, eds., *The Habsburg Mediterranean 1500–1800*, Vienna, 2021, p. 229–253.

<sup>6</sup> P.-Y. Beaurepaire, "Sociabilité des Lumières et exclusion dans les ports méditerranéens au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: l'exemple de la Franc-maçonnerie", *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, 69, 2004, p. 19.

<sup>7</sup> F.J. Foley, *The Great Formosan Impostor*, Rome, 1968 and J. Stagl, *A History of Curiosity: The Theory of Travel, 1550–1800*, Chur, 1995, p. 171–208. Psalmanazar is briefly mentioned by Glyndwr Williams in his article on "Imaginary Geographies and Apocryphal Voyages", in M.H. Edney and M. Sponberg Pedley, eds., *Cartography in the European Enlightenment*, Chicago, 2020, p. 658–663.

<sup>8</sup> V. Voigt, "Maurice Benyovszky and his 'Madagascar Protocolle' (1772–1776)", *Hungarian Studies* 21, 2007, p. 205–238.

<sup>9</sup> For an attempt to map the Republic of Letters see A. Grafton, "A Sketch Map of a Lost Continent: The Republic of Letters", in idem, *Worlds Made by Words: Scholarship and Community in the Modern West*, Cambridge, 2009, p. 9–34.

<sup>10</sup> D. Tollet, "Les comptes rendus de voyages et commentaires des Français, sur la Pologne, au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, auteurs et éditions", *Revue du Nord*, 57, 1975, p. 133–145.

<sup>11</sup> *Les anecdotes de Pologne ou Mémoires secrets du règne de Jean Sobieski III du nom*, Paris, 1699. A pirate copy was printed in Amsterdam the same year and a year later came to print the second Paris edition, a Dutch and an English translation; for details see M. Coman, "François Paulin Dalérac", in *Călători străini despre Țările Române, Supliment I*, ed. by Ș. Andreescu et al., București, 2011, p. 175–201.

knowledge of the Polish king's itineraries, Dalérac found faults with the maps of the region made by Nicolas Sanson and Pierre Duval.<sup>12</sup> Significantly, when a rival French memoirist, Philippe Le Masson Du Pont, decided to expose Dalérac as a fraud, he specifically attacked his pretended geographical expertise.<sup>13</sup> Du Pont acknowledged that the French maps of the regions were deficient in their topographic details, but he scorned at the idea that a charlatan like Dalérac was the right person to amend them.<sup>14</sup> Thus, whether one's travel account was genuine or rather fabricated came to be decided by a cartographic debate. Dalérac clearly won over Du Pont, who, nonetheless, was to be vindicated by modern scholars.

If maps enabled readers to mind-travel, the adventurers' narratives did the exact opposite, providing a first-hand topographical experience.<sup>15</sup> While travelling down the Danube in 1776, Johann Friedel, an Austrian lieutenant turned actor, noticed a previously unmapped island.<sup>16</sup> He recorded it in his diary, while confessing, rather proudly, that his knowledge of the Danube owed nothing to cartography, as he did not like tracing itineraries on maps with his fingers.<sup>17</sup> According to their critics, maps were not only incomplete, but also obsolete. Lionardo Panzini, an Italian monk who was for a while preceptor of the Wallachian princes, remarked in a 1777 letter that settlements which appeared to be flourishing towns on maps had in the meantime decayed and almost disappeared.<sup>18</sup> For Friedel and Panzini mind-travelling with the use of maps was obviously an inferior form of voyaging.

In the case of some regions that were situated at the very margins of Europe, or even further away from the continent, eighteenth-century maps proved to be outdated, vague and inaccurate. The Enlightenment adventurers took advantage of such cartographic imprecision, as it stirred imagination and, thus, provided the perfect setting for their pretences. The direct correlation between the adventurers' imaginative accounts and their audiences' deficient geographical knowledge is unequivocally asserted by the great Formosan trickster, George Psalmanazar.<sup>19</sup> In

<sup>12</sup> "Avant de passer outre, je dois rectifier icy deux ou trois fautes grossieres que nous avons remarquées dans certaines Cartes de Samson et de Duval, tant anciennes que modernes", in Dalérac, *Les anecdotes*, p. 179.

<sup>13</sup> Du Pont's frustration was fuelled by his failure to find a publisher for his memoirs. His travel account was printed only at the end of the nineteenth century, along with a *Réponse au libelle de l'auteur Des Anecdotes de Pologne ou Mémoires, prétendus secrets, de Jean Sobieski, roi de Pologne*; see P. Dupont, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de J. Sobiecki (1671–1684)*, Warsaw, 1882. For the author see *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. 7, București, 1980, p. 278–280.

<sup>14</sup> "Après tant de fracas, il s'érige en censeur de cartes géographiques des meilleurs auteurs, lesquelles, véritablement, auraient besoin d'être corrigées, pour ce qui regarde les provinces en question (la Moldavie et la Valachie)", in P. Dupont, *Mémoires*, p. 246.

<sup>15</sup> For the concept of the eighteenth-century fireside traveller, see P. Adams, *Travellers and Travel Liars 1660–1800*, New York 1980.

<sup>16</sup> J. Friedel, *Gesammelte kleine gedruckte und ungedruckte Schriften*, Preßburg, 1784, p. 239.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*: "... daß ich ausser der homannischen Delineatio Danubii kaum dreyi andere Landcharten deßhalb nachsah, weil ich überhaupt nicht gern mit dem Finger auf der Landcharte herumreise".

<sup>18</sup> See his letters edited by N. Cortese, *La Valachia durante il principato di Alessandro Ypsilanti*, Rome, 1922.

<sup>19</sup> J. Shufelt, "The Trickster as an Instrument of Enlightenment: George Psalmanazar and the Writings of Jonathan Swift", *History of European ideas*, 31, 2005, 2, p. 147–171.

his exposing memoirs, published posthumously, Psalmanazar divulged that the idea of pretending to be a native Formosan came to him while taking geography lesson with the Jesuits. At some point during his learning years, Psalmanazar realised that his teachers knew almost nothing about the Far East, as their knowledge “was only from their maps and comments upon them, for they made use of geographical books”.<sup>20</sup> The con artist seized the opportunity, and he made the most of it.

For the eighteenth-century adventurer, maps provided flaws to be exploited and mistakes to poke fun at, but, if need be, they could also turn into useful rhetorical weapons. When accused of being an impostor, the same George Psalmanazar decided to substantiate his tale by adding a map to the second edition of his description of Formosa. By a remarkable act of cartographic revisionism, Psalmanazar filled in the cartographic blank spaces and asserted his credibility.<sup>21</sup> Enlightenment adventurers, who were so eager to display their geographical expertise by criticising others’ maps, were far more reticent about publicizing their own cartographic artefacts, either of their own making or acquired during their voyages. Their alleged maps became valuable precisely because they were so difficult to get. Cartographic secrecy, either strategic or commercial, has a long history in early modern Europe.<sup>22</sup> Secret cartography, seen as a powerful tool for European colonialism, was institutionalised as early as the sixteenth-century.<sup>23</sup> The eighteenth-century adventurers attempted to take advantage of this tradition of secrecy and to use maps when negotiating positions for themselves in different colonial projects.<sup>24</sup> The maps of Madagascar were essential for Benyovszky’s colonizing schemes and it came as a blow when they fell into English hands.<sup>25</sup> It was not only Madagascar, the New World or the Far East that were cartographically undetermined in the eighteenth-century, but also the Ottoman Europe.<sup>26</sup> As Voltaire sarcastically put it “a general who would wage war in the countries of the Uskoks, the Morlachs, and Montenegrins and who could rely only on maps for finding his way around would be as embarrassed as if he was in the middle of Africa”.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *Memoirs of \*\*\*\*\*: Commonly Known by the Name of George Psalmanazar; a Reputed Native of Formosa*, London, 1765, p. 113.

