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### Osmanlı Öncesi ve Dönemi Tarihi Araştırmaları

#### I

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### Cristina Di Belgiojoso (1808-1871)

An Italian Princess in the Ottoman Countryside

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Cristina Trivulzio was born in Milan on 28 of June 1808. She was the only daughter of count Girolamo Trivulzio and Vittoria Gherardini. In 1812 her father died and left her all his estates and a huge income. One year later, her mother married again with marquis Alessandro Visconti d'Aragona. Cristina was brought up in this new family with a stepbrother and three stepsisters. She studied languages, drawing, embroidery and music, as all the high society girls of that period. As all high class persons from Milan spoke usually French instead of Italian and in fact, during all her life, she used that language to write letters and also literary works.

When she was 16-year-old she fell in love with prince Emilio Barbiano di Belgiojoso, and she decided to marry him notwithstanding the desires of her relatives who did not liked his libertine behaviour and had chosen for her another groom. In fact the marriage did not last long and they peaceful separated in 1828. Cristina got also an illness from her husband which tormented her for the rest of her life and lastly brought her to death.

On marrying Emilio Barbiano she not only had become a princess but also had taken possession of the large fortune inherited from her father. Thus, free again after four years of marriage, she began to travel in Italy and France. She gets involved also in politics. In that period Italy was not a unique kingdom and there were groups who fought against the Pope and against the Austrian Emperor who ruled on part of it. At a certain point she was also exiled in Paris and the Austrian government which then ruled in Milan seized her revenues for some time. Thus she had to gain her life for the first time and she began to write for newspapers. But soon her situation improved and her salon became one of the most brilliant in Paris, attended by aristocracy and politicians<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Sandro Fortunati, The Life of Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso, in Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso. An Italian Princess in the 19th c. Turkish Countryside, ed. by Antonio Fabris, Venezia, Filippi, 2010, pp. 9-18 and the books here quoted. Cfr. also <http://www.cristinabelgiojoso.it/pages.php?id=index0> (19.10.2010).

In 1838 she had a daughter: Maria. Then she came back to Italy and settled in her estate of Locate, near Milan. There she enjoyed the calm life of country. In 1848-49 she was again involved in the riots of Italian patriots. She was in Rome during the short-lived Republic where she directed the hospital for wounded soldiers and, thus, she learned a little of medicine. When the Republic finished she went to Greece with her twelve-year-old daughter. The Austrian government seized again her estates and she was alone and with few money in that country. Her ancient friends and enemies vied with her enemies in despising her and her behaviour in the dark days of the Roman Republic. Thus, in spring 1850 she left Athens for the Ottoman Empire, where many other Italian exiles had found already shelter. She wanted to forget the past and longed for a new life, far from Europe and its pettiness. Her daughter Maria and the English nurse Mrs. Mary Ann Parker left with her Greece on the French ship *Télémaque*<sup>2</sup>.

The first Ottoman city they reached was İzmir. It appeared to them as the town of an exotic Arab novel, springing up from the sea, with the minarets rising against the sky such as strange water plants. The streets were dark and dirty but the women, who opened their houses for the princess, were as beautiful as Ariosto's heroines. She saw harems, she was in the Jewish quarter where there was a school with only one teacher and about one hundred pupils. İzmir was then a city where European patriots had found a resting place after so many battles and struggles against reactionary governments. They came above all from Poland, Hungary and Italy. In the 1850s the sultan Abdülmecid I (1823-1861) had recognised Habsburg dynasty as the owner of the largest part of Northern Italy but, at the same time, had welcomed those who have fought against the Austrian Empire. Many persons left Italy for the Near East after the riots of the years 1848-1849. Some of them decided to remain in Greece, but many others reached Constantinople and other Ottoman cities<sup>3</sup>, and when Cristina came back onboard a delegation of Italian refugees went there with musical instruments to meet her and sang an Italian war song. When the *Télémaque* left İzmir small boats, full of Italians accompanied the ship for a while as it was a cortege<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Maria Pia Pedani, *Cristina's Days in Çakmaközü*, in *Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso*, pp. 43-52.

