

elective' system of succession to the throne, which prevailed also in most of the neighbouring countries. All members of the princely family were eligible for the succession; but the right of selecting among them lay with an assembly composed of the higher nobility and clergy. All was well if a prince left only one successor. But if there were several, even if natural children, claiming the right to rule, then each endeavoured to gain over the nobility with promises, and often even sought the support of neighbouring countries. This system rendered easier and hastened the establishment of Turkish domination; and corruption and intrigues, in which even the Sultan's harem had a share, became capital factors in the choice and election of the ruler.

Economically and intellectually all this was disastrous. The Rumanians were an agricultural people. The numerous class of small freeholders (*moshneni* and *razeshi*), not being able to pay the exorbitant taxes, often had their lands confiscated by the princes. Often, too, not being able to support themselves, they sold their property and their very selves to the big landowners. Nor did the nobles (*boyards*) fare better. Formerly free, quasi-fendal warriors, seeking fortune in reward for services rendered to their prince, they were often subjected to coercive treatment on his part now that the throne depended upon the goodwill of influential personages at Constantinople. Various civil offices were created at Court, either necessitated by the extension of the relations of the country or intended to satisfy some favourite of the prince. Sources of social position and great material benefit, these offices were coveted greedily by the boyards, and those who obtained none could only hope to cheat fortune by doing their best to undermine the position of the prince.