

BYZANTINE LEGACY AND MODERN GREEK INFLUENCES IN THE WALLACHIAN CULTURE OF THE 17TH-18TH CENTURIES

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The history of the Romanian medieval culture includes the chapters of post-Byzantine history which, at least up to the middle of the 16th century, are forms of survival of the Byzantine culture and civilization. However, the Byzantine paradigm persists, in fact, as a referential system up to the end of the 18th century. An excursion into the history of the relations kept by the Romanians with post-Byzantine Constantinople is necessary in order to bring forward the official sumptuousness of the medieval culture and its determinant role as a model and direction for the popular culture. The study reveals the post-Byzantine Greek influences in Wallachia, discerning contemporary Greek elements, forms of the Byzantine ideal preserved in Romanian culture, theological discourses and national reactions.

Key-words: cultural patronage, cultural recession, national conscience, official sumptuousness, political ideology, post-Byzantine culture.

An incursion in the Brancovan and post-Brancovan culture, the one of 17th-18th centuries, implies preliminary observations on the relations between Walachia and Constantinople and also the recurrence of the Byzantine influence in the Romanian culture. The history of the medieval Romanian culture comprises chapters of post-Byzantine history, which, at least until the mid 16th century, are, in their cultural, political, juridical forms, survivals of the Byzantine culture and civilization¹, and the Romanian culture showed its Byzantine character until the end of the 18th century. The determinant role of the Byzantine tradition as a retarding force in the growth of national consciences and in the relations with the

¹ Andrei Pippidi: *Tradiția politică bizantină în țările române în secolele XVI-XVIII*. Bucharest, 1983, p. 5-14. Surpassing the formula inherited from Nicolae Iorga. of "Byzantium after Byzantium", perpetuated, although, on the background of an initial incongruence between the "Byzantine forms and the Balkan realities" (N. Iorga: „Formes byzantines et réalités balcaniques” in *Études byzantines*, vol. I. Bucharest, 1939, pp. 49-157), the author points out the existence of two different kinds of exaggerations that are adopted by most historians when they estimate the role of the Byzantine influence in medieval Romanian culture and civilization: an overrating of the tension between the Byzantine universal imperialism and the local aspiration to national sovereignty, that in post-Byzantine times evolved in the Greek influences giving full scope to discontent, and the opposite error which consists in attributing to Byzantium most of the cultural and political elements in the medieval Romanian principalities.

European world may be followed up to the dawn of the modern era². The Romanian principalities preserved, followed up at least in their historiography, the conscience of their Roman origins against Byzantium³, that was perceived from the beginning as an ethnic alien, because it manifested a political tendency towards dissolving any attempt to national emancipation of the submitted populations in a homogeneity of language and culture⁴.

The history of the Romanian culture reveals frequent contacts with the Western culture⁵, but also, the fact that the Romanian culture had been permanently circumscribed to the horizon of post-Byzantine humanism, a centralized spiritual milieu, in which any approach to the European culture was coming up under the authority and censure of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

From Orthodox neighbours sprang dreams of political power received by the Romanians. The imperial Byzantine model could not be entirely adopted because the Romanians were not in the situation to submit other political formations; therefore the Romanian political line generally was more moderate⁶. Politics were

² One of the most comprehensive analyses of the effects of the Byzantine idea as an inspiring myth for the Romanian culture and civilization belongs to Andrei Pippidi: *Tradiția politică bizantină în țările române în secolele XVI–XVIII*, 1983, *passim*; on Constantinople as the political lighthouse for the Principalities in post-Byzantine times, see N. Iorga, *Bizanț după Bizanț*, 2nd ed., Bucharest, 1972, p. 11.

³ Constantin Cantacuzino, having himself Greek origins, noted in *The Chronicle of Wallachia*, at the end of the 17th century: „We see and hear the Greek, nowadays, answering this way when you ask him: What are you? And he says: *Romaïos*, meaning Roman; but there is a great difference between the Greeks and the Romans. Only after they had been conquered by the Romans, they started to call themselves “Romans”, especially after the Empire moved from Rome to Byzantium; *although they are not Romans, but Hellenic Greeks, especially the ones in Greece.*” (Stolnicul Constantin Cantacuzino: „Istoria Țării Românești” in *Cronicari munteni*, M. Gregorian ed., Bucharest, 1961, p. 39). As A. Pippidi remarks, since the 17th century the Romanian intellectuals started to make the difference between the myth of the Roman empire as an ancestor of the Romanians, supporting their aspiration on the national independence, and, on the other hand, the myth of the Greek Christian empire, that the Greeks wished to restore at its former height, as an empire for all the Christians living under the sultan’s domination (*op. cit.*, p. 123). For the Romanian vocation of independency towards any tendency of supernational unification, see Al. Valentin Georgescu: „L’idée impériale byzantine et les réactions des réalités roumaines (XIV^e–XVIII^e siècles). Idéologie politique, structuration de l’État et du droit”, in *Byzantina*, II, 1971, p. 311–339.