<sup>21</sup> For Psalmanazar’s cartographic revisionism and manipulation see B. Breen, “No Man Is an Island: Early Modern Globalization, Knowledge Networks, and George Psalmanazar’s Formosa”, *Journal of Early Modern History* 17, 2013, 4, p. 391–417.

<sup>22</sup> See J.B. Harley’s seminal study “Silences and Secrecy: The Hidden Agenda of Cartography in Early Modern Europe,” *Imago Mundi* 40, 1988, 1, p. 57–76.

<sup>23</sup> María M. Portuondo, *Secret Science: Spanish Cosmography and the New World*, Chicago, 2009, p. 103–108.

<sup>24</sup> For the eighteenth-century adventurers’ attempts to become colonial agents, cf. S. Roth, *Les Aventuriers*, p. 207–216.

<sup>25</sup> “The maps of Madagascar too, appear for the first time in the English edition, and we can imagine how (illegally) these maps passed from French hands into the possession of the British who were at the very least rival colonizers”, in V. Voigt, “Maurice Benyovszky...”, p. 216.

<sup>26</sup> On the Western mapping of Ottoman Europe in the eighteenth century, cf. L. Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, Stanford, CA, 1994, p. 144–194.

<sup>27</sup> Voltaire, *Collection Complete des oeuvres de Mr. de V\*\*\*\**, tome XVI<sup>ème</sup>, 1774, p. 315. For a brief overview of the eighteenth-century mapping of the Balkans see the corresponding entry by Z. G. Török in *The History of Cartography*. vol. 4, p. 152–153.

Naturally, adventurers tried to step in and take advantage of the cartographic haziness of Ottoman Europe.

The French adventurer Jean Louis Carra claimed to have unsurpassed expertise when it came to Ottoman Wallachia and Moldavia.<sup>28</sup> In 1777 he published a monograph on the two principalities, allegedly in the Moldavian city of Iași, but actually printed in Bouillon.<sup>29</sup> Carra argued that a better geographical knowledge of the region should precede any political or economic colonizing plans.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, he began his geographical report on the current state of the two provinces by supplying their precise geographical coordinates.<sup>31</sup> This proved to be a blatant mistake, as Carra came to be widely derided by his contemporary critics for his lack of geographical wit.<sup>32</sup> As modern scholars came to confirm, Carra's pretence was a fraud and his description was a shameful plagiarism.<sup>33</sup> Carra made no mention of any maps in his text, precisely because he wanted to emphasise that his geographical expertise derived directly from his journeys.

Some adventurers adopted a slightly different strategy and claimed to have come into possession of some rare maps during their travels. Hoping to convince his readers that Britain should invest in the Black Sea region, the English adventurer William Eton bragged about his knowledge of the Crimea and claimed to have closely scrutinized two Ottoman charts of the peninsula.<sup>34</sup> But once again, the adventurer favours his traveling experience over his cartographic expertise, emphasizing that it was only because of his intimate knowledge of the landscape

<sup>28</sup> See the adventurer's biography written by S. Lemny, *Jean-Louis Carra (1742–1793). Parcours d'un révolutionnaire*, Paris, 2000, p. 61–102.

<sup>29</sup> Carra used the same hoax with his *Essai particulier de politique dans lequel on propose un partage de la Turquie européenne*. According to the title page the place of publication was Constantinople, but the pamphlet was actually printed in Paris.

<sup>30</sup> "Et sans une connaissance exacte de la géographie d'un pays, il est bien difficile d'y former des projets d'attaque ou de commerce", in J.L. Carra, *Histoire de la Moldavie et de la Valachie: avec une dissertation sur l'état actuel de ces deux provinces*, Jassy, 1777, p. XVII.

<sup>31</sup> "La Moldavie et la Valachie Provinces contiguës sont situées entre le 41 et le 47° degrés de Latitude Est et le 44 et 49 de Longitude Sud", J.L. Carra, *Histoire de la Moldavie et de la Valachie...*, p. 162.

<sup>32</sup> "Examinons maintenant ce que dit Mr. Carra de la latitude et de la longitude de la Moldavie et de la Valachie. La manière dont il en parle est d'une extravagance, ou si vous voulez bien le permettre, d'une ignorance inouïe. Ecoutez la de sa bouche même [...] Ah Messieurs les Journalistes, combien d'hérésies géographiques n'a-t-il pas écrit en deux lignes votre Illustre Ecrivain! Latitude Est et la longitude Sud? Ah Messieurs quelle confusion d'idées?" in *Lettre à Messieurs les auteurs du Journal de Bouillon sur le compte qu'ils ont rendu d'un livre intitulé Histoire de la Moldavie*, Vienna, 1779, p. 23. This anonymous reviewer was identified with the Moldavian Gheorghe Saul by Al. Ciorănescu and with the Dalmatian Stephan Raichevich by M. Holban. On this authorship debate see a balanced discussion in A. Drace-Francis, *The Traditions of Invention: Romanian Ethnic and Social Stereotypes in Historical Context*, Leiden-Boston, 2013, p. 123–125.

<sup>33</sup> M. Holban, "Autour de l'Histoire de la Moldavie et de la Valachie de Carra", *Revue historique du sud-est européen* 21, 1944, p. 155–230; Eadem, "Jean-Louis Carra", in *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. 10.1, București, 2000, p. 234–242.

<sup>34</sup> For this adventurer who introduced himself as British consul and Potemkin's confidant, see *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. 10.1, p. 277–280 and Н.И. Храпунов, "Крым глазами британского авантюриста Уильяма Итона", *Zolotoordynskoe obozrenie* 8, 2020, p. 147–166.

that he was able to judge the true value of the Ottoman charts.<sup>35</sup> Another French adventurer in Ottoman Wallachia and Moldavia, Charles Leopold Bilistein, wrote a memorandum in 1776 for the French Crown.<sup>36</sup> Bilistein proudly asserted that he owned a small map of Wallachia that indicated the most important mines of that realm.<sup>37</sup> Bilistein offered no further details, as he was obviously using the map to lure the French government into investing in the Wallachian trade and, more importantly, into his own career. Six years later, in 1782, Bilistein tried his luck with the Habsburgs, as he offered a copy of the same memoire to Ignaz Stephan Raicevich, the Austrian consul in Bucharest.<sup>38</sup> Thus, a copy of Bilistein's small map found its way into the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv in Vienna.<sup>39</sup> It was a manuscript topographical sketch of the western Wallachian county of Mehedinți, comprising 16 names of mountains and 31 place names. A closer look reveals that Bilistein's hand-drawn sketch was derived from the 1718 Venetian printed map of Wallachia that accompanied Antonmaria del Chiaro's *Istoria delle moderne rivoluzioni della Valachia*.<sup>40</sup> Unsurprisingly, Bilistein did not divulge the source of his map, as it would have been detrimental to his case. His professed expertise in Wallachian affairs would have suffered a terrible blow, if one were to find out that it was partially based on some out-of-date Venetian printed map. Predictably enough, the Austrians, who had an in-depth topographical and mineralogical knowledge of Wallachia, were unimpressed with Bilistein's map and memoire.<sup>41</sup> Bilistein was far from being the first one who failed to impress the Habsburgs with his professed geographical knowledge and cartographical abilities. Sixty-six years earlier, another adventurer had tried to pull a similar trick and had equally failed.

<sup>35</sup> "I found two Turkish charts of the Black Sea which differed in the latitude of the Danube a degree. I examined the coast of Anatolia, which I had surveyed that summer from Constantinople to Kitros, and by that judged which was the best", in W. Eaton, *A Survey of the Turkish Empire*, London, 1801, p. 314–315.

