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Iordache Filipescu, the “Last Great Boyar” of Wallachia and His Heritage

A World of Power, Influence, and Goods

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IORDACHE FILIPESCU, THE “LAST GREAT BOYAR” OF WALLACHA AND HIS HERITAGE: A WORLD OF POWER, INFLUENCE AND GOODS^{*}

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“Ce nom de Philipesco est le grand nom de la Valachie, et le grand boyard qui le porte, l’idole du Roumain, qui retrouve en lui ce type national qu’il voit s’effacer a regret de jour en jour.

Si Georges Philipesco, reniant ses somptueux habits, coupait sa longue barbe blanche, et abandonnait le kalpak d’Astrakan, cette apostasie causerait une douleur générale, qui prendrait les proportions d’un deuil public dans le peuple de la grande ville ; et l’artiste, avide du spectacle encore si curieux de ce poétique pays, ne saurait désormais ou retrouver le seul vestige élégant et splendide d’une société dont la réalité ne sera plus bientôt qu’un souvenir confus.” (Charles Doussault, Église de Saint-Georges à Bucarest in “L’Illustration”, nr. 566, 31 décembre 1853, p. 445 ; Călători străini, VI, p. 151).

Charles Doussault (1814–1880), a French painter and illustrator, became known as an Orientalist painter following his voyages to the Ottoman Empire; he also paid special attention to Wallachia, which he visited during the first half of the 19th century. There, he becomes an integral part of society and is welcomed in the boyars’ homes and at the Court so much so that, in August 1843, he is invited by Prince Gheorghe Bibescu to be part of his delegation going to Constantinople to pay tribute to the sultan. In 1848, together with Michel Bouquet (1807–1890), he draws the illustrations for *Album Moldo-Valaque ou guide politique et pittoresque à travers les Principautés du Danube*, a work meant to introduce the Romanian territory to Europeans commissioned by the former French

^{*} I give my thanks to Iuliu Rațiu for the translation of the text and to Mihai-Răzvan Ungureanu, Constantin Ardeleanu, Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu and Giulia Calvi, for their observations, which will be better seen in the final form of the article.

Consul in Bucharest and friend of Romanians Adolphe Billecocq (1800–1874).¹ Doussault's notes about Wallachia appeared in the magazine *L'Illustration* during the Crimean War (1853–1856), as timely a publication as the above-mentioned album, which allowed Westerners to better acquaint themselves with a space and a people much talked about on the political scene. Part of the Ottoman Empire as provinces with a special status, both Danubian Principalities had their own administration and were for some time under Russian protectorate. In fact, under the Russian influence, the elites largely embraced the French language and culture as vehicles of Westernization, adopted the first Romanian constitution (*The Organic Regulation*, 1831), and started social-cultural reforms. Thus, following the Treaty of Adrianople (1829), the Russians became the second power to overlook these territories. And, they might resemble the Phanariots, Greeks appointed by the Porte in the 18th century as princes in the Principalities. They were also considered reformers by part of the Romanian historiography² and a synthesis of the East-West fusion by some Turkish historians.³ Crimean War came in a long series of conflicts between the Russian and the Ottoman Empires, with France, England, and Sardinia siding this time with the latter. Western states now manage human and financial resources benefitting an Empire with which they had been in conflict for many years and with which they had not had any cultural contacts. Moreover, the theater of war is on the edge of Western Europe, on the border of Russia, the new power of the modern times. These are the last signs of Oriental opulence and power. Up to that point and in such a context, the importance of local leaders proved crucial for the stability and durability of Ottoman presence in border areas and peripheral territories. Ali, pasha of Ioannina, Osman Pasvantoğlu from Vidin or Ali Muhammad in Egypt are handy examples to show the volatility of ruling over such

¹ Adolphe Etienne Billecocq was also a French consul in Bucharest during 1839–1846.