⁴ Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca: „Bizanțul și românii”, in *Bizanțul și românii*, (reprinted articles), Bucharest 2003, pp. 9–54.

⁵ The Western influence on the Romanian culture, having an early medieval history, will grow progressively, despite the Oriental and Neo-Greek influences, which had, on the contrary, an external and temporary character and therefore, will be easily cleared off during the 19th century (see A. Pippidi, *Tradiția politică bizantină*, p. 235, for Constantinople’s more or less conscient role of Western culture agent for the Balkan provinces in the 17th–18th centuries).

⁶ A. Pippidi, *Tradiția politică bizantină*, p. 9; 19. Val. Al. Georgescu also points at the character of creative adaptation and not simple imitation of Byzantine forms by the Romanians (Val. Al. Georgescu, *Bizanțul și instituțiile românești până la mijlocul secolului XVIII*, Bucharest, 1980, p. 17). See, also, Nicolae Iorga: *Istoria românilor*, vol. I–VII, Bucharest, 1936–1938; Gheorghe I. Brătianu: *Sfatul domnesc și adunarea Stărilor în Principatele române*, 2nd ed., Bucharest, 1995.

put in the service of the national idea⁷, presenting the Romanian leaders as legitimate and autarchic, but the forms taken by these ideas were borrowing the Byzantine iconographic schemes. These were fitted to legitimize Christian rule (the providential choice of the leader and his coronation by God) and the symbolic elements of Byzantine ideology, anachronistic by now, but recurrent until the mid of the 16th century, as the basileus' mantle (*granatsa*), the symbolic association with the canonized figure of emperor Constantine, about whom many legends existed that were inspired by hope of liberation from Ottoman domination⁸, the genealogies and the heraldry of the Cantacuzino family, proved of its imperial origin, or an ornate rhetorical discourse. Nevertheless, besides the legitimizing Byzantine tradition, new formulas of Serbian import came from the Balkans, as the genealogic votive representations, which emphasized hereditary rights to power in a period of continuous menace from the Ottoman side. From the second half of the 17th century, these formulas in the churches' mural painting are synthesized into an original Wallachian expression, of large galleries of votive portraits. The church founding movement, a Byzantine element of law and culture, persuades the Romanian society, from the top and down to the peasantry.

The forms of Byzantine culture and civilization have been cultivated in historical periods of political or confessional threat, for purposes of strategy, thus invoking a venerable authority. But, actually, the originality of the Romanian resources survived in a defensive state in various forms, but mostly in an authoritarian formula⁹, which was supported by the church. The periods when the Romanian medieval culture had the respite to find its own forms of expression were very rare and, from the beginning, the force of the neighboring cultures, the Greek and the Slavic ones was much stronger. We have to deal with a cultural dualism in the Romanian Middle Age: the official side, which, being a double-faced one, internal and external, borrowed internationalized forms of expression: Slavic language, Byzantine symbolic formulas, later the Greek language; the other side is the popular, which leads eventually to the conscience of Roman background. This last tendency constitutes, until to the mid of the 18th century, only a preoccupation of learned boyars. But, from then, with the initiative of a new generation of literati who were feeling acutely the problem of the confessional propaganda exercised on

⁷ The beginnings of the Romanian political thought have been deeply affected by the Ottoman aggression against Byzantium. As an effect, two fundamental political themes embodied the national energy: the idea of centralization and the problem of independence. Inspiring itself from Byzantine forms, the Romanian leadership developed an autocratic character. (A. Pippidi, *Tradiția politică bizantină*, p. 17).

