

Cristian CONSTANTIN*

**DANUBIAN GRAIN AND THE EUROPEAN DEPOSIT PORTS.
QUANTITATIVE ASPECTS (1829–1853)**

***Cerealele dunărene și porturile depozit europene.
Aspecte cantitative (1829-1853)***

Abstract: *This paper refers to the foreign trade of the Romanian grain Principalities and their destination (the European deposit ports). During the Modern Age, a large part of the world grain trade was controlled by certain intermediate ports. The grain was stored for lengthy periods (even up to 7 years) and sold when market conditions seemed favourable. Two cities, Galați in Moldavia and Brăila in Wallachia, personified the interests and hopes of the principalities regarding the economic role of the Danube. Starting with the 1830s, the Danubian region became an increasingly frequent destination for European entrepreneurs who had discovered their great commercial prospects. The Russian–Turkish Peace of 1829 turns the ports of Brăila and Galați into important suppliers of grain for the European markets. In the following century, grain from Romanian Principalities supplied the European deposit ports.*

Keywords: *Brăila, Galați, wheat, maize, commerce, deposit ports.*

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Introduction

Grain was one of the most important commodities on the world markets in the Modern Age. By the 1829, Danubian grain market entered this commercial pattern, following the provisions of the Treaty of Adrianople (1829). The Russian–Turkish Peace turns the ports of Brăila and Galați into important suppliers of grain on the European markets. The deposit trade occupied most of the commerce of large ports such as Trieste,

* Ph.D. Candidate, “The Lower Danube” University of Galați, Romania; constantin.p.cristian@gmail.com.

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Genoa, Leghorn and Marseille in the Mediterranean; Amsterdam and Hamburg in Northern Europe. This Peace It granted the two Romanian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia full freedom to pursue commerce and to navigate on the Danube, turning the ports of Brăila and Galați into important suppliers of grain on the European markets.¹ In the following five decades, Grain from Romanian Principalities supplied the European deposit ports. In the 19th century, industrialisation, famines and wars were chief causes of increased grain market demand. The sums necessary for modernization of the Romanian Principalities were obtained from economic activities, more numerous and important, and the agricultural exports played the primary role. Ștefan Zeletin's study on the beginning of capitalism and the emergence of the Romanian bourgeoisie generated much controversy at the time of publication. Among Zeletin's concerns was to prove that Romanian economic and political evolution was the result of becoming enmeshed at the beginning of the nineteenth century in global trade, whose symbol and engine was the British Empire (in extension from this hypothesis to the European deposit ports).²

Organised in commercial houses, the merchants served as agents of the most important company from Europe. In an area where capitalist instruments were still at the beginnings, these businessmen were "at the same time bankers, merchants, exchange agents, traders for import and export, but more than anything they are middlemen."³

Quantitative aspects

About 75% of all merchandise exported (in terms of value) from Galați and Brăila was represented by wheat and maize. The expeditions of rye, millet or barley, are not significant because the importance of cereal exports for the trade of the two Romanian ports and the economy of the Danubian Principalities is irrelevant. Wheat and maize exports from Romanian Danubian ports (Galați and Brăila) are detailed in Tables 1 and 2. The percentage minimum was recorded in 1841 (63%) and a maximum of 88% in 1852, being in a continuous growth throughout this interval: from an average percentage of 70% in the period 1837–1842, it increased to 75% in 1843–1847 and 79% in 1848–1852.⁴ One important aspect in grain international trade is the supplementary cost added, because in 19th century the Romanian infrastructure transports it was non-existent.

The price of grain was lower at Brăila than at Galați due to the better conditions of water carriage from Wallachian ports upstream the Danube. The average price increased throughout this period and making more

¹ See: Herlihy 1963: 16–24; Bușe 1976; Mocanu 2012: 23-179 (part I); Ardeleanu 2014: 95–100.

² Zeletin: 1925; Enache 2013: 218.

³ Lefebvre 1858: 313; Ardeleanu 2014: 78-79.