² We only mention here the works of Pompiliu Eliade, *De l'influence française sur l'esprit public en Roumanie: les origines. Etude sur l'état de la société roumaine à l'époque des règnes Phanariotes*, Paris, Ernest Leroux, 1896 (transl. in Romanian, București, Institutul Cultural Român, 2006); Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria Românilor*, vol. VI. Reformatorii, București, 1938; Ariadna Camariano-Cioran, *Les Academies princieres de Bucarest et de Jassy et leurs professeurs*, Thessaloniki, Institute for Balkan Studies, 1974 (especially the activity of Nicolae and Constantin Mavrocordat, Alexandru Ipsilanti and Mihail Soutzo), although there are other several discussions on each Phanariot Prince, and a short encyclopaedia was recently published by Mihai Țipău, *Domnii fanarioți în Țările Române: 1711–1821. Mică enciclopedie*, prefață Pashalis M. Kitromilides, Omonia, 2004.

³ Fatma Müge Göçek, *East encounters West: France and the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 125.

territories. In the Danubian Principalities, the Phanariots held the ruling power and were often times contested by the local boyars, among whose ranks they were not able to fully integrate. Historian Ali Yaycioğlu argues that, at the beginning of the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire, following other unsuccessful options, chose partnership between central elites and local ones as a solution to its problems.⁴ In Wallachia and Moldavia, local rulers are only reinstated after 1821, and Russia’s presence after 1829 is a mechanism to level the playing field. However, while he is enthroned formally by political fiat, the prince is nothing more than a smoke screen hiding an informal power network, which can always dethrone him. Historians of the internal power struggles in the Ottoman provinces already showed how various factions negotiated a fragile balance between them or sought the protection of the Turkish and then Russian authorities.⁵ In this respect, the Filipescu family is no different than other elite local families whose members gained power, privileges, and high ranks, thus aiming for the highest position, that of the prince. For our inquiry we will use a definition of elite local families, which makes use of primary (status, wealth, power) and secondary (lineage, control of land/estates, patron-client networking, titles as part of prestige) features in their relationship with the centre and society.⁶

In 1853, Charles Doussault describes the minorities in Dobrogea, “the capital-city of the Orient” Bucharest, and the local customs. He brings to the forefront the great boyar Gheorghe (Iordache) Filipescu, as the representative figure of both the Romanian *ancien régime* and of the Ottoman Empire. Filipescu is the point of reference that gives the author the opportunity to discuss the need for a transition in changing regimes without deviating from contemporary politics while serving, at the same time, the interests of his friends, the Romanians. Put differently, the Frenchman is not an “armchair” traveler and uses his acquired experience for diplomatic gains.

⁴ Ali Yaycioğlu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions*, Stanford University Press, 2016, p. 14–15.

⁵ Christine M. Philliou, *Biography of an Empire: Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution*, University of California Press, 2011 with reference to Stephanos Vogorides (1770s–1859) or Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha’s men: Mehmed Ali, his army and the making of modern Egypt*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

⁶ Antonis Anastasopoulos, *Introduction* in Antonis Anastasopoulos (ed.), *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire*, Crete University Press, 2005, p. xxi–xxii.

The long-standing membership of Wallachia to the Ottoman Empire, reflected by the Oriental garb of the elite, reveals what might be called a “national model.” Doussault observed the aspirations of the younger generation, but he also captured the transition from the old to the new, and the question he raised had to do with whether elites could suddenly give up being Oriental (Turkish) to become Western. Would the population embrace such a change? The church frescoes on the boyars’ estates have votive portraits in which the donors appear in Oriental garb, donning beards as long as Filipescu’s. Even though abandoning Oriental garments would negatively affect especially the boyars, all classes know clothing is a sign of social status.⁷ The frequent political changes have caught the elites between the new and the old order, between the Oriental dress of the suzerain Turks and the Western fashion of the occupation troops.⁸ At the time of writing, there were other old boyars who had not given up the old clothes, but Iordache Filipescu exuded Oriental opulence, which made Charles Doussault draw his portrait in one of the illustrations. Thus, he appears to us:

“sitting Turkish-style on the divan, he is dressed according to the old tradition—he wears *işlic* on his head, a long *anteriu* (coat) with a shawl, probably of cashmere, around his waist, *shalwar*, and a fur-lined overcoat with visible furry seams. Standing, Iordache Filipescu is wearing *meşi* (leather boots), and next to his sofa there are Morocco leather slippers. The accessories he owns are representative of his status: a valuable ring and rosary beads on a table, the chibouk on another.”