⁸ See Iulian M. Ștefănescu: „Legendele Sf. Constantin în literatura română”, in *Revista Istorică Română*, I, 1931, p. 251–297

⁹ It is still problematic if the political structure of a state may express the originality of its national typology, or, as it is the case with elements of law, or culture, it is influenced by neighbouring areas of elder civilization (cf. A. Pippidi, *Tradiția politică bizantină*, p. 6).

the Romanians from Transylvania, it becomes object of a systematic research, aiming at the identification of Romanian specific, the main argument being the mother tongue and not the confessional affiliation, which had for centuries associated the Romanians to the Slavic and the Greek cultures. The Brancovan artistic synthesis was shaped by these features of the late 17th century, an epoch of pan-Orthodox relations, of political and national expectations, of intellectual interests comparable with those of the West and of effort to consecrate an original cultural style¹⁰.

Only from the second half of the 18th century and as a consequence of the cohabitation with Greek rulers, the contradictions between the Romanian conscience and the Greek or Balkan aliens become manifest. This historical age is equally felt by the Greeks and other Balkan nations, that break off the old Byzantine homogeneity and proceed the way of national affirmation¹¹.

From the 17th century on, the military and political force of the Romanian principalities was limited by the Ottoman domination; after the failure of the union project of the Principalities under Michael the Brave, the political authority of the Empire became a reality widely accepted¹². The consolidation of the boyars' parti at the end of the 17th century¹³ weakened the prince's power that usually acted in favour of the Greeks. By the first half of the 17th century, the opposition of the small boyars to the Greek newcomers increases and claims control of the foreign administration of Romanian monasteries and dioceses, which was a source of riches¹⁴. But, with the Phanariot régime and the establishment of an oligarchy, the

¹⁰ cf. George Popescu-Vâlcea: „Constantin Brâncoveanu – inițiator al unui nou stil în arta românească: stilul brâncovenesc”, in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, 9–10/1964, p. 900–915.

¹¹ The Greeks have also a fundamental role in subverting the Byzantine spiritual continuity, the intellectuals paying homage to the liberal and rationalist spirit, and standing in protest against the Ecumenical Patriarchate that rejected the Enlightenment and the revolutionary ideas (Constantine Theodore Dimaras. *La Grèce au temps des Lumières*, reviewed by Cornelia Papacostea-Danielopolu in *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes*, 1/1978, p. 172–174).

¹² Princes like Radu Mihnea, Gavriil Movilă or Leon Tomșa acknowledge the sultan's authority: „The Lord vouchsafed me the rule and the venerable emperor granted me the scepter of Wallachia” (*DIR*, XVII, B, II, p. 151, 364; A. Pippidi: *Tradiția politică bizantină*, p. 27)

¹³ The increasingly free access of the Greek and Levantine creditors of the princes to various democratic jobs produced xenophobic reactions and excited the detestation between natives and foreigners. Thus, the solidarity of interests between the boyars of both principalities increased from the end of the 16th century, fact which will contribute significantly to the consolidation of a unity feeling between the two countries. (Ghe. I. Brătianu; *Sfatul domnesc și adunarea Stărilor în Principatele române*, p. 33).

¹⁴ For instance, the *Establishment* of Leon Tomșa in 1631 in Wallachia canceled the prerogative of the Greek prelates to appoint abbots in Romanian monasteries and reinstalled the elective right of the monastic communities „as it was from the old times” (Al. Elian, „Legăturile...”, p. 163). Other measures were taken by Matthew Basarab in order to get back some Romanian monasteries from their Greek owners (Cesar Bolliac, *Mănăstirile din România*, Bucharest, 1862, p. 465–490, with the documents between 1639–1641).

former councils of boyars are suppressed. The concentration of forces in order to protect the Orthodoxy and the Great Church¹⁵, favouring the Greek hierarchy, is now the main task of cultural politics.

In the 17th century, the Jesuit, Calvinist and Lutheran missionaries are numerous in the Eastern Europe, a fact that alarms the Ecumenical Patriarchate, especially when its intellectuals, having studied in Venice or Padua, like Teophil Corydaleos and John Caryophilos, come with proposals to reform the academic education and with rationalist interpretations of the canonical texts. These initiatives are blamed by the Oriental hierarchs, the most offensive in this matter being the Patriarchs of Jerusalem, Alexandria or Antioch. They came to Bucharest and stimulated here to the accomplishment of an Orthodox combat program in the disputes with the Catholics and the Uniates. As it was told by Alexandru Elian, this century is the most important in Romanian history in ecclesiastical matters¹⁶. The presence of Patriarchs in Wallachia at ceremonies, consecrations of churches, princes' weddings, coronations, increased the importance and the prestige of the Romanian church, but also determined the introduction of the Greek language in the liturgical office¹⁷.