<sup>36</sup> For this adventurer see A. Stroev, *Les aventuriers...*, p. 250–281, Al. Stroev, I. Mihăilă, "Le baron de Bilistein, faiseur de projets", *Dix-huitième siècle*, 29, 1997, p. 329–342; Al. Stroev, I. Mihăilă, *Eriger une République souveraine, libre et indépendante*, București, 2001, M. Coman, "Charles-Leopold Andreu de Bilistein", in *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, p. 225–230; I. Mihăilă, "La compagnie de la Mer Noire ou la mer perdue des Roumains au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Études balkaniques* LVI, 2020, 1, p. 35–50.

<sup>37</sup> "J'ai de la Valachie une petite carte, qui indique les montagnes, où sont les mines principales".

<sup>38</sup> A letter sent by Raicevich to Kaunitz included Bilistein's memoire and a brief notice on his meeting, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor culese de Eudoxiu de Hurmuzaki, XIX/1 (1782–1797)*, ed. by I.I. Nistor, București, 1922, p. 63–69.

<sup>39</sup> The map is printed in the above-mentioned Hurmuzaki volume, p. 69.

<sup>40</sup> Antonmaria del Chiaro, *Istoria delle moderne rivoluzioni della Valachia con la descrizione del paese, natura, costumi, riti e religione degli abitanti*, Venice, 1718.

<sup>41</sup> The classical study on this subject is still the one by N. Docan, "Memoriu despre lucrările cartografice privitoare la răsboiul din 1787–1791," *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice* seria II, 34, 1912, p. 1249–1360. For a recent survey of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century Austrian cartography of Wallachia see Z. Bartos-Elekes, "The Habsburg mapping of Moldavia and Walachia," *Proceedings of the 27<sup>th</sup> International Cartographic Conference. Rio de Janeiro*. Retrieved from [https://icaci.org/files/documents/ICC\\_proceedings/ICC2015/papers/18/fullpa-per/T18-696\\_1428396969.pdf](https://icaci.org/files/documents/ICC_proceedings/ICC2015/papers/18/fullpa-per/T18-696_1428396969.pdf). 2015, last accessed on 14.03.2022.

He is the main character of this study: the Transylvanian-Suisse charlatan Ridolfo Damiano de Brünnetz.

Like most eighteenth-century adventurers, Ridolfo Damiano de Brünnetz claimed to have an intimate knowledge of a lesser-known region and he sought to capitalize on his expertise. The region was Ottoman Wallachia and his prospective employers were the Habsburgs. Seizing the opportunity of the Habsburg-Ottoman war in 1716, he wrote a memorandum on Wallachia addressed to the Habsburg emperor.<sup>42</sup> The text was meant to parade the author's extensive knowledge of the realm and was structured into three parts. The first section comprised a general description of Wallachia, while the last one examined the political, religious, economic, administrative and military organization of the realm. Admittedly, these two sections rather failed to persuade the reader of the author's self-proclaimed expertise and Ridolfo himself must have realized it, as he attempted to anticipate criticism.<sup>43</sup> In sharp contrast, the second part of his memorandum showcased an impressively detailed geographical knowledge of the realm. Each of the seventeen Wallachian counties was treated systematically, following the same five rubrics: the city or the borough (*la citta* or *il borgo*), big monasteries (*monasterii grandi*), small monasteries (*monasterii piccoli*), villages with a manor house (*ville nobili*) and ordinary villages (*villagi ordinarii*). The outcome was an impressive fusion of prose cartography and descriptive gazetteer.<sup>44</sup> Ridolfo Damiano de Brünnetz expounded on the Wallachian human landscape, while listing a staggering number of 503 place-names. Unsurprisingly, the adventurer said nothing about the sources of his comprehensive description of Wallachia, but repeatedly hinted at his intimate and exhaustive knowledge of the realm. However, as it often happens with the Enlightenment adventurers' claims, it was all but a hoax. Ridolfo's acquaintance with Wallachia did not derive from his travels, but from a map. His geographical description of Wallachia resembled so closely a cartographic discourse, because it was actually one. His prose cartography was a veiled reading of a map, as it was mostly based on the 1700 Paduan map of Wallachia. Ridolfo Damiano de Brünnetz's attempt to scam the Habsburgs ultimately failed, but his description of Wallachia provides us with a rare case-study of an Enlightenment adventurer's cartographic literacy. This article aims to reconstruct the strategies Ridolfo used for transposing a cartographic discourse into a textual one and to shed some further light on the intricate relationship of Enlightenment adventurers with maps. In

<sup>42</sup> For a discussion on the two extant manuscripts see the next section.

<sup>43</sup> Basically, Ridolfo uses two rhetorical stratagems: (1) he claims to know more than he writes, asking for an in-person meeting: "e ci sarebbe sopra ciò molto a ragionare à viva voce", "riservandomi in oltre di dire anco à viva voce qualche cosa", "mà di ciò è meglio ragionare à viva voce, che colla penna"; (2) he blames the young age for his insufficient insight: "la memoria giovanile non m'hà permesso all'orche mi trovava colà di osservare il tutto con occhi lincei".

<sup>44</sup> I borrowed the concept of "prose cartography" from Ricardo Padrón, who defines it as "a specific type of geographical writing designed to assist its reader in forming a cartographic image, whether on paper or in his or her imagination", in *The Spacious Word: Cartography, Literature, and Empire in Early Modern Spain*, Chicago, 2004, p. 92.

addition, it will provide a new insight into the early eighteenth-century reception - albeit a peculiar one - of the 1700 Paduan map.

### A TRANSYLVANIAN-SWISS ADVENTURER

Ridolfo Damiano de Brünnetz is a minor figure amongst the eighteenth-century adventurers that seems to have escaped every scholar's attention until now. *Ridolfo*, as he spelled his own name in Italian, is most certainly one and the same person as a certain Rudolph Damian von Brünnetz, whose stay in Lucerne and attempts to acquire the status of *hintersassen* where investigated by Heike Bock.<sup>45</sup> Ridolfo/Rudolph, who entered the Lucerne community by way of a marriage in 1721, was proscribed from the canton in 1744 due to a rare combination of debt and fraud. The first Lucerne document that mentions him is a plea, dated 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1720, written to the city council by his wife, Anna Maria Schumacher.<sup>46</sup> A request was made to finance Ridolfo's trip to Rome for some important, unnamed, businesses. In order to raise the travel money needed by her husband and to pay back some of his debts, Ridolfo's wife asked for a loan of 400 thalers. The council approved the loan, but also stipulated how the money should be distributed to various uses. Most importantly, the plea also includes some biographical details about Ridolfo: he was a native of Transylvania, born in *von Krohnsburg in Sibenbürgen* or *uss Sibenbürgen von Cronssburg*, who has lost all his wealth and was compelled to leave his fatherland due to his conversion to Catholicism. A few months later, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 1721 the city council of Lucerne granted him the right of residence and one year later, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March 1722, he received the much-desired status of a "hintersassen" [immigrant resident without civic rights]. The city authorities praised Ridolfo for his good Christian behaviour, for his zealous practice of Catholic religion, but also for his faithful service in times of unrest, a rather cryptic reference.<sup>47</sup> Nine years later, in 1731, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March, the Lucerne council renewed Ridolfo's status, although he was in some financial trouble, unable to pay his debts, and he was spending most of his time travelling outside of Switzerland, in Italy and France.<sup>48</sup> This time, a new moniker was added

<sup>45</sup> H. Bock, *Konversionen in der frühneuzeitlichen Eidgenossenschaft: Zürich und Luzern im konfessionellen Vergleich*, Epfendorf, 2009, p. 226–228. I am grateful to Robert Born for helping me with this reference.

<sup>46</sup> J. Schacher, "Luzerner Akten zur Geschichte katholischer Konvertiten 1580-1780", *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Kirchengeschichte/Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique Suisse* 57, 1963, p. 305–307. I am grateful to Dana Caciur for providing me with this reference.

<sup>47</sup> Heike Bock read this as a reference to the peasant rebellion in Lucerne, in 1712, see *Konversionen* ..., p. 226, footnote 95. However, Bock was unaware of the Wallachian and Italian episodes in Ridolfo's biography.