But there is another component that makes Filipescu a typical example of the Oriental tradition, a component that does not transpire from Doussault’s account, but from old family testimonials and from internal documents.

⁷ Adrian–Silvan Ionescu, *Modă și societate urbană în România epocii moderne*, București, Paideia, 2006, p. 76–80; Constanța Vintilă–Ghițulescu, *De la işlic la joben. Modă și lux la Porțile Orientului*, București, Peter Pan Art, 2013, p. 73–74.

⁸ Adrian–Silvan Ionescu mentions the resistance met when this class had to give up the Oriental garb and start to wear „the clothes of democracy”. Old clothing items are still preserved and adopted by lower classes such as the merchants, cf. ”Prefață. Lamentă la un işlic bătrânesc sau culoare și rafinement vestimentar în veacul fanariot” in Maria Camelia Ene (ed.), *Moda în Țara Românească. Secolul al XVIII-lea și prima jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea*, Muzeul Municipiului București, 2016, p. 20; Constanța Vintilă–Ghițulescu, *De la işlic...*, p. 60 talks about „boyars’ chameleon-like clothing habits.”

The present study follows the generational trajectory of this branch of the Filipescu family as seen through two points of view: 1. diplomacy and power transfer strategies during a period of conflict between the Russians and the Turks; and 2. the internal assimilation of European and Romanian culture and their external propagation, with a look at consumer goods. Archival documents (estate inventories, private and official correspondence) are complemented by travelogues and press reports with the intention of providing a comprehensive account. While he is the protagonist and his family an emblem, Iordache Filipescu is better understood when assessing the knowledge and aspirations he had received from his father and, in turn, passed down to his sons.

THE FILIPESCU FAMILY, WALLACHIA, AND THE RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA AND THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The Filipescu family is one of the local boyar families (*boieri pământeni*) who managed to maintain their leadership position in Wallachia even after the arrival of the Phanariots. This is not small feat considering the fact that the latter brought with them an entire entourage meant to replace the old local leaders and thus consolidate their power. This left local boyar families with two options: oppose or form matrimonial alliances with the newcomers; on each side, the examples are numerous. By and large, with few exceptions, the Filipescus chose the opposing side. Conflict with the Phanariots is part of the political life of the elites, and so Iordache Filipescu’s ancestors were severely punished for their opposition. In 1788, Prince Mavrogheni sent his grandfather, Pană II Filipescu, a great *ban*, in exile to Mt. Athos, together with his entire family, while the father Constantin (Dinu) was exiled to Ecaterinoslav by the Russians in 1810 and, later, by the Phanariots to his estate in Bucov.⁹

The Filipescus also appreciate culture¹⁰, and cultivate their diplomatic sense, etiquette and refinement without completely abandoning the spirit and customs of their country. Thus, they walk the thin line between the Russians and the Turks without compromising

⁹ Octav Lecca, *Familiiile boierești române. Istoric și genealogie*, București, Institutul de Arte Grafice și Editură "Minerva", p. 221.

¹⁰ Constantin Filipescu Căpitanul wrote *Istoriile domnilor țerii românești*, from the beginning to 1688, published by Nicolae Iorga in 1902. Another Constantin (Dinu), Iordache Filipescu’s father, great treasurer, encouraged and sponsored cultural event, and poet Barbu Paris Mumuleanu was one of his protégés.

their own social class and living up to their family motto: *Potius mori quam foedari / Death before Dishonor.*¹¹



Figures 1–2. Coats of arms of Constantin Dinu Filipescu (left) and Iordache Filipescu (right) (source: Dan Cernovodeanu, *Știința heraldică în România* (Bucharest, 1977), p. 400, 404).

There are also political elements that bring them closer to the population, a population that rejects the Phanariots for the fiscal measures introduced, for the divine punishment they are perceived to represent. A state of constant war, poverty and plagues engulf the territory of the Principalities, while the Greek “intruders” come and go to power and amass great fortunes. This is the broad overview presented by the Romanian chroniclers.