The Wallachian prince Constantine Brancovan and the Metropolitan Anthim realized the urgent necessity of increasing the education level of the population through founding schools and promoting written culture in the vernacular language, as well as through patronage of the monastic communities, where printing had a part. This last activity could not develop in need of experienced workers (the Metropolitan Anthim often complained of the difficulty to print without specialized printers, type-setters and translators). Therefore they will resort to the experience of Greek clergy¹⁸. Especially as educational reformers, the Patriarchs of Jerusalem Dositheos Nottaras and Chrysanth Nottaras will help the Romanian church, both of them being involved in the foundation of the Bucharest and Iassy Academies. The long-term effect was the steady extension of Greek influence on the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the academic elite¹⁹. However, Constantin Erbiceanu throws light on the Western content of the education in these Academies during the 18th century, where modern scientific textbooks were used²⁰. The teaching was in the Greek

¹⁵ A. Pippidi: *Tradiția politică bizantină*. p. 106–107.

¹⁶ Alexandru Elian: „Legăturile Mitropoliei Ungrovlahiei cu Patriarhia de Constantinopol și cu celelalte biserici ortodoxe (de la întemeiere până la 1800)”, in *Bizanțul, Biserica și cultura românească*, p. 159.

¹⁷ N. Iorga: *Istoria Bisericii românești*, Bucharest 1931, reprint, Bucharest, 1995, vol. II, p. 16–17.

¹⁸ N. Iorga appreciated Anthim for carrying at an intellectual revival, but he also judged him as an agent of Greek influence in the Romanian church. However, Anthim strove against the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Jerusalem. (N. Iorga: *Istoria Bisericii românești*, vol. II, Bucharest, 1931, p. 54; cf. Al. Elian, „Legăturile...”, p. 175, note 136).

¹⁹ Constantin Erbiceanu: *Cronicari greci care au scris despre români în epoca fanarioită*. Bucharest, 1888, reprint, Bucharest, 2003, cap. I., „Câteva cuvinte asupra scolelor grecești. Raportul și influința grecilor asupra românilor”, p. IX–XLI.

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. XXXVI–XXXVII.

language, but Latin, Italian and French languages were also taught, and for the sciences the appropriate Western authors were consulted²¹.

There was, in the 17th–18th centuries, a Greek cultural unity felt in Christian Orthodox communities covering the entire Ottoman Empire²², and its conscience kept constantly the idea of cultural superiority over other national cultures. This idea formed itself an ally in the Byzantine centralizing tradition that tried to stifle any national emancipation²³. The Patriarchate of Constantinople strove consequently to impose its supremacy to the other Patriarchates, and then, to attract under its influence the Romanian church too, imposing the Greek language and the Hellenic classicism. There is a conservative inertia in culture, conscientiously entertained²⁴, justified by the prestige of the great Greek and Byzantine classical culture. Some Phanariot princes, who were themselves admirers of the Western educational methods, had also a solid classical culture²⁵. This Greek academism put its fingerprint on churches' architecture of that time, like the Văcărești monastery²⁶ in Bucharest or Frumoasa monastery in Iassy.

If the Romanian attitude had been, until now, relatively open to the Western civilization, tolerant, interested in cultural exchanges, in the tradition of the old times, the increasing incoming of Oriental hierarchs and abbots into the Wallachian clergy brings forth a Hellenizing influence in culture, of which the Wallachian society becomes aware, and which it starts to fight by stimulating a Romanian culture. Is not hard to understand, thus, why Greek intellectuals opened to the Occidental culture, like John Caryophilos – with who Dositheos was in a fierce quarrel –, moved in Wallachia, being welcomed by the Cantacuzino family and at Brancovan's court, where the interest in Western sciences coexisted with the patronage of the Orthodox culture all over Orient. The sympathy shown by the Cantacuzins, Brancovan and Cantemir for Peter the Great's Westernization policy, is highly significant. The relations with Italy, a land with which, in spite of the theological disputes of the time, the Romanians respected their affiliation, were

²¹ *loc. cit.*, p. XXXVI; *ibid.*, p. XXVII: Prince Alexandru Ipsilanti, one of the reformers of the Bucharest Academy, sends one of the professors, Manases Iliade, in Italy and Germany to update his knowledge in Physics and Mathematics and to get instruments for the scientific experiments. See, also, Ariadna Camariano-Cioran, *Academile domnești din București și Iași*, Bucharest, 1971.