<sup>3</sup> Sergio La Salvia, *La comunità italiana di Costantinopoli tra politica e società (1830-1870)*, in *Gli italiani di Istanbul. Figure, comunità e istituzioni dalle riforme alla Repubblica 1839-1923*, a cura di Attilio De Gasperi e Roberta Ferrazza, Torino, Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, 2007, pp. 15-44.

<sup>4</sup> Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso, *Ricordi dell'esilio*, a cura di Luigi Severgnini, Cinisello Balsamo (MI) 1978, pp. 148-150. (*Souvenirs dans l'exile, "Le National"*, Paris, 5 Sep.-12 Oct. 1850<sup>1</sup>; Milano, Istituto Editoriale Italiano, 1946<sup>2</sup>)

After some days they reached Constantinople. Here a dark forest of houses which sprang up from the bowels of the earth greeted foreign visitors. Cristina saw the grand bazaar where Persian and Indian *cashmere* fabrics were mixed up with *percale* coming from Switzerland and France. In her letters she described to her friends dark shops with pieces of green soap, Peking fans, Nankin ink-pot, were exhibited together with sweet perfumes. She liked to compare Mevlevi dances and Bektashi songs to some European performances: the sweat was the same but the dervishes wanted to gain the Paradise while the others desired only a moment of pleasure. She saw also the cemetery: a cool and sweet place, full of people, where horrible wild dogs used to play havoc with bones and corpses. She made a promenade at the Sweet Waters of Europe where Ottoman high class beautiful girls went for a walk with no veil at all on their faces. She met musicians, eunuchs, gypsies and Turkish men smoking their pipes. Among her acquaintances there was also Giuseppe Donizzetti, the brother of the most famous Gaetano, who taught music in Istanbul and prepared for her a concert performed by his Turkish students. She was also invited to inspect a Turkish company of soldiers and she saluted them<sup>5</sup>.

The Italian princess spent that summer in the house of an Armenian, in a small village two miles far from Constantinople. Probably at Ortaköy; it was near the Bosphorus, between one of the sultan's palaces and the valide's house<sup>6</sup>. In the meanwhile she was looking for a better solution. Her idea was to create a "colony" for Italian refugees. Cristina had begun to think to gather together her fellow countrymen when she was in Athens but the Greeks who had promised money and help for this enterprise had disappeared at a certain moment leaving her alone with her hopes and desires. In Constantinople the American ambassador and the Savoy diplomat, Baron Romualdo Tecco, encouraged her in this enterprise. First of all she decided to find a place in the capital itself but an important Ottoman person suggested her to buy a "little kingdom" in Anatolia. In July she went there to see the place and then came back to the capital to buy it<sup>7</sup>. This estate was a Turkish *çiftlik*, that is to say a kind of fief which belonged to the Ottoman state but could be sold and bought. It was near the towns of Cesarea, in the *kaza* of Kızılbel in the *sancak* of Bolu-Viranşehir. Princess Cristina called it "the valley of Çakmaközü". It was at six hours from

<sup>5</sup> Belgiojoso, *Ricordi*, 160-172, 180.

<sup>6</sup> Belgiojoso, *Ricordi*, p. 173: a letter from "Orta Kur" is edited, it may be a misspelling for Ortaköy.

<sup>7</sup> July 1850, Constantinople, Cristina's letter to Thierry. For the letters written by Thierry to Cristina cfr. *La princess Belgiojoso et Augustin Thierry*, ed. by Augustin Augustin-Thierry, "Revue des deux Mondes", 1925, t. 29, pp. 70-111, 338-379, 661-685, 846-877.

Safranbolu, 16 hours from Balca on the Black Sea and about 20 hours from Constantinople<sup>8</sup>.