<sup>48</sup> *das er wegen seinem zugestossnen Unglück in Italien oder Franckreich* in Joseph Schacher, "Luzerner Akten...", p. 307.



to his name, Geörg Rudolph Damian von Brünnetz, in order to distinguish him from his son, Carl Rudolph Damian von Brünnetz, mentioned in another document issued a few days later. In 1733, a new request for a loan was coldly received by the city council, as Ridolfo's credit was steadily deteriorating. Finally, in 1744, the Lucerne officials condemned him for taking advantage of his wife's money and of his creditors' trust and expelled him from the Confederation for the symbolic period of 101 years.<sup>49</sup> Until recently, nothing was known about Ridolfo's whereabouts either before his arrival into the Swiss confederation or after his expulsion. The origins of the unusual toponym added to his name, *de Brünnetz*, might be related to the village of Brunnetji, in the catholic Swiss canton of Valais. However, it is rather unclear why a Transylvanian native from Cronssburg/ Krohnsburg, which could be identified with Kronstadt (Braşov) or Kreuzburg (Teliu), would add a Swiss toponym to his name. Fortunately, three recent archival discoveries shed some light on Ridolfo's activities a few years before settling in Lucerne, in 1714 and 1716.

The first document is a letter from the archive of Cardinal Annibale Albani in the Biblioteca Oliveriana di Pesaro.<sup>50</sup> It is nothing more than a clichéd Christmas greeting, but it helps us place Ridolfo Damiano de Brünnetz in cardinal Albani's circle and to find out that he was in Venice in December 1714. The other two archival sources comprise the same text: a memorandum on Wallachia written by Ridolfo Damiano de Brünnetz and addressed to the Habsburg emperor, Charles VI in September 1716. The two manuscripts are preserved in Kriegsarchiv in Vienna and, respectively, in the Princeton University Library. While the Vienna manuscript originates from prince Eugene of Savoy's personal archive, the history of the Princeton manuscript is impossible to trace, as it was recently bought from an unknown seller.<sup>51</sup>

The Princeton manuscript contains 26 folios and was written by a single hand, in Italian, with just a few phrases in Latin and some Slavonic words. The format of the first page, as well as the beautiful script and the lack of any corrections, deletions or additions, point to a presentation copy. However, a few blank spaces left to be filled in later and some editorial vacillation do not exclude

<sup>49</sup> *haben hochgedacht selbe solches dahin gesetzt, das er wegen überschwencklichen Schuldenlast und mitgeloffnen betriegereyen, wordurch velle creditores angesetzt, sein frau aber von ihren anschlichen mittlen in die äusserste armuoth gestürzt worden, auf 100 und ein jähr, in Joseph Schacher, "Luzerner Akten..."*, p. 307.

<sup>50</sup> The letter was sent from Venice, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 1714. A digital copy is accessible on-line (<http://www.archivioalbani.it/>, last accessed on 15.03.2022), but is mistakenly indexed under the name *Lettera di Ridolfo Damiano de Bruenner (sic!) al Cardinale Annibale Albani in Archivio Albani, Lettere di buone feste, 1714 B.Feste Tom. I. e II.*

<sup>51</sup> AT-OeStA/KA KPS LB K I e, 18 E and Princeton University Library, Rare Books and Special Collections, Manuscripts Division, inventory number C0938 no. 201 q. The Princeton manuscript was acquired in 2006 from an unknown buyer with the help of the Stanley J. Seeger Fund for Hellenic Studies. I have prepared an edition of the text with a Romanian translation for the next volume of *Călători străini despre Țările Române, Supliment III*, ed. by Ștefan Andreescu and Ovidiu Cristea (in print). I would like to thank Ștefan Andreescu for pointing out to me the reference for the Princeton manuscript and to Konrad Petrovsky for signalling to me the Vienna copy and for providing me with a digital copy of it.

the possibility of a working copy.<sup>52</sup> This was certainly the case with the Vienna manuscript, which contains just 7 folios and comprises only the first part of the memorandum, approximately a third of the Princeton version.<sup>53</sup> The two texts are almost identical, but the Princeton manuscript contains a slightly amended version.<sup>54</sup> The title page of the two manuscripts reads as follows:

Il Principato di Vallachia con la sua capitale residenza arcivescovato, vescovati, moltissimi monasteri con abbazie e altri piccoli, comprese le miniere città, borghi, e gran quantità de ville con sede nobile, oltre alcune centinaia d'altri villagi ordinarj, succintamente & quas' in abbozzo rapresentato da Ridolfo Damiano de Brúnnetz e secondo la norma di quel governo in 17 prefetture diviso servato il possibile miglior ordine con alcune osservazioni sopra la religione, politica, milizie, et economia di questo stato Anno MDCCXVI Mense Settembre

The author's name and signature appear at the end of a lengthy and highly flattering dedication to the Habsburg emperor: *umilissimo et fidelissimo suddito vassallo Ridolfo Damiano de Brúnnez*.<sup>55</sup> The text itself offers a few glimpses into the author's background: he compares the Argeş monastery with the Siena cathedral, he paralleled the biggest of the three Bucharest public baths to the ruins of the ancient thermae in Rome and he measures up the Piteşti wine to the Conegliano one.<sup>56</sup> Ridolfo had spent some time during his youth in Wallachia, but a few years had passed since then. He excused himself for not being able to provide a more comprehensive account of the Wallachian economy, blaming his "young memory", that "didn't allow me, while I found myself still there, to notice everything with lynx-like eye".<sup>57</sup> Of all Wallachia, Ridolfo seems to know best the city of Câmpulung, as he recalls not only its number of parishes and the extent of the Franciscan community that lived there, of fifty-six monks, but also its summer

<sup>52</sup> The Princeton manuscript has blank spaces for the length of the realm measured in travelling hours, but the distances are written in the Vienna text: 90 hours from Est to West and 50 hours from North to South.

<sup>53</sup> The second and the third part of the text, comprising the systematic geographical account of Wallachia and the political, religious, economic, administrative, and military organization of the realm, are missing from the Vienna manuscript.

<sup>54</sup> In the Vienna manuscript there was a chapter on the Wallachian wines, which eventually was dropped out from the Princeton, more elaborated, version. Probably, Ridolfo realized that too much of a familiarity with the Wallachian wines was not the best recommendation for the Habsburg court...

<sup>55</sup> The dedication, adorned with Biblical quotes from the Psalms, from the Gospel of Matthew and from the Book of Nahum, praises Charles as a liberator of the Danubian Lands and of Greece: *quest'aquila Sua Vittoriosa libero il volo alla conquista dell'oriente, ma prima a quella del residuo del Danubio, che con la Grecia geme fra ceppi e cattene, ed attende con impazienza dalla Maesta dell' Imperatore Carlo la desiderata liberta promessagli da Profetti*

<sup>56</sup> *il monistero pure Arzis, che nella bellezza, ed antichità se non supera, almeno uguaglia il Gran domo di Siena; il Principale di questi somiglia molto à quanto in Roma si scorge dalle rudere delle Therme Romane; Pitesti – questo Primo ne buoni tempi uguaglia quello di Tokay e Conegliano.*

<sup>57</sup> *Con questo capitolo non entro nelle totali rendite del Principato, mentre la memoria giovenile non m'hà permesso all'orche mi trovava colà di osservare il tutto con occhi lincei.*

shaded trees.<sup>58</sup> He seems to have spent some time in the cities of Argeş, as he recalls the local legend of Saint Philothea, and of Bucharest, which he thoroughly describes.<sup>59</sup> Although Ridolfo suggests he has visited Oraşul de Floci and Râmnic, their description is rather vague and unspecific.<sup>60</sup> When accounting for the main roads that connected Wallachia to Transylvania, across the Carpathian Mountains, Ridolfo adds to the well-known passages of Vâlcan, Câineni, Rucăr, Câmpina and Timiş, the rather obscure path of Tamaş, in the Făgăraş region.<sup>61</sup> Most likely, Ridolfo himself used this mountain path during one of his travels. Thus, a close reading of the memorandum suggests that its author was a Catholic, with a good knowledge of Italian language and of Italian towns, who has spent some time in Câmpulung in his youth, but also visited Argeş and Bucharest and who entered Wallachia from across the mountains, coming from Transylvania.