²² Al. Elian: „Legăturile...”, p. 176.

²³ See N.-Ș. Tanașoca, „Bizațul și românii”, p. 15.

²⁴ See R. Theodorescu: *Civilizația românească între medieval și modern*, vol. II, Bucharest, 1987, p. 152.

²⁵ The most admirable are the Mavrocordatos, whose chrysobulls and personal exercises of literature, poetry and epigraphy are full of classical reminiscences and constructions close to the Attic forms in Ancient Greek (see Demostene Russo, *Studii istorice greco-române*, Bucharest 1939, vol. II: „Elenismul în România”, p. 493–494).

²⁶ Mihai Ispir: „Academism și industrie artistică în arhitectura de tradiție brâncovenească”, in *Studii și Cercetări de Istoria Artei, seria Artă Plastică*, 1996, p. 37–46.

also strengthened during the same period. What distinguishes the Byzantinism of the Romanian principalities from the Greek one is the climate of wider tolerance and more openness to Western scholarship, unlike the rigorous Orthodoxy promoted by the Greek Orient²⁷.

The position of the Church in both Romanian principalities was, according to the Byzantine tradition, controlled by the secular power. Metropolitans like Anthim in Wallachia or Dositheos in Moldavia enhanced the distinction between *sacerdotium* and the scepter²⁸ and, in the name of this distinction, undertook an anti-Ottoman policy, which led the first of them to deposition and death, and the second to exile²⁹.

The Patriarchs of Jerusalem, Dositheos and Chrysanth, may be described as opening a new period in the culture of the Orthodox Church. This period is characterized by a strong Greek intellectual offensive under the guidance of Patriarchates and by an augmented centralization of the Metropolitan seats, bishoprics and monasteries towards Constantinople³⁰. This last era of ecumenism under the shield of the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate is sought its main principle in anti-Catholic fervor, which caused an attempt to resuscitate the headsprings of Orthodoxy³¹ by reediting texts of the Holy Fathers or various Byzantine historiographers, polemicists, canonists. A new and last wave of Byzantinism is revived by bringing to print old parenetical texts, Byzantine manuals of ceremonial, speeches and eulogies of emperors³². The movement, sprung from the initiative of the Great Church through the Phanar School, is rapidly diffused in the Greek and Romanian elites and relights the flame of the Byzantine political ideal, which had been surrounded with reverence by the Romanian princes. After the political failure from the beginning of the 18th century, the hope of a restoration of the Empire enters an eclipse. On this blurring background, different surrogates of the imperial idea

²⁷ N.-Ș. Tanașoca: „Bizațul și românii”, p. 21.

²⁸ In a sermon pronounced on the day of Saints Emperors Constantine and Helen, in front of Prince Constantine Brancovan, the Metropolitan Anthim worked the cleavage by saying: „the emperors' crown is separated from the mitre...” and by quoting Constantine's words at Nicaea: “*you in the Church, and I outside the Church am put bishop by God...*” (*apud* A. Pippidi: *Tradiția politică bizantină*, p. 108).

²⁹ Brancovan's chronicler, Radu Greceanu exclaims this sharp criticism being aimed at Anthim: „Oh, how ungodly is for the churchmen to interfere in the political affairs” (*apud* A. Pippidi, *Tradiția politică bizantină*, p. 108).

³⁰ This tendency is more evident in Serbian and Bulgarian provinces where the Ecumenical Patriarchate shoke severe blows to the Patriarchate of Peć (1766) and the Archbishopric of Ohrid (1767) passing the under its direct administration, by delegating patriarchal exarches. The result was the Graecization of the Church's culture in zones of Slavic language and tradition, but it also provoked opposition reactions from the local population and clergy. (Barbara Jelavić: *History of the Balkans*, vol. I, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 56).

³¹ Ana Dobjanschi, Ioana Iancovescu: *De la Matei Basarab la Constantin Brâncoveanu. Arta secolului XVII* (exhibition catalogue), „Cuvânt înainte” by Al. Elian, p. 7.