Constantin (Dinu) Filipescu (1751–1817), the patriarch, was a great boyar of Wallachia, married to a sister of princes.¹² He also had his eye on the throne and his contemporaries described him as following:

¹¹ Octav Lecca, *Familiiile boierești...*, p. 223. Filipescu family also has a coat of arms, constantly evolving from Dinu Filipescu’s simple 18th century seal to the complex, golden bronze version of the one of the last representatives of the family in the high echelons of power, George G. Filipescu (1840–1907), Marshall of the Romanian Royal Court. Cf. Dan Cernovodeanu, *Știința și arta heraldică în România...*, p. 400, 404, plate XCVII, fig. 1; plate XCIX, fig. 3 and 4.

¹² Zoe Ghica, daughter of Dimitrie Ghica and of Maria Văcărescu and sister of Grigore IV Ghica (1756–1834), prince of Wallachia (1822–1828) and of Alexandru II Ghica (1796–1862), prince of the same principality (1834–1842) and kaymakam (1856–1858).

IORDACHE FILIPESCU, “THE LAST GRAND BOYAR”

“Grand et bien fait, gai, affable, d’un aspect majestueux, religieux, généreux et pieux comme pas un. Il eut une vie brillante et pleine de grandeur, il fut un fervent défenseur de la patrie et le soutien inébranlable du pays.”¹³

Although he was sent into exile by the Phanariots, he was a man of the Turks and of their French allies in the Russian–Turkish war of 1806–1812. He used various methods to spy on the Russians, and it was rumored he even pimped his daughter to get information.¹⁴ While little is known about this aspect of his life, Filipescu’s subversive activities were consequential and they lead not only to the Russians losing the Battle of Giurgiu (March 24th, 1809), but also to changes in the administration of the principality wherein Turkish protégés replaced the Russian ones. In the opinion of Russian General Langeron, these effects determined the situation of the Russian troops in this part of the Balkans.¹⁵

As treasurer, he was in direct contact with well-known money-lenders from Bucharest, such as Ion Hagi Moscu, Manuc Bey, or Sachelarie, who were lending large sums of money and did business with the state.¹⁶ Thus, irrespective of any regime change, Filipescu had access both to information and power without being directly involved. During the Russian-Turkish war, he sent the battle plans of General Miloradovici, who resided in his house, to the Turks (more precisely, to the pashas in Giurgiu and Vidin) and to the French consul Ledoulx. He then suffered the consequences of his actions: during a

¹³ Octav Lecca, *Familiile boierești...*, p. 221.

¹⁴ Louis Alexandre Andrault de Langeron (1763–1831), French general in the Russian Army, took part in the Russian–Turkish wars from the beginning of the 19th century and recounts Miloradovici’s story when he returns to Wallachia in 1829. He adds that Dinu Filipescu was close to the French and describes him as „the most shadowy, perfidious, and wicked among the Wallachians” cf. *Mémoires de Langeron, général d’infanterie dans l’armée russe, campagnes de 1812, 1813, 1814*, publiés d’après le ms. original par L.G.F(abry), Paris, 1902, p. 134 (translated to Romanian in *Călători străini*, I, p. 324, a collection of foreign travel accounts about the 19th century Romanian space). Information taken from Marquis de Saint Aulaire, himself an officer in the Russian Army, p. 339. Ștefan Ionescu, *Manuc Bei, zaraf și diplomat în prima jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea*, p. 129–130.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 134 (*Călători străini*, I, p. 325).