⁴ Ardeleanu 2014: 108–114.

landowners invest in grain production and trade. Between 1836 and 1846, the price of a quintal of grain increased in Danubian ports from 7 to 15 shillings and that of maize from 4 to 10 shillings. In 1852, the price of a quintal of wheat was 10 to 11 shillings and that of maize from 7 to 10 shillings. The record was recorded in 1846–1847, after a decisive shift took place following the repeal of the Corn Laws in Britain, when wheat reached at Brăila 17 shillings and maize 13 shillings per quintal, treble the price recorded ten years earlier. The record was recorded in 1846–1847, after a decisive shift took place following the repeal of the Corn Laws in Britain, when wheat reached at Brăila 17 shillings and maize 13 shillings per quintal, treble the price recorded ten years earlier. In March and April, the months of maximal demand, grain was sold at the following prices (per quintal): wheat 16–17 shillings, maize 12–13 shillings. In the following months, prices diminished substantially. In this period, the average price of grain was approximating identical at Odessa and double or triple in Naples, Genoa, Trieste, Marseilles and London⁵.

Table 1
Wheat Exports from the Danubian Ports (1837–1852)
Quantities (in quintals) and Values (in sterling pounds)

| Port | Galați | | | Brăila | | |
|------|---------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| | Quantity (quintals) | Average price (shillings) | Total value (£) | Quantity (quintals) | Average price (shillings) | Total value (£) |
| 1837 | 12,494.83 | 8 | 73,785 | 9,626.02 | 7 | 53,054 |
| 1838 | 21,821.25 | 8 | 137,450 | 7,813.90 | 8 | 46,143 |
| 1839 | 19,098.89 | 12 | 180,454 | 18,185.20 | - | - |
| 1840 | 29,283.49 | 13 | 299,738 | 16,840.46 | 12 | 159,115 |
| 1841 | 12,809.17 | 12 | 121,026 | 10,756.38 | 11 | 93,161 |
| 1842 | 19,644.63 | 11 | 162,409 | 20,336.30 | 10 | 160,121 |
| 1843 | 13,670.14 | 9 | 91,489 | 40,939.45 | 9 | 257,874 |
| 1844 | 21,150.92 | 8 | 133,228 | 44,183.81 | 9 | 295,705 |
| 1845 | 22,865.11 | 12 | 216,038 | 39,999.22 | 12 | 362,181 |
| 1846 | 14,085.20 | 13 | 149,718 | 41,597.72 | 15 | 425,784 |
| 1847 | 22,970.28 | 16 | 289,376 | 49,636.17 | 17 | 586,227 |
| 1848 | 14,428.50 | 11 | 124,966 | 20,255.40 | 10 | 159,484 |
| 1849 | 23,343.29 | 12 | 199,867 | 14,903.63 | 10 | 117,346 |
| 1850 | 17,863.62 | 12 | 161,750 | 35,979.49 | 10 | 269,126 |
| 1851 | 17,078.98 | 11 | 141,198 | 35,956.12 | 9 | 254,795 |
| 1852 | 23,820.58 | 11 | 206,311 | 43,637.18 | 10 | 343,584 |

Source: Ardeleanu 2014: 265 (dates recalculated by me from quarters [UK] in quintals).

⁵ See tables 1 and 2.

Table 2
Maize Exports from the Danubian Ports (1837-1852)
Quantities (in quintals) and Values (in sterling pounds)

| Port | Galați | | | Brăila | | |
|------|---------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Year | Quantity (quintals) | Average price (shillings) | Total value (£) | Quantity (quintals) | Average price (shillings) | Total value (£) |
| 1837 | 11,044.93 | 4 | 34,786 | 3,087.89 | 4 | 9,725 |
| 1838 | 7,413.84 | 4 | 23,350 | 4,724.61 | 4 | 14,880 |
| 1839 | 16,339.17 | 6 | 77,189 | 7,261.17 | - | - |
| 1840 | 24,008.80 | 9 | 160,681 | 8,710.82 | 8 | 54,869 |
| 1841 | 4,495.24 | 8 | 28,315 | 3,406.04 | 8 | 20,114 |
| 1842 | 11,878.98 | 6 | 56,119 | 1,298.12 | 6 | 5,622 |
| 1843 | 17,864.89 | 5 | 70,331 | 15,406.95 | 5 | 57,622 |
| 1844 | 22,101.94 | 6 | 95,713 | 16,284.81 | 6 | 67,316 |
| 1845 | 19,952.74 | 7 | 102,116 | 15,839.40 | 6 | 74,828 |
| 1846 | 42,753.60 | 10 | 336,627 | 20,720.37 | 10 | 154,988 |
| 1847 | 40,464.70 | 13 | 398,256 | 78,631.23 | 13 | 773,894 |
| 1848 | 18,254.17 | 10 | 136,541 | 37,100.31 | 9 | 262,904 |
| 1849 | 32,864.41 | 9 | 232,887 | 42,233.51 | 8 | 266,026 |
| 1850 | 15,605.84 | 9 | 110,588 | 19,017.09 | 8 | 116,044 |
| 1851 | 44,538.67 | 8 | 280,546 | 82,124.15 | 7 | 404,136 |
| 1852 | 41,820.36 | 9 | 271,655 | 92,112.14 | 7 | 489,550 |