Cristina tells us a sad story about the owners of this estate and the way they were obliged to sell it. According to her it had belonged to a *derebey*, Osman, whose son, Musa bey, rebelled against sultan Mahmud (1808-1839), was defeated, put in prison in Istanbul and, lastly, beheaded<sup>9</sup>. Some Ottoman documents, recently discovered by Mehmet Yavuz Erler, tell us another story<sup>10</sup>. About 1832 Musa ağa Karamehmetoğlu and his father, Hüseyin ağa, then governor of Viranşehir-Kızılbel, fought against the Tahmiscioğulları family. The inhabitants of the place were pushed to complaint against Hüseyin's and Musa's cruelty and they were convicted and imprisoned in 1834-35. They were set free the following year and, then, Musa sold his estate a certain Hasan Çavuşoğlu in exchange of his debts. Lastly Hasan's sons, İsmail, Hasan, Halil and Musa ağa, inherited the estate. Cristina bought it from Hasan, Halil, Musa and a woman, Besime Hatun, who, she asserted, was the widow of the late Musa bey, while documents reveal she was the divorced wife of İsmail Çavuşoğlu.

In 1850 Cristina hired the *çiftlik* for ten years, in order to buy it and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs gave her the permission to live there. She registered the estate under the name of her daughter Maria and an Ottoman *zimmiye* named Ocean and resident in Yenişehir, village of Karabük. In 1851 the Ottoman cadastral law was changed and, according to the new rules, the *çiftlik* could become real properties if one was Ottoman citizen. For this reason Cristina asked that her daughter Maria, the official owner of the estate, become Ottoman subject.

In Autumn 1850 Cristina settled in her valley. Çakmakoglu was a small estate, which comprehended a farm, some fields, and animals. Some Italians accompanied the princess. One of them was a carpenter and he began immediately to put in order the house. At a certain moment Giuseppe Pastori, the lawyer who administrated the princess's estates in Italy, arrived with Italian objects for the house: chairs, tables, beds, curtains, doors. In this way the princess's room was completely furnished according to the Italian style, and this fact caused rumours in the village. For about a fortnight the inhabitants of the place went there to see that incredible room. Chickens, turkeys, one cow, four buffalos and four horses were also bought.

<sup>8</sup> Without date (about June-September 1851), Çakmakoglu, Cristina's letter to Torre. Many thanks to Sandro Fortunati who collected the princess's letters and gave me the trascriptions of some of her letters.

<sup>9</sup> Cristina di Belgiojoso, *Vita intima e vita nomade in Oriente*, Como-Pavia, Ibis, 1993, pp. 23-29.

<sup>10</sup> Mehmet Yavuz Erler, *An Italian Princess in the Ottoman Empire 1850-1855*, in Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso, pp. 29-42.

The princess spent her time reading and writing. She intended to live with the income of the farm. Çakmakoglu meant "the son of the flintstone" and she asked her friends in Constantinople to send her a book of mineralogy to study if it was possible to begin some enterprise also in this field. The valley was a place full of the silence of nature, where the external world did not exist. Only her friends' letters and the journals brought news from Europe. Italian refugees in Athens began to complain her behaviour in Rome. The famous Italian patriot Giuseppe Mazzini too was not fair with her and, writing to his mother, expressed his harsh opinion about her. Vincenzo Gioberti behaved in the same way but he expressed his ideas in public, in his book *Rinnovamento morale e civile degli italiani* (1851). Gioberti had paid frequent visits to the princess's house in Paris and had travelled with her in Italy in 1848, but then he began to consider her words against his political ideas as personal attacks and he got even more angry when he knew that she had described, in a comic way, an episode of his life, when he could not speak because he had a nasty cold. Other articles and letters, published in journals, caused Cristina more pain than Mazzini's secret judgements. The Italians who wrote them had been helped by the princess while she was in Athens, but now she was far away. In autumn 1850 Cristina had send some of her letters to *Le National*, a journal where they had been published under the title *Souvenirs dans l'exile*. These papers were full of lively humour about Greeks and their police but the inhabitants of Athens did not like them and the refugees who lived there thought better to disown her and her writings. Moreover, some passages of her private letters to her friend Mme Jaubert were published without her permission and misinterpreted. In Europe the whole world of Italian patriots seemed to be against the princess<sup>11</sup>.