¹⁶ G. Ionescu Gion, *Istoria Bucureștilor*, 1899, p. 472. For example, only in 1816 Wallachia owed to Sachelarie 910.681 *thalers*, and to pay it back, the principality ceded the profits from one branch of its income (*husmeturi*) for a year. Ștefan Ionescu, *Manuc Bei.*, p. 113. On the importance of Manuc Bey’s activity in South-eastern Europe see Ștefania Costache, ”From Ruscuk to Bessarabia: Manuk Bey and the Career of an Ottoman–Russian Middleman at the Beginning of the 19th Century” in *Cihannüma. Tarih ve Coğrafya Araştırmaları Dergisi* Sayı III/1 – Temmuz 2017, pp. 23–43.

fancy dance party at his house following the Russian occupation, he was informed that he and his family would be sent into exile. He only had 48 hours to leave, which Dinu Filipescu did with an entire suite.¹⁷

Filipescu family, important Romanian boyar family since 16th century



Source: Octav George Lecca, *Genealogia a 100 de case din Țara Românească și Moldova*, București, 1911, the Filipescu plate

He returned home with his family after two years, following the peace treaty agreement and the enthronement of Phanariot Prince Ioan Caragea. The Greek Prince "bought" Wallachia with 4 million *galbeni*, a large sum he wanted to recuperate with interest once in power. He raised taxes, created new management positions, bribed and entered alliances with local boyars and still he could not have full access to the treasury. That is why he brought back Filipescu thinking that he could serve him as he served the Turks. On December 19, 1812, he is appointed great *ban* of Craiova "as an old local and able boyar of the land, highly esteemed by *Vodă* (Prince) Caragea." Filipescu does not miss this perfect opportunity to reestablish his powerful position in the country and ends up leading the first *divan* and appointing, with Caragea's help, all those close to him to high administrative

¹⁷ Ștefan Ionescu, *Manuc Bei...*, p. 139–140.

offices.¹⁸ However, Caragea needs direct access to the treasury and appoints him as a treasurer, but, to his surprise, he soon finds out that Dinu Filipescu does not follow orders but instead wants a greater autonomy for Craiova and Oltenia.¹⁹ Indeed, compared with other regions, Oltenia played a considerably larger role in Wallachia, was under Austrian administration,²⁰ and was the seat for higher legislative bodies such as the Craiova Divan.²¹ Dinu Filipescu wanted Oltenia to be the second place of power in the principality, no more, no less. This brings him in direct conflict with the Prince, who demands submission, loyalty, and no local opposition. Filipescu’s moment of defiance had negative consequences. In 1813, Caragea was on alert because of some border skirmishes and very much aware of what was happening outside Principality’s borders.²² “Le Moniteur Universel” informed about Vidin Molah Pasha’s rebellion, which could easily spread to neighboring territories such as Wallachia. Some of the boyars were ready to run away, but were stopped. The Turkish army, on its way to Rusciuc, did in fact stop in Bucharest, where it commandeered 52 houses during its short stay. Furthermore, the Turks terrify the local population by executing one of their officials. The emissary of the grand vizier, in connivance with Phanariot Prince Caragea, ordered the decapitation of Abdullah Ramiz Pasha and the wounding of 17 other individuals. Pasha’s head is sent to the Sultan, and thus Caragea shows again his force by declaring he followed the orders of the former. However, there is a pest outbreak over the summer and the population’s hate towards the Prince increases. Filipescu does not miss the opportunity to send formal complaints to Constantinople regarding the abuses and thievery of the Prince. Chronicler Zilot Românul and even the “Moniteur Universel” talk about the boyars’ plot initiated by the great *ban*. For this, he is banished again to Bucov

¹⁸ Urechea, “Justiția sub Ioan Caragea”, taken from *Analele Academiei Române*, seria II, tom XX. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice, București, Institutul de Arte Grafice Carol Göbl, 1898, p. 275, 277.

¹⁹ Situated in south-eastern part of nowadays Romania, Craiova was the second larger city after Bucharest, the capital of Wallachia. It was also the centre of its main region, Oltenia, known also under the name of Little Wallachia.

²⁰ Șerban Papacostea, *Oltenia sub stăpânire austriacă (1718–1739)*, ediție îngrijită de Gheorghe Lazăr, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 1998.

²¹ Ilie Vulpe, *Divanul Craiovei*, Scrisul Românesc, 2002.