Ridolfo Damiano de Brünnetz picked the right moment to write his memorandum. In 1716 the Ottomans declared war on the Habsburgs, but their military campaign proved to be a fiasco, as they were severely defeated at Petrovaradin.<sup>62</sup> Ridolfo's memorandum dates from September 1716, just one month after the battle, and the following events proved that he foresaw accurately the Habsburgs' intentions with regard to Wallachia. A twofold strategy was put in motion in order to incorporate Wallachia into the Habsburg Empire. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of November, general Steinville issued a manifesto announcing that the Habsburg armies would enter Wallachia in order to save its inhabitants from the Turkish yoke. However, a few months later, the Habsburgs reduced their territorial ambitions to the western parts of Wallachia, across the river Olt. The peace of Passarowitz, in 1718, confirmed the new frontiers and *Valachia austriaca* or *Valachia cisalutana*, a region later named Oltenia,

<sup>58</sup> *Quinci è la città di Campo Lungo, così detta per esser quasi un hora din camino la di lei lunghezza, scorrendo per mezzo amenamente il fiumicello di questo nome, adorno d'ambe le parti con alberi di bella comparsa ed ombra per l'estate. In questa città sono 5 Parochie [...] Qui sono tollerati cinque sei padri francescanj scalzi.* Ridolfo's etymology for the city's name is obviously wrong; for a discussion on the origins of this toponym, see Laurențiu Rădvan, *Oraşele din Ţara Românească până la sfârşitul secolului al XVI-lea*, Iaşi, p. 395.

<sup>59</sup> The story known to Ridolfo resembles closely to the versions recorded by Paul of Aleppo and Neophyte the Cretan, see D. R. Mazilu, "Sfânta Filoteia de la Argeş. Lămurirea unor probleme istorico-literare. Monografie hagiografică", *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secției Istorice*, seria III, VI, 1932–1934, p. 213–317 and P. Cernovodeanu, "La double histoire de Sainte Philothée d'Argeş et ses miracles", in *L'empereur hagiographe. Culte des saints et monarchie byzantine et post-byzantine*, ed. by P. Guran, Bucharest, 2001, p. 159–176.

<sup>60</sup> *In questa è Oras de Flozi. Si poul dire più città che borgo [...] Rinnik benche hà più apparenza di Borgo.*

<sup>61</sup> The Vienna manuscript specifies if the mountain pass was suitable for horses and carriages (*Vulcan pro equis tantum; Kınani pro equis tantum; Rukero-Possada pro carribus; Tamas – pro peditibus sollumodo; Prahova-Kimpina pro equis; Themis pro equis tantum*). As the Tamaş pass could be crossed only by foot, Ridolfo decided to remove its mention from the revised Princeton version of the text.

<sup>62</sup> For the 1716-1718 Austro-Ottoman war and for the subsequent Passarowitz peace, see Ch.W. Ingrao, N. Samardžić, and J. Pešalj, eds., *The Peace of Passarowitz, 1718*, West Lafayette, Ind., 2011.

became part of the Habsburg Empire for the next two decades.<sup>63</sup> The Austrian military and political efforts were doubled by an impressive endeavour to improve the geographic and cartographic knowledge of Wallachia. Already in January 1717, the Austrian officer Friedrich Schwantz began a systematic topographic survey of the entire Wallachia. In the end, Schwantz had to limit his mapmaking project to *Valachia austriaca*, but, even so, it took him almost five years to complete the project.<sup>64</sup> An alternative to such lengthy and strenuous efforts, albeit an unreliable one, was provided by a whole gallery of “experts” in Wallachian affairs that tried to gain the Habsburgs’ favours by trading their knowledge. The former Italian secretary of the Wallachian prince, Nicolo de Porta, or the Greek-Venetian adventurer Michael Schendo van der Beck, were reaching out to the Habsburg authorities to offer their services.<sup>65</sup> Ridolfo Damiano de Brúnnez was one of these self-professed Wallachian experts who tried to pose as an extremely knowledgeable person. The purpose of his memorandum was explicitly conveyed in the last chapter, entitled *The Way of Obtaining and Preserving Wallachia*.<sup>66</sup> His advice was unsophisticated and predictable: the Habsburgs should win over parts of the local elite, aristocracy and high clergy alike, and should take advantage of the intense hatred felt by the inhabitants towards the Turks.<sup>67</sup> Ridolfo also added a word of warning against the French intrigues that reached as far as Wallachia.<sup>68</sup> The adventurer was well aware that his memorandum failed to measure up to the Habsburgs’ expectations and fell short when compared to other similar writings.<sup>69</sup> In a defensive explanation, he argued that some things are better spoken than written.<sup>70</sup> The suggestion was plain enough: if granted an audience, he was to reveal his thorough knowledge of Wallachia, of which his memorandum was only the appetizer.

<sup>63</sup> *Valachia austriaca* was a major theme of research for Romanian scholarship, starting with the impressive archival research by Constantin Giurescu (*Material pentru istoria Olteniei supt austrieci*, 3 vols., 1913, 1944) and reaching a peak with Șerban Papacostea’s seminal monograph (*Oltenia sub stăpânirea austriacă*, 1971, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1998). Contrary to a wide-spread belief, the name of Oltenia dates only from the nineteenth-century, see Al. Mareș, “Vechimea toponimului Olteniei”, *Limba Română*, LVII, 2008, 2, p. 198–202. See also P. M. Kreuter, “Attempts of Austrian Redesign of the Administration of Lesser Wallachia between 1718 and 1739,” *Yearbook of the Society for 18<sup>th</sup> Century Studies on South Eastern Europe* 2, 2019, p. 131–140.

<sup>64</sup> For details see the annotated translation by Maria Holban in *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, ed. M. Holban, M. M. Alexandrescu-Dersca Bulgaru, P. Cernovodeanu, vol. IX, București, 1997, p. 43–77 and the new critical edition by M.-Gh. Abrudan, Friedrich Schwantz von Springfels, *Descrierea Olteniei la 1723*, Brăila, 2017.

<sup>65</sup> See their writings translated and commented by Maria Holban in *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. IX, p. 93–135 and P. Cernovodeanu, N. Vătămanu. “Un médecin princier moins connu de la période phanariote: Michel Schendos van der Bech (1691 – env. 1736),” *Balkan Studies* 18, 1977, p. 13–30.

<sup>66</sup> *Modo d’acquistare e conservare la Valachia.*

<sup>67</sup> *pegno dell’amor che portano alla Christianità, e dell’ odio verso Turchi.*

<sup>68</sup> *poiche insino qui arrivano ancora la zizanie francesi.*

<sup>69</sup> *In questa materia non dubito che’qualcheduno havrà dati buoni ricordi.*

<sup>70</sup> *mà di ciò è meglio ragionare à viva voce, che colla penna.*

Ridolfo Damiano de Brúnnetz's alleged expertise was an unconvincing pretence, as his description of Wallachia reveals a rather patchy and superficial knowledge of the realm. The third part of his memorandum, which was supposed to epitomize the political, religious, economic, administrative and military organization of Wallachia, is schematic and full of platitudes. Ridolfo seems better informed only when it comes to religion, as he writes about the crypto-Catholics within the Ottoman Empire or about the theological debates between Greek and Catholic Christians.<sup>71</sup> The other chapters are unsystematic and largely inadequate. The chapter on the army, for instance, mainly consists of a detailed description of the military escort that accompanied the prince during ceremonial visits. When trying to impress the Habsburg authorities with his expertise, Ridolfo unintentionally reveals his ignorance. The Slavonic terms of the Wallachian dignitaries included in the memorandum were copied from a chancery document, as the words were written in an abbreviated form, with superscript letters.<sup>72</sup> As for his language proficiency, Ridolfo uses only a few Romanian words, when explaining the different Wallachian military ranks and corps.<sup>73</sup> In stark contrast with this patchy knowledge, Ridolfo's geographical description is astonishingly detailed, especially when it comes to recording place-names. To a large extent, Ridolfo's memorandum was a pseudo-gazetteer of Wallachia.