Source: Ardeleanu 2014: 266 (dates recalculated by me from quarters [UK] in quintals).

Destination

Danubian grain was mainly exported to Constantinople and the Greek islands. Only the best cargoes got to Marseille, Leghorn, Genoa or wherever they could be sold for a better price than Odessa grain (considered superior). Most exporters had agents in Constantinople, cargoes were sent to the Ottoman capital, whence they were reshipped to other destinations, depending on the quality of the harvest and the evolution of prices on the European grain markets. In 1839, 70% of the wheat exported from Galați was directed to Constantinople, smaller quantities being shipped to Trieste and Genoa. For the same year, maize was exported to Constantinople (75%), Marseille, Trieste, Genoa, Samos and Anvers. Until 1847, the Ottoman Empire, Austria and France occupied the first places in the exports from Danubian ports, with Great Britain as a secondary destination for direct expeditions, although there were significant indirect cargoes, via Constantinople or the Ionian Islands. According to his data Constantin Bușe, in 1845, the exports from Galați, amounting to about 28 million lei, headed to the Ottoman Empire (9.2 million lei), Austria (7 million lei), the Italian states (4.7 million lei), France (4.7 million lei), the Ionian Islands (1.1 million lei) and England (0.6 million

lei). The export of wheat totalled 13.7 million lei, of which Constantinople received 3.68 million, Marseille 3.12, Genoa 2.58, Austria (mainly Trieste) 2.58, and Leghorn 1.02 million.⁶

Trieste was, of course, the largest market, and the Ionian Islands only received a relatively larger number of ships by the mid 1840s (46 in 1844, 29 in 1845 and 24 in 1846). During the decade 1843–1852, 18% of the ships that sailed from Brăila and 20% from Galați headed to these ports, loaded with large quantities of grain: 18% of the wheat and 34% of the maize from Brăila, and 13% of the wheat and 26% of the maize from Galați. We should notice the gradual decrease of imported quantities in the late 1840s and early 1850s, after the huge demands of maize in the mid 1840s, when more than half of Danubian exports headed to Trieste. The same decrease is also visible for the Western Mediterranean deposit ports of Genoa, Leghorn and Marseille, which appear together in some Danubian statistics. The decrease in the number of ships that headed to these markets was sharp, three times lower in the second interval if we divide the decade into two periods of five years.

After the 1847 (the abolishment of the Corn Laws in Great Britain) the great famine in Ireland, Danubian grain entered the British market directly. For example, in 1849, from Brăila, 72% of the grain went to Constantinople and the rest to Marseille, Trieste, England and Leghorn. The maize from Galați went to England (63%) and to Constantinople (28%), the rest getting to Trieste, Malta, Marseille and Cephalonia. The maize from Brăila headed to England in a proportion of 51% and to Constantinople 33%, the rest going to Trieste, Malta, Marseille, Hamburg and the Ionian Islands. A third (32%) of the wheat exported from Galați was shipped to Constantinople, the great port of redistribution, 27% to the English ports, 14% to Trieste, 10% to Genoa and 10% to Marseille, the rest going to Leghorn, Cephalonia and Malta.⁷ In 1850, 56% of the grain exported from Galați went directly to the British ports, the same situation being recorded for 67% of maize exports; for Brăila the proportions were 29% for wheat and 43% for maize.⁸

If in 1845 only 1.29% of the wheat and 0.47% of the maize shipped from Galați were exported directly to British ports, two years later the percents were 12.87 and 55.52. Wallachian exports from Brăila witnesses a similar growth, so that, overall, on a five-year long interval (1848–1852), 38% of the wheat and 57.9% of the maize exported from Galați, respectively 19.5% and 45.1% of the similar exports from Brăila were supplied to the British market. The difference between the two ports relates to the quality of grain. Most important it was aspect the increase in the number of ships

⁶ Bușe 1976: 63.