On the contrary, the inhabitants of the valley were good and kind with Cristina di Belgiojoso. Everybody liked her. In Rome she had learned a little of medicine and now she became the physician of the country. She succeeded in restoring to health a woman who had been paralysed for six months and, from this moment on, people arrived to her house to be cured. Ali *paşa*, her patron in Constantinople, wrote to the governor of the province to avoid asking her taxes for three years and the governor answered that it was not possible to ask her to pay because the inhabitants of the place would have set themselves against it. They called her *bey-zade* and when she had no money she lived on credit and nobody asked the money back<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> 22 January 1851, Paris, Thierry's letter to Cristina; 27 March 1851, Paris, Thierry's letter to Cristina; *La princess Belgiojoso et Augustin Thierry, ad annum*; Aldobrandino Malvezzi, *Cristina di Belgiojoso*, 3 voll. Milano, Trevis 1937, vol. 3 *Pensiero ed azione*, pp. 304-311, 316-317.

<sup>12</sup> 1 January 1851, Çakmakoglu, Cristina's letter to Thierry; *La princess Belgiojoso et Augustin Thierry, ad annum*.

In this period she began to write a novel and some plays. Since *Le National* did not want to publish her papers any longer, the works written in Çakmaköğlü were published in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, just when Cristina came back to Europe, between 1856 and 1858. They were *Emina*, *Un prince kurde*, *Les deux femmes d'Ismail bey*, *Les pachas de l'ancien régime*, *Un paysan turc* and *Zobeideh*<sup>13</sup>. In one of her letters the princess complained only that certain journals, such as *La Démocratie pacifique*, did not use to pay their writers while she needed money and wrote to gain it. Her literary works, as well as most of her letters, were written in French, the language of Italian high class in that period. They were not masterpieces, but they gave a deep insight into the Ottoman society, without any prejudice. If there was something to despise, it was said and, if there was something to praise, all the same, it was commended. They all were stories of women. The focus was on Ottoman society. Cristina had the possibility of knowing much more than other European writers in this field, just because she was a woman and she could manage a little with Turkish. She also began to repeat often *inşallah* as the inhabitants of her valley did. The Ottoman Empire she described was the real one, not the fantastic world of most 19<sup>th</sup> century orientalist<sup>14</sup>.

In April 1851 Cristina went to Safranbolu to spend there the Easter, together with the Christian community. She had become a renown physician in the country and, as soon as the news of her arrival spread, hundreds of persons arrived to see her and to ask to be cured. All the inhabitants of the town, both Christian and Muslim, vied in giving her hospitality, and paying her every attention.

In the same period, in her valley, she bought other fields to produce also rice, rented a mill, a sawmill, bought buffalos, cows, asses, horses, two hundred Angora sheep and built a new part of the house and a stables. Most of the craftsmen were hired on the place but two masons were European and they had come from Constantinople. In her letters Cristina compares how much money she spent for all this, and how more she would have spent if she had been in France or Italy. She was very attentive about mon-

<sup>13</sup> Princesse de Belgiojoso, *Emina*, "Revue des deux mondes", t. 1 (1856/1), pp. 465-504, 726-767; Princesse de Belgiojoso, *Un prince kurde*, "Revue des deux mondes", t. 2 (1856/2), pp. 241-268, 508-543; Princesse de Belgiojoso, *Les deux femmes d'Ismail bey*, "Revue des deux mondes", t. 4 (1856/4), pp. 150-180, 284-312; Princesse de Belgiojoso, *Les pachas de l'ancien régime*, "Revue des deux mondes", t. 5 (1856/5), pp. 401-431; Princesse de Belgiojoso, *Un paysan turc*, "Revue des deux mondes", t. 12 (1857/2), pp. 68-93, 241-272, 506-531; Princesse de Belgiojoso, *Zobeideh*, "Revue des deux mondes", t. 14 (1858/3), pp. 559-594, 878-925.

<sup>14</sup> 18 February 1852, Kırşehir, Cristina to Thierry; *La princess Belgiojoso et Augustin Thierry*, ad annum.

ey and the estate was a kind of commercial enterprise for her. In Italy her estates had been blocked by the Austrian government and, in this way, she tried to improve her economic situation and, above all, to prepare a future for her daughter Maria<sup>15</sup>.