³² A. Pippidi: *Tradiția politică bizantină*...p. 57 sqq.

occur: the obedience towards the Ottoman Empire that governs the Christian world by the will of God³³, the belief in the end of the world which generated diverse mystical interpretations of post-Byzantine history³⁴, or the hope put in the Russian empire, as potential liberator. But, beyond these, more rational minds turned towards science and culture, and it was due to their activity, that the force bases for the future era have been constituted.

The cultural activity in Wallachia under Constantine Brancovan's reign was an effort of integration and valorization of the traditional resources entirely due to the Romanian initiative. But, indeed a strong attempt of cultural convergence existed, generated from the mid of the 17th century, by hierarchs of great intellectual force.

The Orthodox Orient wasn't everywhere, however, capable of a revival of Byzantine culture by resorting to the classical cultural background. Great parts of the Christian Oriental population from the Eastern zones of the Empire were speakers of Arabic and Turkish (the *karamanlı*) and were incapable of a classical renaissance of Orthodoxy. So, this project of cultural Orthodox ecumenism under the shield of the Greek classicism had to accept in its content also the Oriental component, as a reality of civilization and ethnical cohabitation, cultivating thus a literature in Turkish and Arabic and also a visual tolerance to Oriental artistic elements. The opening of the populations of Byzantine culture, Greeks and Slavs, to economic relations with Muslims brought to an inevitable situation of leaven of the Byzantine tradition culture with Oriental elements, but also the reverse is true³⁵.

During the 17th–18th centuries, in the Orthodox world the written culture took the most important part. The arts, meanwhile, began to adopt, to a greater or lesser extent, the Baroque style, assumed in the Eastern Europe by the Habsburg and Russian Empires³⁶. The intellectual life was acquiring more autonomy toward the Church and a more interest in the classical Antiquity, a common background for the whole Europe unto the Eastern shores, where those venerable centers of

³³ By example, the Patriarch Anthim of Jerusalem blamed, in his *Patriki Didascalía*, in 1798, the Greek nationalism and the liberation struggle, arguing that the Ottoman rule had been empowered by Divine help, in order to protect the Orthodox peoples from contamination with the Latin heresy (Richard Clogg: *A Short History of Modern Greece*, 2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 40).

³⁴ Some of these prophecies are enumerated by Cyril Mango: in the 16th century it was believed that only five sultans will reign in Constantinople; in the 17th century it was predicted that Constantinople will be liberated at 200 years after its conquest (1653), and in the 18th century an apocalyptic devastation of Constantinople was fore seen for 1773, that would have been followed by the Second Coming of Christ! (Cyril Mango: „Byzantinism and Romantic Hellenism”, in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 28 (1965), p. 35–36).

³⁵ Machiel Kiel: „Some reflections on the origins of provincial tendencies in the Ottoman architecture of the Balkans”, in *Islam in the Balkans: Symposium. Royal Scottish Museum, 28th–30th July 1976, Edinburgh*, 1979, p. 20.

³⁶ For the baroque style as an appanage of aristocracy and its utilization in order to express the imperial glory, see Victor Ernest Tapié: *Barocul*, Bucharest 1969, p. 61–64; Dan Ionescu: „Le baroque à l'Est. Terminologie et réalité d'art”, *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes*, 1/1978, p. 111.

Ancient tradition, the Oriental Patriarchates were surviving. The dependence on the Baroque stylistics was motivated, first by its imperial pomp, then, by the classical origin of its elements, the only opened cultural zone between Orient and Occident. Of course, the Orthodox Baroque is found more in Russia and less in the Greek prosperous zones and in the Romanian principalities, being at the border with the Danubian Empire of the Habsburgs and having an old and deep relationship with the Principality of Transylvania.