#### RIDOLFO'S TRANSCRIPT OF THE MAP OF WALLACHIA

At the core of Ridolfo's memorandum lies a detailed and systematic geographical description of Wallachia. The second section of his text, from folio 7r to folio 16v in the Princeton manuscript, comprises seventeen chapters, one for each Wallachian county (*județ*). The chapters follow the same format: a title heading,<sup>74</sup> a shorter or a longer text describing the most notable features in the county, and a list of place-names. The descriptive texts are disproportionate, reflecting different degrees of knowledge. Usually, Ridolfo limits himself to some

<sup>71</sup> The chapter on the Wallachian religious life touches upon the following points: the financial support provided by the Wallachian princes to the Constantinopolitan patriarchs, the utter rejection of Islam, but also of Protestantism, the acceptance of two or three Franciscan friaries within the realm, the use of Greek liturgy and the cult of icons, the inhabitants' ignorance of the Catholic practices and the existence of crypto-Catholics.

<sup>72</sup> Вел дворникъ (*Supremo Giudice*), Вел логофѣтъла (*Gran Cancelliere*), Вел постелникъ (*Cameriere Maggiore*), Вел вистіарѣла (*Gran Tesoriere*), Вел спѣтар (*Generalissimo*), Вел комисъ (*Cavaliere Maggiore*), Вел ага (*Generale Comandante dell' Infanteria*), Вел портаръ (*Portiere Maggiore ed introduttore delli Ministri*), Вел ствалникъ (*Scalco Maggiore*), Вел питарѣла (*Praefetto d'Annona*), Вел пахарникъ (*Copiere Maggiore*), Вел садѣѣрѣла (*Praefetto della grascia*), Вел камераш (*Tesoriere di Corte*), Вел сѣрддар (*Sopraintendente alle milizie di casa*), Вел шѣтрар (*Super intendente alle tende*), Бан де Фовѣдан (*Gran Capo di Foxan*), Бан де Чернец, Краіѣва (*Gran Capo di Dziu*).

<sup>73</sup> *capitani di margine, kasaki, simeni, kallarasi, lefezij.*

<sup>74</sup> Ridolfo uses the Romanian enclitic definite article: *Mehedinzul, Arizesul, Ilfowul, Rimmikul.*

geographical considerations, discussing the county's location and its main rivers and roads. Occasionally, he also includes some economic highlights, such as a famous iron mine in Gorj or a copper mine in Mehedinți,<sup>75</sup> or other local information, as the legend of Saint Philothea in Argeș,<sup>76</sup> the sad fate of Brâncoveanu and his family in Romanai,<sup>77</sup> or the memorial crosses from battlefields in Dâmbovița.<sup>78</sup> For the county of Râmnic he notes in amazement that the inhabitants could evade punishment by simply crossing over in the neighbouring realm of Moldavia, as the frontier was largely unguarded.<sup>79</sup> Ridolfo's knowledge of the Wallachian counties is noticeably uneven: the longest texts are about Argeș, Muscel, Dâmbovița and Ilfov, while the shortest, one phrase only, describe Teleorman and Săcuieni. The case of Teleorman is highly suggestive, as initially Ridolfo wanted to merge two counties into a single chapter. Thus, the seventh chapter was originally entitled *La Giudicatura dell'Aluta e di Telormano*, but Ridolfo changed his mind, probably for the sake of symmetry, and decided in the end to discuss separately the counties of Teleorman and Olt. His problem with Teleorman was the introductory descriptive section, as, apparently, there was nothing memorable to report about this county. In the end, he wrote an insipid phrase informing the readers that: "Teleorman has a borough, Rușii, and two villages with manors, Bărbătești and Popești".<sup>80</sup> As if to compensate for the brevity of this text, he enlarged significantly the section on toponyms, listing no fewer than forty-two villages from the Teleorman county. Although Ridolfo had nothing specific to say about this Wallachian county, he seems to have had at his disposal an almost inexhaustible source of place-names to fill in the gaps. The amount of toponymic knowledge was not an anomaly for Ridolfo's memorandum, as each county chapter includes impressive lists of place-names. The shortest toponymic lists were for Săcuieni (12), Râmnic (16) and Ialomița (17),

<sup>75</sup> *ci' è una miniera di ferro, che rende al principe notabil emolumento ed ni oltre (Dsio Superiore); ha una miniera di rame più che mediocre (Mehedinzul)*. The Gorj iron mine was *Baia de Fier*, for its exploitation at the beginning of the eighteenth century, see Ș. Papacostea, *Olenia sub stăpânirea austriacă (1718–1739)*, ed. G. Lazăr, București, 1998, p. 89. The Mehedinți copper mine was *Baia de Aramă*, see F. Schwantz von Springfels, *Descrierea Olteniei ...*, p. 191.

<sup>76</sup> *nel monastero risplende con Miracoli il corpo tutto intiero, ed intatto d'una santa, figlia d'uno fu avaro di quel Paese, che per la gran elemosina faceva à poveri ne'tempi calamitosi, fu con sicure dal Padre medesimo trucidata sul principio del passato secolo per quanto mi ricordo (Arizesul)*.

<sup>77</sup> *E rinomato il Paese per il Monistero è villa di Brankowan, d'onde proviene la stirpe dell'infelice decapitato principe Kostantin Bassaraba Brankovan (Romanazi)*. The portrait of the Wallachian prince adorns the 1700 Paduan map and his reigning name, Constantin Basarab, is inscribed both in a medallion around the portrait and in the title cartouche. For the dynastic discourse used by Brâncoveanu to increase his legitimacy, see C. Rezachevici, "Cum a apărut numele dinastic Basarab și când l-a adoptat Matei vodă", *Analele Universității din Craiova*, 10, 2005, p. 7–29.

<sup>78</sup> *li medesimi hanno alzate croci di sopra in segno di vittoria (Demboviza)*. See above, footnote 60.

<sup>79</sup> *gli abitanti di queste parti sono più libertinaci degli altri, mentre commesso il delitto passano il fumicello per salvarsi abbenche il confine non è sprovvisto delle dovute guardie per tutto il corso Milkow insino à Brailla (Rimnikul)*. Ridolfo's comment reminds of a similar observation by Neculce in *Opere*, ed. G. Ștrempel, București, 1982, p. 720.

<sup>80</sup> *Questa seconda chiamata Telormano oltre il Borgo Rusi, e le Nobil Ville Barbatestj e Popestj comprende in se li seguenti villagi*.

while the longest were for Vâlcea (45), Teleorman (45), Dâmbovița (53), and Ilfov (69).<sup>81</sup> Ridolfo Damiano de Brünnetz's memorandum on Wallachia records an impressive total of 11 cities, 9 boroughs, 71 monasteries, 95 villages with a manor house and 317 ordinary villages.