²² On his involvement in European politics see Constantin Ardeleanu, “Friedrich von Gentz and his Wallachian Correspondents: security concerns in a Southeastern European Borderland (1812–1828)” in Beatrice de Graaf, Ido de Haan, Brian Vick (eds.), *Securing Europe after Napoleon*, Cambridge University Press, 2018 (forthcoming).

until 1817.²³ To prevent boyars who remained in Bucharest contact Filipescu, Caragea sent them all individual messages informing them that Filipescu was considered a traitor and they were forbidden to meet with him. And, they never did, because he was kept under guard on his Prahova estate until the end of his life. This was a testament to Filipescu's influence, shrewdness, and diplomatic ability.

This is a time when the Phanariot Ruling Prince of Wallachia, Ioan Caragea, looks for as many methods to impose himself and his power to the local boyars and society as possible. On January 12, 1817, by decree, he declares white as the exclusive color of the ruling family:

“because the white satin and the white color of gowns and other clothes, lined with fur, (irrespective of material) is a color destined to be worn only by highbrow Princes and rulers of people, and not by their servants, and therefore My Highness forbids them to wear white satin in any type of clothing. Fore white satin in gowns and other vestments is exclusively reserved to princely offspring.”²⁴

Tarsița, Dinu Filipescu's daughter-in-law, dares to pass by in front of the Princely Palace wearing *salup*²⁵ from white satin and sable fur. The sanction was quickly pronounced and the young woman was called “foolish, irrational, and disobedient of our Princely decree.” If caught like this anywhere in the city, she must be surrounded, disrobed, and the *salup* torn to pieces. Practically, it was a show of force by the two camps. The young Filipescu woman wanted to show that great boyars were also entitled to wearing white satin because they were part of the Wallachian ruling class, even though at that the time the head of the family had recently passed away, being overthrown by Caragea. On her part, representing her social class, wearing white was an act of defiance. In turn, the Prince would not approve his authority and supremacy be questioned.

²³ Two other important boyars were also banished, *vornic* (= official in charge of justice and internal affairs) Constantin Bălăceanu and great logothete Grigore Ghica.

²⁴ V. A. Urechia, *Societatea sub I.G. Caragea*, taken from „Analele Academiei Române”, seria II, tom XXIII. *Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice*, București, Institutul de Arte Grafice Carol Göbl, 1901, p. 155; Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria Bucureștilor*, ediția Municipiului București, 1939, p. 217

²⁵ A type of mantle for ladies, with or without sleeves.

The story of the family and their aspirations do not stop here. All the Filipescus were involved in diplomatic and military activities. They held high-level administrative positions and, at times, switched political sides. For instance, during the 1820s Iordache, who was highly cultivated, joined the Russian-backed political faction in stark contrast to his father who favored the Turkish faction. Returning in 1828, shortly before the end of another war and the conclusion of the Treaty of Adrianople (1829), old Langeron wrote that:

“The most amazing thing that I felt then (in 1828), compared to what I suffered in 1809, was this Filipescu family who proved very devoted to me. Constantin had been dead for many years and his children showed me they had not inherited his hatred for me.”²⁶

Iordache Filipescu knows what the future holds, but he is not in a hurry to make it happen. His marriage to Ecaterina Balș, a rich Moldavian from the neighbouring principality, earns him two powerful allies: the boyars of Moldova and Russia. His younger wife, who had been raised in Russia, introduced him to a new type of sociability, that of the salon and of parties, even though he did not give up the Oriental clothes and way of life. Only the princely house was more visited and appreciated than his own. Russia’s victory in the war with the Ottoman Empire leads to the imposition of a Russian protectorate on both principalities and, implicitly, a division of authority and economic benefits. At the time, contemporaries already spoke about a decline of the Ottoman Empire, following an idea launched by Cantemir in the Western world²⁷ which was soon embraced by historians. However, at the moment, Turkish historiography, in particular, is revising this view and proposes a paradigm shift.²⁸ The Turks did not give up, but were only looking and accepting solutions they considered on the spot. These two visions are not mutually exclusive and they both reflect Iordache Filipescu’s situation. Perhaps, he did not give up the Oriental costume because he understood the events were transient. In fact, after many

²⁶ *Călători străini*, I, p. 337.