Besides the matter of style, another very important aspect of the Romanian arts in the 17–18th centuries is the fact that the Orthodox monument, as an expression of the religious and social significance of founding, had also, in the case of the princely foundations, a political meaning, because it showed the founder in the legitimate continuity of power. The last who still meditated on this fact is the Phanariot prince Nicholas Mavrocordatos. But the legitimation he was boasting of could not disguise the reality of the Phanariot rule: it was the sultan associated to the divine power, who conferred the scepter. The Romanian principalities, having lost their autonomy, the traditional ideas could not be invoked anymore: neither the close relationship of the prince with his people and the national church, nor his hereditary right to throne which, in the case of the most Phanariotes, never existed, nor the property rights over the Romanian land, nor, finally, the providential election because his governance was provisional. Of course, all the ruler's rituals have been kept unchanged, even accentuated by a certain imperial spectacle³⁷ which illustrated, however, more the Ottoman Empire's prestige than the traditional dignity of the Romanian principalities. This is the reason why a Wallachian monumental art does not appear anymore in the 18th century. The few churches and monasteries built by the Phanariots in their Wallachian residence – they never left the capital city, being urban dwellers, unlike the Romanian princes who had most of their residencies and churches built on their domains –, will repeat the traditional monumental types, however modest, inexpensive and intended to personal use, such as: the Foișor church of the Mavrocordatos family, Saint Stephen church built by the Prince Stephen Racoviță, Pitar Moș of Alexander Moruzi. Such religious foundations were also intended to produce capital, for themselves or for Oriental establishments to which were affiliated, for instance in Bucharest Old Saint Spyridonos or the Healing Spring monastery, built by Prince Mavrogheni. These monasteries aren't characterized anymore by scholarly or artistic activities. In Wallachia, since the second half of the 17th century, as a consequence of the economic development, a new type of capital-productive activity developed in the monastic centers: the inns and the shops. The inns came from the Turkish architectural

³⁷ Neagu Djuvara: *Între Orient și Occident: Țările române la începutul epocii moderne (1800–1848)*, Bucharest, 2000, p. 40 sqq.

program for supporting the commercial activity – *caravanserai, han*³⁸. In the Balkans, none of such establishments existed before the Turkish domination. In the Romanian principalities, besides craftsmen and traders, boyars and monks were also involved in trade, as they sold the products from their properties on the market. Some monasteries, when they were placed in the center of towns, began to rent rooms for inns and shops or printing establishments. The big monasteries in Bucharest became a known all over Southeastern Europe for their trading business³⁹. The first Wallachian inns appeared at the initiative of the Cantacuzino family (the Șerban Vodă inn). The monasteries of Bucharest in Brancovan's time had inns: Colțea, Saint George the new, Saint John the Great, Ghiorma Banul, Zlătari, all built in the commercial zone of the city. The inns were used by Greek traders who came from all the provinces of the Empire, but especially by the traders of the Levantine corporations. These inns presumably built in the style still visible in the Balkans and in Constantinople do not exist anymore, but the Stavropoleos monastery, which shared the same commercial activity, can suggest how they looked like.

Craftsmen from all the empire came to sell their products on the important market of Bucharest, meeting here Romanian traders and craftsmen from other centers and this might spread the taste, that style serving as an inspiration source for the taste of provincial church founders and artists⁴⁰. In this cosmopolitan Bucharest, various Balkan commercial routes crossed and contributed to stylistic exchanges, especially in the field of decorative arts. From the mid of the 18th century, some communities of Bulgarian traders settled here, as were the ones from Gabrovo, who moved in the commercial zone of the city, in the Gabroveni inn, built especially for them with the support of prince Constantine Mavrocordat⁴¹. The craftsmen and salesmen, who lived in Bucharest around these inns, built their churches in post-Brancovan style (Batiștei, Negustori, Scaune).

As a result of the commercial contacts, the Oriental elements of decorative art penetrated in the Romanian provinces, not only them, but also Western ones, which pervaded different social classes. This situation encouraged a taste for mixing Oriental elements of decoration with features of Western style objects. There was certainly room for such innovations in cases of church building, where, in the groups of founders, two or more social classes were associated. The mixture of

³⁸ M. Kiel: *op. cit.*, p. 20.

³⁹ George Potra: *Din Bucureștii de ieri*. vol. I. Bucharest. 1991, p. 500 *sqq.*

⁴⁰ Andrei Paleolog identifies a style which he calls "Stavropoleos", in the districts of Ilfov, Prahova, Buzău, and explains this diffusion of the model by presuming the existence of a common taste which appears in the Wallachian bourgeoisie during the second half of the 18th century. (Andrei Paleolog: *Pictura exterioră din Țara Românească*, Bucharest, 1984, p. 66–68).

⁴¹ G. Potra: *Din Bucureștii de ieri*. vol. II. p. 218–219.

cultivated and popular, Oriental and Occidental, is found everywhere in Wallachia during the 18th century.