Quietness, silence and a sweet and easy life improved Princess Cristina's health. She began to feel better. Every disease disappeared and she also put on weight. She imagined a previous life where she was a gypsy and knew the open air, the silence of deserts, the difficulties of travels and the rest under a tent. She thought to have known that country in a very far off time. In the meanwhile, a friend who lived in Constantinople, Jacques Alleon, sent her letters and books, among which the treaty of mineralogy she desired so much. She was happy of her enterprise. The *çiftlik* began to be self-sufficient and she compared it with the estates chosen by other Europeans in Turkey. Most of them, as the famous philosopher Lamartine, had settled near İzmir and the sea, but there the climate was dangerous. On the contrary her valley was in the mountains and the climate was far better. Moreover they could only rent those estates while she had succeeded in buying the land<sup>16</sup>. As Cristina herself explained in one of her letters to Mme Jaubert, who invited her to come back to France, many were the reasons why she could not leave Turkey: the Austrian government was still her enemy; moreover, if she had even succeeded in reaching Paris, the best thing to do for her would have been to lead a secluded life without seeing the friend of her past. This behaviour was impossible for her. Moreover, the Italian patriots too, who did not share all her political ideas, certainly preferred blame her and her words and, at the same time, since they probably believed her still very rich, they would have asked her money again and again. For all these reasons it was better for her to remain in the Ottoman Empire<sup>17</sup>.

However, the calm of so a sweet valley was not enough for the Italian princess and she decided to leave it for a while to go to Jerusalem. It was a long voyage which she described in a kind of diary, published under the title *La vie intime et la vie nomade en Orient* in 1855 and then, in 1858 as *Asie Mineure et Syrie. Souvenirs d'un voyage*<sup>18</sup>. She left Çakmaköğlü in

<sup>15</sup> 24 April 1851, Çakmaköğlü, Cristina to Thierry; *La princess Belgiojoso et Augustin Thierry*, ad annum.

<sup>16</sup> 24 April 1851, Çakmaköğlü, Cristina to Thierry; *La princess Belgiojoso et Augustin Thierry*, ad annum.

<sup>17</sup> 3 December 1851, Cristina to Mme Jaubert, quoted in Malvezzi, *Cristina*, pp. 312-316.

<sup>18</sup> Princesse de Belgiojoso, *Asie Mineure et Syrie. Souvenirs d'un voyage*, Paris, Michel Lévy Frères, 1858; Reiner Speelman, Cristina Belgiojoso's Jerusalem Travel Book, in Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso, pp. 53-62.

spring 1851 and came back more than one year later, in December 1852. The estate was entrusted to a man from Alsace, who lived there with his wife. He was not a very good administrator and made some debts. The last part of the travel was troubled by her daughter Maria's illness. When she came back the previous life began again. Letters were written in order to publish the diary as well as some novels which were later accepted by the *Revue des deux mondes* and also by the *New York Daily Tribune*<sup>19</sup>.

At a certain point, on the first of July 1853 everything changed. An Italian, Bernardo Lorenzoni from Bergamo, tried to kill the princess. He had been admitted in her household two years before. At that time he was ill, he was cured and employed as a warehouse-keeper. Then he had fallen in love with Maria's nurse, Mrs Parker. He was a kind of madman. One day he even gave the nurse a good thrashing and broke her nose. For this reason the nurse left him and he began to consider the princess responsible for her refusal and his failure. He decided to leave the place but also to murder somebody. First of all he obliged a young Armenian, a faithful servant of the princess, to drink a cup of poison, threatening to stab him. In this way he thought to have deprived the princess of her body-guard. However, the boy survived even if he was very ill for some hours. That evening the Italian was at dinner with the princess who did not know what had happened. Then he accompanied her to the upper floor with a lamp, but when they arrived in her room he began to accuse her. The Armenian, who had recover a little, arrived immediately but, all of a sudden, Lorenzoni took a dagger and stabbed the princess. In the confusion of the moment a glass was broken and the noise advised people below that something was happening. The servants came and stopped the killer but, in the meanwhile, the princess had received seven stabs<sup>20</sup>.