The key for uncovering Ridolfo's source material is provided by the rubrics he used for structuring the place-names section. For each such section, there are five main headings under which toponyms are grouped: the city or the borough (*la citta or il borgo*), the big monasteries (*monasterii grandi*), the small monasteries (*monasterii piccoli*), the villages with a manor house (*ville nobili*) and the ordinary villages (*villagi ordinarii*). For two counties, Vâlcea and Argeș, Ridolfo added a new heading, on nunneries (*monasterii de verginii*), but usually he kept the structure unaltered, even if a rubric was left empty.<sup>82</sup> His headings are directly inspired by the legend of the map of Wallachia printed in Padua in 1700.<sup>83</sup> The map, whose sole extant copy is at the British Library, stirred scholars' interest as it was, allegedly, the first one authored by a Romanian, and one of the earliest ever printed in Greek.<sup>84</sup> Ridolfo's distinction between the three types of the monasteries, large, small and nunneries, followed faithfully the map-key of the 1700 Paduan print. Among the cartographic signs included in the map's legend, three had the following bilingual explanations: Μοναστήρια μεγάλα/*Monasteria magna*, Μοναστήρια μικρά/*Monasteria minora* and Μοναστήρια Μοναζουσων/*Monasteria virginum*. When setting apart the villages with a manor house (*ville con sede nobile*) from ordinary villages (*vilagi ordinarij*), Ridolfo also mirrored the map's legend, which differentiated Χωρία/*Villae* from Καθέδρα των Αρχόντων/*Villae habitatae a nobilibus*, ascribing a different cartographic sign to each. Even the chapter on wines from the first draft of Ridolfo's memorandum was largely based on a cartouche of the 1700 map, which registered the best Wallachian vineyards.<sup>85</sup>

The cartographic inspiration for Ridolfo Damiano de Brünnetz's memorandum is certain, as some of the rather cryptic references in his text can only be elucidated with the help of the map. Ridolfo emphasised that Wallachia had only one

<sup>81</sup> In between lie the counties of Muscel (19), Vlașca (20), Romanai (21), Dolj (23), Olt (24), Buzău (25), Gorj (27), Prahova (27), Mehedinți (29), Argeș (41).

<sup>82</sup> Such is the case with the rubric on the small monasteries in Gorj.

<sup>83</sup> For the convoluted story of this map, with a discussion of the relevant scholarship, see Ionuț Cruceru's study in this journal issue: "The Map of Wallachia published in Padua in 1700. Production, Content and Early Uses".

<sup>84</sup> Unescapably, Romanian scholars focused on Constatin Cantacuzino's assumed authorship, while the Greek scholars emphasised the involvement of Ioannis Komninos and Chrysanthos Notaras in the making and printing of the map. The map was undoubtedly the result of a collaborative effort based on Cantacuzino's geographic knowledge of Wallachia, on Komninos's mathematical skills and on Notaras's geographic and cartographic assistance and it seem rather unlikely that we will ever be able to delineate precisely the contribution each had made. Until a new edition of the map will be available, the best interpretation of its content is that of G. Aujac, "La première carte de Valachie", *Geographia Antiqua* XII, 2003, 129–140, which exceeds the classical descriptive presentation by C. C. Giurescu, "Harta stolnicului Constantin Cantacuzino. O descriere a Munteniei la 1700," *Revista Istorică Română* 13, 1943, 1, p. 1–26.

<sup>85</sup> See C.C. Giurescu, "Harta stolnicului..." , p. 3–4.

archbishop, but two metropolitan sees (*arcivescovato con due sedi*). On the Paduan map there was a small notice, in the lower right corner, that warned the reader that Wallachia had only one archbishop, despite the fact that two cities were marked by the corresponding cartographic symbol (București and Târgoviște).<sup>86</sup> At some point in his text, he mentioned two fountains, without providing any further details: *una fontana chiamata de' Principi* (Mehedinți) and *una fontana detta della Principessa* (Săcuieni). Both fountains, constructed by the princely family as a form of architectural patronage, are inscribed on the Paduan map, as *Βρύσις τοῦ Κράλλη* and *Βρύσις Δόμνα*.<sup>87</sup> The iron mine from Baia de Fier and a sulphur mine nearby the Târcov monastery, which figure prominently on the map, are also mentioned by Ridolfo in his brief descriptions of the counties of Gorj and, respectively, of Buzău.<sup>88</sup> The ruins of the Roman bridge near Celei are also transcribed from the map, on which the foot-bridge was accompanied by a bilingual inscription.<sup>89</sup> Impressed by an ancient Roman paved road, highly visible on the map, Ridolfo concluded that the county of Romanați was most famous for its large roads.<sup>90</sup> The two towers mentioned on the Danube and on the Transylvanian frontiers, *Torre* and *Torre Rossa*, are equally taken from the map, Πύργος Κόκκνος and Πύργος, as well as the enigmatic Chisar monastery from the Prahova county.<sup>91</sup> One could multiply the examples, but the point is clear: Ridolfo Damiano de Brünnetz extensively used the 1700 Paduan map for his memorandum. As it was rather difficult to write a systematic account of Wallachia based on some patchy juvenile memories and on a rather superficial knowledge of the realm, he shamelessly plagiarized, by converting into a text the Paduan map of Wallachia and by appropriating it for himself. Obviously, he tried his best to hide the cartographic source of his knowledge and for the most part he succeeded. Only a very suspicious reader would have inferred that Ridolfo was looking at a map when using phrases such as *à man sinistra/destra* or *situata in un angolo*.

The understanding of Ridolfo Damiano de Brünnetz's fraudulent attempt to pose as a well-versed person in Wallachian affairs throws a new light on his memorandum. The text is a difficult to untangle mix of personal experience and map reading, but a close analysis allows us to grasp the level of his cartographic

<sup>86</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 4.

<sup>87</sup> C.C. Giurescu viewed the toponym as a reference to some kind of pond, but A. Cruceru convincingly argued that it indicates an actual fountain, see A. Cruceru, *Județul Săcuieni. Studiu de geografie istorică*, București, 2018, p. 25. For this particular type of architectural patronage, see M. Wasiucionek, "Silks and Stones: Fountains, Painted Kaftans, and Ottomans in Early Modern Moldavia and Wallachia", *Revista istorică*, 29, 2018, 1–2, p. 33–54.

<sup>88</sup> The mentioning of the sulphur mine was also inspired by the Paduan map (Μέταλλα θειασίου).

<sup>89</sup> In Ridolfo's text: *una Torre sulle ripe del Danubio vicino alle Rudere delli ponti Trajani [...] alle uestigie del ponte Trajano*; on the Paduan map: *Γέφυρα τοῦ Τραϊανού/Pons Trajani*.

<sup>90</sup> *la frequenza delle strade maestre*.

<sup>91</sup> See N. Stoicescu, *Bibliografia localităților și monumentelor feudale din România. I. Țara Românească*, vol. 1, 1970, Craiova, p. 156. Most likely, Chisar is an anthroponym, therefore it should be read: *Chisar's monastery*.



literacy. To begin with, the bilingual nature of the map does not seem to have confused Ridolfo, who got the gist of the legend and of the main inscriptions and who was able to transcribe, quite accurately, the 500 Greek toponyms into Italian.<sup>92</sup> He read the map from top to bottom and from left to right, as if it were made up of several stripes stitched together. The result is close to a zig-zag reading.<sup>93</sup> The list of place-names for each county suggests a similar way of reading the map, albeit a much more irregular one.<sup>94</sup> His gaze focused on human geography, while the physical features of the realm were rather underrepresented. The most important mountains and rivers are transcribed into Ridolfo's text, but the Wallachian forests, meticulously depicted on the Paduan map, are only vaguely referred to.<sup>95</sup> Even more surprising is the complete absence of bridges, considering that the map had a distinct cartographic sign for them, included in the legend. Actually, of the fifteen cartographic signs used on the map, only two were completely overlooked by Ridolfo.<sup>96</sup> What drew his attention most were the cities, the monasteries and the villages, as he made the effort to transcribe them thoroughly and comprehensively into his memorandum. As already mentioned, Ridolfo organized his rubrics according to the map's legend. The only exception is his attempt to tread a fine line between city (*la citta*) and borough (*il borgo*), which on the Paduan map are marked by the same cartographic sign.<sup>97</sup> The distinction between big or small monasteries and nunneries corresponds to different signs in the map legend, as the

<sup>92</sup> For the edition of the memorandum, to be printed in *Călători străini despre Țările Române, Supliment III*, ed. by Ștefan Andreescu and Ovidiu Cristea, I was able to identify almost all toponyms.