⁷ Commerce 1852: 299.

⁸ Commerce 1852: 299–307.

loading at Galați and Brăila directly for the British ports, which grew from about 1% in 1843 to about a quarter and then a third of the total number of vessels registered in the Danubian ports. In 1846, according to data from loading ports, most ships headed to Constantinople or the Mediterranean re-exporting centres. 203 ships that left Galați headed to Constantinople, 165 to Trieste, 118 to Marseille, 61 to Genoa and 57 to England. The following year shows a completely different distribution, with 206 ships going to England, 145 to Marseille, 123 to Constantinople, 58 to Genoa, 39 to Malta, etc. In 1848, the totals were 133 to Constantinople, 115 to England, 44 to Trieste, 26 to Marseille, etc. In the case of Brăila, the destinations of the 911 vessels that cleared the port in 1846 were: Constantinople – 489, Leghorn and Marseille – 203, Trieste and Venice – 131, Algiers – 67, England – 11, Malta – 10. Two years later the same changed pattern applies, with 359 ships going to Constantinople, 136 to Trieste, but a massive 115 ships headed to England.⁹

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⁹ TNA, FO 78/792: 122–133.

¹⁰ TNA, FO 78/792: 122–133.

Table 3
Danubian exports to the Adriatic Sea (1843–1852)
Number of ships and quantities (in quintals)

| Year | Brăila | | | Galați | | |
|------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Ships | Wheat | Maize | Ships | Wheat | Maize |
| 1843 | 178 | 7,745 | 11,097 | 106 | 1,751 | 11,116 |
| 1844 | 123 | 5,985 | 10,477 | 158 | 3,934 | 13,017 |
| 1845 | 112 | 5,830 | 7,029 | 148 | 5,124 | 11,575 |
| 1846 | 131 | 4,523 | 766 | 158 | 1,281 | 14,696 |
| 1847 | --- | --- | --- | 59 | 1,910 | 3,556 |
| 1848 | 145 | 6,616 | 11,774 | 53 | 1,837 | 1,907 |
| 1849 | 56 | 1,467 | 6,073 | 80 | 3,593 | 1,637 |
| 1850 | 61 | 5,624 | 2,734 | 44 | 223 | 333 |
| 1851 | 204 | 6,017 | 22,035 | 92 | 2,958 | 3,862 |
| 1852 | 333 | 11,913 | 33,871 | 104 | 3,491 | 3,626 |

Source: TNA, FO 78/608: 149–173; FO 78/649: 103–115; FO 78/792: 122–140; FO 78/829: 45–56; FO 78/865: 85–103; FO 78/901: 161–177; FO 78/977: 115–120; FO 78/1014: 206–216 (dates recalculated by me from quarters [UK] in quintals).

Table 4
Danubian exports to the Western Mediterranean
(Genoa, Leghorn, Marseille) (1843–1852)
Number of ships and quantities (in quintals)

| Year | Brăila | | | Galați | | |
|------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| | Ships | Wheat | Maize | Ships | Wheat | Maize |
| 1843 | 185 | 19,099 | 1,542 | 126 | 9,647 | 4,997 |
| 1844 | 173 | 19,474 | 1,805 | 121 | 8,356 | 4,905 |
| 1845 | 131 | 13,776 | 1,243 | 145 | 11,204 | 5,783 |
| 1846 | 203 | 17,299 | 2,083 | 198 | 10,108 | 10,267 |
| 1847 | --- | --- | --- | 213 | 15,545 | 6,247 |
| 1848 | 97 | 5,639 | 1,222 | 63 | 3,489 | 1,856 |
| 1849 | 49 | 2,042 | 251 | 52 | 5,273 | 677 |
| 1850 | 37 | 3,641 | 140 | 33 | 3,841 | 486 |
| 1851 | 35 | 3,428 | 369 | 35 | 3,864 | 421 |
| 1852 | 52 | 4,445 | 1,261 | 77 | 5,604 | 1,623 |