Cristina succeeded in curing herself but the stroke was very hard. However, even if she lost a lot of blood, the wounds were not dangerous. The next day the killer was arrested by Ottoman authorities in the market of a near town. When he realised that he had failed he began to curse. In the meanwhile a Polish servant of the princess went to Safranbolu to advise the governor of what had happened. He immediately asked if the killer was a Turk and when they said him that he was an Italian he was very happy because, he said, if it had been a Turk he would have lost his office. He immediately sent his guards to take him and put him in jail in Safranbolu. A Greek servant of the princess accompanied them. During the journey the women and the children of Cristina's *çiflik* shouted: "Here is his mistress's

<sup>19</sup> 7 June 1853, Paris, Thierry to Cristina; *La princess Belgiojoso et Augustin Thierry*, ad annum.

<sup>20</sup> 5 July 1853, Çakmaköğlü, Cristina to Mme Jaubert, quoted in Malvezzi, *Cristina*, pp. 322-333.

murderer. She gave him bread and he killed her. Damned soul. Cursed be the murderer of our mother" and they threw him stones and the men said: "Dodgy infidel. You had enough to be treated well. Your bed was too sweet, your bread too white, your coffee had too much sugar and your mistress was too indulgent. You will change all this with the stones of our dungeons. Damned soul" Bernardo Lorenzoni, called "Balkimor Bernardo" in Ottoman documents was judged by an Ottoman court of justice on 25 October 1853 and convicted. In prison he got sick, was sent to Italy to recover and then brought back to spend in prison the rest of his penalty<sup>21</sup>.

At the end of July 1853 important news came from Italy. Pastori informed her that the Austrian government was ready to give back to the patriots involved in 1848 riots all the money and the estates which had been seized but they had to come back to Milan. It was the only condition, otherwise the estates would have been seized for ever by the government. Cristina did not want to leave Turkey and, moreover, she was still too feeble to make so long a journey. She wrote to the Austrian ambassador saying that she had been stabbed and was ill<sup>22</sup>.

She succeeded in remaining in Çakmaköğlü for another year. In February 1854 she had already accepted the idea of leaving but she wanted to remain in order to reap the crop of wheat and opium, to be present to the birth of horses, lambs and chickens. In July, Pastori went to Paris to sell some properties in order to find the money for the princess to come back. The months passed. Her last letter from Çakmaköğlü was written on 9 October 1854. She was happy to come back home. The idea to go to Milan gave her "le vertige de plaisir". She was not afraid of the Austrian government but only of what Italian radicals would have said and written about her. Many of them lived in the Ottoman Empire and were well organised. She feared some public protest against her in the capital. At last she left her valley and went to Constantinople and entrusted it to her administrator, Boulanger.<sup>23</sup> In July 1855 she was in Pera. Luckily nothing happened and she could come back quietly. Another part of her life was beginning<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Erler, *An Italian Princess*, p. 39.

<sup>22</sup> 2 August 1853, Çakmaköğlü, Cristina to Thierry; *La princess Belgiojoso et Augustin Thierry*, ad annum.

<sup>23</sup> About the story of Belgiojoso's estate in the following years cfr. Erler, *An Italian Princess*, pp. 40-41. Some other Ottoman documents of the period have been recently discovered by Tayfun Eyyapan who is preparing his theses in the University of Ankara and kindly showed them to me.

<sup>24</sup> February 1854, Çakmaköğlü, Cristina to Thierry; 22 July 1854, Paris, Thierry to Cristina; 9 October 1854, Çakmaköğlü, Cristina to Thierry (letter given to me by Sandro Fortunati); 2 July 1855, Pera, Cristina to Thierry; *La princess Belgiojoso et Augustin Thierry*, ad annum.

She reached Italy again. Her daughter married and she became grand mother of two girls. The English nurse Mrs. Parker and the faithful Turkish servant "Bodoz" lived with her in the villa she bought on the Como Lake, at Blevio. She died on 5 July 1871. She was 63 year old.