<sup>93</sup> Ridolfo starts in the north-western corner, with Gorj, and only after describing the southern neighbouring counties of Mehedinți and Dolj, he moves eastwards to Vâlcea and to its southern adjoining district of Romanați. Then, coming back to the upper parts of Wallachia, Ridolfo describes the district of Argeș and the two counties placed below it, Olt and Teleorman. Returning once more in the north, Ridolfo goes on with Muscel and Dâmbovița, and then he turns southwards, to Vlașca. Things get a little complicated as the shapes of the counties become more elongated. Ridolfo continues by describing Prahova and Săcuieni in the north, before moving south to Ilfov, and afterwards he returns in the upper parts of the realm to Buzău and goes down on the map to Ialomița. The last county in Ridolfo's text is the easternmost one, Râmnic.

<sup>94</sup> Usually, Ridolfo follows the rivers' courses from north to south, from the Carpathians to the Danube, but he has to adjust to his description to incorporate the numerous toponyms placed between rivers.

<sup>95</sup> In the general description of Wallachia, at the beginning of the fourth chapter in the first section of his memorandum, Ridolfo refers to its massive forests.

<sup>96</sup> The fifteen cartographic signs used on the map are: (1) archbishopric; (2) bishopric; (3) cities or boroughs; (4) villages; (5) villages with a manor; (6) big monasteries; (7) small monasteries; (8) nunneries; (9) copper mines; (10) iron mines; (11) sulphur mines; (12) "boiling earth" (muddy volcanoes); (13) salt mines; (14) Ottoman settlements; (15) bridges. The muddy volcanoes sign is included only once on the map, in the Buzău county. It might be the case that Ridolfo had difficulties to understand the meaning of the Greek and Latin legend: *Πυλός Αναβράζων/terra bullita*. As for the bridges, the legend is clear and the cartographic sign is used no fewer than twenty-four times.

<sup>97</sup> Hence, Ridolfo's hesitations with regard to Orașul de Floci and Râmnic, which are usually considered cities, but look a lot more like boroughs. See for instance the rubrics for the Argeș county, which distinguishes the city of Argeș from the borough of Pitești.

one between villages with a manor and ordinary villages, or between archbishopric and bishopric sees.<sup>98</sup>

For Ridolfo Damiano de Brünnetz reading a map means, first and foremost, deciphering the texts inscribed on it, such as legend, inscriptions and toponyms. The Paduan map of Wallachia, for Ridolfo at least, was an object to be read, rather than an image to be looked at. The pre-eminence of reading over seeing is reflected by Ridolfo's gaze. Although the Paduan map of Wallachia displays several layers of information, his ability to understand the non-textual ones seems to have been rather limited. For instance, of the three Wallachian regions ruled directly by the Ottomans, the so-called *kaza* districts, he mentions only Brăila, leaving out Giurgiu and Turnu. On the map, all three districts are clearly delineated by graphic lines, but only Brăila contains an inscription explaining it was ruled directly by the Ottomans. To conclude, Ridolfo's cartographic abilities and map literacy were rather modest and his systematic effort of transcribing the map meant exactly that: copying out and ordering the texts, legend, cartouche, inscriptions and toponyms, inscribed on the map. For Ridolfo, the map was a geographically framed collage of texts.

## CONCLUSIONS

While Ridolfo Damiano de Brünnetz was writing his Wallachian memorandum, drawing extensively on the Paduan map, little did he know that the Habsburgs had acquired, as early as 1707, a manuscript copy, enlarged and improved, of the same map.<sup>99</sup> Whether his prospective employers discovered the plagiarism or not, Ridolfo's memorandum failed to impress them. Except for the partial copy from prince Eugene of Savoy's archive and for a singular reference in a diplomatic missive,<sup>100</sup> there seems to be no contemporary echo of his memorandum. Nevertheless, despite its limited impact, his prose cartography is of interest to scholars, as it reveals the strategies of an Enlightenment adventurer, admittedly not a very successful one. Ridolfo's attempts to find a lucrative position with the Habsburgs were mainly based on his geographic mobility and on his

<sup>98</sup> In the chapter on the Vlașca county, Ridolfo introduces a once-used rubric: medium-sized monasteries (*monasteri medii*), comprising the convents of Cobia and Glavacioc. It seems to be just a slip of the quill. When discussing the Prahova county, Ridolfo includes salt mines as a rubric on its own, but usually he refers to the mines in the introductory descriptive texts and not in the place-names section.

<sup>99</sup> The copy made by Schierl von Schierendorf was 1690 × 780 mm, whereas the Paduan printed original had 1400 × 650 mm. A digital version is available on Österreichische Nationalbibliothek website <https://digital.onb.ac.at/rep/osd/?1110534F>, last accessed on 20.03.2022.

<sup>100</sup> Alexander Randa mentions a *Sistema del Governo Politico Militare ed Economico della Wallachia* written by a certain *Ridolfo Damiano de Brüner*, but unfortunately does not provide any reference, see "Wiener Archivalien über die Geschichte des Hauses Cantacuzino", in *Actes du II<sup>e</sup> Congrès International des Études du Sud-Est Européen, Athènes 1970*, III, Athènes, 1978, p. 343.

language skills. He seized the opportunity to stir the Habsburgs' interest in the context of their impending expansion into Wallachia and posed as a good catholic with a thorough knowledge of the realm. He concealed his Transylvanian origins (assuming these were real and not just an invented pedigree concocted to deceive the Lucerne authorities) and pretended to have travelled extensively across Wallachia. Ridolfo's strongest assets were his ability to learn, at least superficially, different languages and alphabets, but also his talent of telling stories. The adventurer had a good knowledge of Italian and of some Latin, he was able to read Greek and, probably, to understand some of the language. He was also ready to copy some Slavonic terms, although he did not know how to fill in the abbreviated and superscripted letters, and he even memorized some Wallachian words. The genre of a memorandum clearly does not suit him, as sometimes the desire of telling stories takes precedence over the need of a systematic account. He wrote the memorandum in the hope of receiving an audience, as he seemed more confident in his elocutionary skills and, probably, in his social abilities. He brought along different notes and documents that might have been of help in his endeavours. He had access to Wallachian chancery documents, from where he copied the Slavonic terms, and he had acquired a copy of the 1700 Paduan map. Most likely, he procured the map in Italy, and, although the item was not extraordinarily rare, it clearly went beyond Ridolfo's social status.<sup>101</sup> His cartographic literacy was rather limited and he valued more his traveling experience than his bookish or mapping knowledge. Therefore, he concealed the cartographic source of his memorandum, pretending instead to have an unrivalled topographical and toponymical familiarity with the realm of Wallachia. Ridolfo Damiano de Brúnnetz was a conman and a professional liar and any attempt to capture his identity or to describe his personality is extremely risky. The alleged Transylvanian fugitive, the good catholic hovering on the periphery of a cardinal's entourage, the self-proclaimed expert on Wallachia or the adopted citizen of Lucerne, were all carefully constructed personae. Such a character is not easy to untangle, but I do hope I was able to unravel, even if just partially, Ridolfo's web of lies and deceptions.

<sup>101</sup> If we leave aside the people involved in its making, Chrysanthos Notaras, Constantin Cantacuzino and Constantin Brâncoveanu, the early eighteenth-century documented owners of this map are just a few: the English epigraphist Edmond Chishull, Meletios, Metropolitan of Athens and the Italian secretary Anton Maria del Chiaro; for details see Ionuț Cruțeru's study in the present volume.