Source: TNA, FO 78/608: 149–173; FO 78/649: 103–115; FO 78/792: 122–140; FO 78/829: 45–56; FO 78/865: 85–103; FO 78/901: 161–177; FO 78/977: 115–120; FO 78/1014: 206–216 (dates recalculated by me from quarters [UK] in quintals).

Table 5
Danubian exports to Great Britain (1843–1852)
Number of ships and quantities (in quintals)

| Year | Brăila | | | Galați | | |
|------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | Ships | Wheat | Maize | Ships | Wheat | Maize |
| 1843 | 3 | 99 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 1844 | 16 | 2,363 | 89 | 10 | 168 | 600 |
| 1845 | 35 | 2,276 | 978 | 9 | 295 | 93 |
| 1846 | 11 | 337 | 537 | 57 | 0 | 6,714 |
| 1847 | --- | --- | --- | 206 | 2,957 | 22,465 |
| 1848 | 115 | 801 | 15,322 | 115 | 4,026 | 12,129 |
| 1849 | 133 | 591 | 21,357 | 164 | 765 | 20,787 |
| 1850 | 120 | 11,191 | 8,212 | 133 | 10,017 | 10,517 |
| 1851 | 320 | 12,776 | 36,436 | 296 | 4,491 | 37,492 |
| 1852 | 339 | 10,838 | 42,921 | 311 | 12,521 | 31,182 |

Source: TNA, FO 78/608: 149–173; FO 78/649: 103–115; FO 78/792: 122–140; FO 78/829: 45–56; FO 78/865: 85–103; FO 78/901: 161–177; FO 78/977: 115–120; FO 78/1014: 206–216 (dates recalculated by me from quarters [UK] in quintals).

Table 6
Danubian exports to Constantinople (1843–1852)
Number of ships and quantities (in quintals)

| Year | Brăila | | | Galați | | |
|------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| | Ships | Wheat | Maize | Ships | Wheat | Maize |
| 1843 | 355 | 13,521 | 2,768 | 79 | 2,146 | 1,524 |
| 1844 | 418 | 16,307 | 4,346 | 210 | 8,693 | 3,579 |
| 1845 | 541 | 17,732 | 6,413 | 153 | 6,242 | 2,512 |
| 1846 | 489 | 2,271 | 9,262 | 203 | 2,585 | 10,548 |
| 1847 | --- | --- | --- | 123 | 2,188 | 4,786 |
| 1848 | 359 | 7,199 | 8,136 | 133 | 3,221 | 1,106 |
| 1849 | 344 | 10,738 | 14,047 | 276 | 7,144 | 9,067 |
| 1850 | 285 | 16,159 | 7,708 | 162 | 3,655 | 3,724 |
| 1851 | 490 | 13,735 | 23,030 | 176 | 5,713 | 2,592 |
| 1852 | 401 | 16,244 | 13,950 | 114 | 2,099 | 4,659 |

Source: TNA, FO 78/608: 149–173; FO 78/649: 103–115; FO 78/792: 122–140; FO 78/829: 45–56; FO 78/865: 85–103; FO 78/901: 161–177; FO 78/977: 115–120; FO 78/1014: 206–216 (dates recalculated by me from quarters [UK] in quintals).

Conclusions

In two decades after the Russian-Turkish Peace of Adrianople (1829) Moldavia and Wallachia were attracted into the mechanism of world trade, an exclusivist club based on the authentic capital. The first traders who took advantage of these opportunities were the Italian, Greek and Jews merchants. The merchant connections in the European economic world secured the access of Danubian grain to these large international markets. The Grain trade of Danubian ports was determined by the character and structure of the Moldo–Wallachian economy.¹¹ For an important International Trade, Danubian Grains ameliorations were visible in terms of production, clearing and preservation, especially in modern warehouses erected in the Danubian ports.

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¹¹ Ardeleanu 2014: 51-53.