The most eloquent example of cultural cosmopolitanism cultivated by the Greek elites is the monastery of Văcărești in Bucharest. Using Wallachian workers and the building tradition as it was shown in the most recent monuments of the time – the monasteries of Hurezi and St. George the new in Bucharest⁴², prince Nicolas Mavrocordatos, being advised by Patriarch Chrysanth of Jerusalem, tried to build a monument capable to illustrate the quality of the Greek patronage⁴³.

The monastery of Văcărești was a mixture between the Brancovan art and the Greek classicism, together with an Oriental hue, of ecumenical reference. Never had it been in Wallachia until then a monument of such a classical ordinance and such a magnificent monumentality: the tendency to a central plan⁴⁴, supple and high columns – the interior ones having a cylindrical base –, paneled façades, a proportion in monumental, classical spirit of the painting's registries. Nevertheless, in comparison with the Brancovan monuments, Văcărești lacks the reasonable proportions, previously used in the Romanian architecture; the impressive dimensions, the fascinating sculptures, of an Oriental luxury, from the interior, the painting which continues the Brancovan theological line but adding the dramatic scene of the Apocalypse, all these elements determine the character of this monument.

The following intervention that of Constantine Mavrocordatos at Văcărești, by building the parekklesion, is even more interesting. The aspect of the monument is consciously farther from the Romanian tradition, in the spirit of an Oriental ecumenism, the epicenter of which had moved to the Romanian principalities, altogether with the organization of the Academies and the Greek, Turkish and Arabic print-houses of the Patriarchates. The parekklesion, so unusual with its exotic columns in the form of a palm tree stem⁴⁵, although it borrows the Brancovan architectural structures, reveals the Phanariot's preference to the Oriental spiritual world, where shepherd his confident, Patriarch Samuel of Alexandria. Objective and equitable, Constantine Mavrocordatos conserved the Brancovan culture, but behaved also as belonging to other spaces, too. He financially supported the

⁴² According to Tereza Sinigalia, the direct model for the monastery of Văcărești could be the New St. George church in Bucharest (*Istoria românilor*, vol. VI. Bucharest, 2002; "Români în Europa clasică și Europa Luminilor. 1711–1821", p. 891).

⁴³ Vasile Drăguț, "Le monastère de Văcărești, expression des relations artistiques roumano-grecques", in *Symposion. L'époque phanariote*, 21–25 oct. 1970, Institute for Balkan Studies, Thessaloniki, 1974, p. 300.

⁴⁴ T. Sinigalia, *ibidem*, p. 891.

⁴⁵ Although, the palm-tree motive may also come from the Baroque style, full of exotic elements, like palm-trees or parrots (they are to be found in the Russian Baroque sculpture, too; see И.Н.Уханова: „Книжечные стили русского народного декоративно-прикладного искусства XVII– начала XVIII. в.”, in *Русское искусство Барокко*, Moscow, 1977, p. 39).

Patriarch Sylvester of Antioch, another Oriental presence at Bucharest, by building the small and short church with an inn, Old Saint Spyridonos (it is known that in the Turkish provinces, it wasn't accepted that the churches should overtop the mosques), which modifies the equilibrate Brancovan architectural structure. Mavrocordatos also surrounded himself of cultivated Greek hierarchs, like Neophytos the Metropolitan of Wallachia, personal professor of his children. The very religious spirit, although very rational of Constantine Mavrocordatos marks the epoch in which Wallachia opens itself definitively to the European cosmopolitanism. His intellectual mobility which, from the Oriental spirituality could pass easily to the most sophisticated Occidental culture, open to Wallachia the horizons of the cosmopolitanism, Bucharest becoming the second important Southeastern capital after Constantinople⁴⁶. In Bucharest were the biggest libraries; Wallachia had a better financial situation than Moldavia and benefited to the cultural endowment done by Constantine Brancovan. The clergy in Bucharest was, also, more permissive to the Greek influences than in Iassy, because of that town's proximity to the Ukrainian cultural area, now strongly westernized.

As a result of the commercial contacts, the Oriental elements of decorative art penetrated in the Romanian provinces, not only them, but also Western ones, which pervaded different social classes. This situation encouraged a taste for mixing Oriental elements of decoration with features of Western style objects. There was certainly room for such innovations in cases of church building, where, in the groups of founders, two or more social classes were associated. The mixture of cultivated and popular, Oriental and Occidental, is found everywhere in Wallachia during the 18th century.

⁴⁶ Florin Constantiniu: *Constantin Mavrocordat*, Bucharest, 1985, p. 166 *sqq.*