

**Modern History Sourcebook:  
Thomas Thorton:  
The Phanariots of Moldavia, 1809**

**From:** <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1809phanariot.html>

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The education of the boyars is little superior in point of real utility to that of the common people. The children are instructed by priests in the houses of their parents, and are surrounded by *chinganehs*, who corrupt them by abject servility and a base compliance with all their caprices. Formed by such tutors, they pass into a world of hypocrisy and vice, without one just principle to regulate their conduct, without one generous purpose, or one honourable sentiment. They adopt indiscriminately the vices, without inheriting the vivacity, of the Greeks, or veiling them with that delicacy which the Greeks have not wholly relinquished. They confound whatever is most degrading in luxury with the fair fruit of civilization, and in their rude adoption of European manners, they plunge into promiscuous debauchery, and indulge to excess in an unprincipled passion of gaming. Like the Poles and Hungarians the boyars inherit a taste for magnificent dresses and splendid equipages: they love balls and public entertainments, but their assemblies are rude and tumultuous. Their tables are open to every person of their acquaintance, but are inelegantly served. In the cities they are forbidden to form connexions of intimacy, or even to keep up intercourse, with strangers; but I have occasionally lodged for a night in their country seats, and was always received and treated by them with a plain but decent hospitality.

The Greeks adopt a more than Asiatic luxury: they sleep after dinner on their sophas, whilst a female servant fans away the flies and refreshes the air which they breathe: They exact from their attendants the respect and homage which they have seen paid to the Turkish grandees; but feeling within themselves no consciousness of personal worth or importance, they cannot command with Turkish dignity, the petulance of vanity betrays itself in harsh expressions, and insulting behaviour, to their inferiors. On the death or deposition of a prince the divan assembles, and immediately assumes the administration of public affairs. All the creatures or dependents of the prince are removed from office, and other persons are appointed, who are continued in authority until the arrival of his successor. The *catmacam*, or lieutenant of the newly created prince announces the nomination of his master, but does not interfere in the affairs of government, further than in superintending the collection of the prince's revenues. The fallen sovereign is immediately forsaken by his courtiers, is always treated with neglect, and sometimes with insult and abuse. He returns privately, and without pomp, to Constantinople, where he retires to his seat in the Fanal or on the shores of the Bosphorus. With the usual modesty of *rayahs* the princes resume their habits of submission, and the exterior of humility. They are followed only by a single servant; but at home they are surrounded by a princely and titled household: they allot to particular officers distinct portions of service, and pass the day in planning new schemes of ambition, or in receiving the secret homage of their clients and vassals....

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**Source:**

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Scanned by Jerome S. Arkenberg, Cal. State Fullerton. The text has been modernized by Prof. Arkenberg.

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