²⁷ Dimitrie Cantemir wrote *Historia incrementorum atque decrementorum Aulae Othomanicae* following the defeat in the battle of Stănilești (when he formed an alliance with Peter the Great) and his dethronement by the Turks. His son published posthumous editions in English (1734), French (1743), and German (1745). The first Romanian translation dates from 1876, but the content of the work was well-known before that.

²⁸ See especially the analysis made by Suraiya Faroqhi in her Introduction to *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. III. The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

occupation troops things were still the same and the Turks still remained in charge in the Principalities! Nonetheless, he realized Russia was the day's winner and wanted to take advantage of it. Thus, in 1834, at the height of his popularity and with some encouragements from the Russians, he runs as a candidate for the position of prince. In the end, a candidate from the new generation narrowly defeats him. Barbu Dimitrie Știrbei was the favorite among the candidates but decided to renounce the throne in favor of his brother, Gheorghe Bibescu. Although young, Știrbei is a promising politician and later will become prince of Wallachia twice. Why did Iordache Filipescu give his votes to his younger opponent? Marquis Bois-de-Comte gives an explanation, which reflects Filipescu's future endeavors, at a friendly meeting:

“We were three old men as candidates, he told me. The Russians dismissed the three of us and they were right to do so. Our ideas and feelings were obsolete. The new generation must have its own leaders. We have remarkable people to lead us: Știrbei, Bibescu, and others. Our duty is to watch, to council well, and to object to unjust and hasty gestures. As soon as the prince comes, I will resign but will stay in the Assembly (Adunare); I'm not completely without power.”²⁹

Frenchman J.A. Vaillant, the private teacher of Iordache Filipescu's children, believed the Russians did not favour him because he was “too human and liberal.”³⁰ That he was too human is no surprise since he was a philanthropist and his soup kitchen daily fed the poor; an activity that was in such a good connection with the Ottoman tradition of imarets.³¹ Also, he learned from his father's experience to be more prudent and diplomatic in politics. At the same time, he is open to society's new modernizing ideas. In 1843, Prince Gheorghe Bibescu recognizes his merits and grants him the title of “first boyar” because:

²⁹ *Călători străini*, III, p. 163.

³⁰ *Călători străini*, IV, p. 362.

³¹ Historian Amy Singer defined and contextualized the charitable institution of imarets to which it gave three functions: 1) to distribute food; 2) legitimise a dynasty and 3) „a means of Ottomanization” as they were present, from 14th century on in many Ottoman towns such as Istanbul, Edirne, Iznik, Salonica, Belgrade, Mecca, Damascus etc. cf. Amy Singer, “Imarets” in Christine Woodhead (ed.), *The Ottoman World*, London–New York, Routledge, 2012, p. 84. For more details see Amy Singer, *Constructing Ottoman beneficence: An Imperial Soup Kitchen in Jerusalem*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2002 and “The “Michelin Guide” to Public Kitchens in the Ottoman Empire” in Amy Singer (ed.), *Starting with Food: Culinary Approaches to Ottoman History*, Princeton, Markus Wiener Publishers, 2010, pp. 69–92.

“from times past [first boyar] was the rank which elevated the most venerable members of the nobility to the highest respect of the community.”³²

In 1854, in less than 20 years after this event, together with other boyars and clerics, he is decorated by the Russian emperor with St. Ana Order.³³ At the height of the Crimean War, it was a gesture in recognition of his support given to Russian officers.

By this time, Iordache Filipescu also formed a clear position regarding the unionist current which became dominant in Romanian political circles. Many were in favour of bringing in a foreigner to lead both principalities as long as he was “neither Turk, nor Greek or Jew.”³⁴ While the omission of Russians could be seen as their acceptance, the likelihood of a Russian prince was slim because Romanians set their hopes on French and Belgian ones. Besides, the esteem he enjoyed among the young was due to this openness. In Moldova, when Mihail Cantacuzino-Paşcanu died, “*Steaua Dunării*” magazine announced the disappearance of “le dernier grand *boyar*, homme de bien, voilà ce qu'à perdu la societe de Iassy!” even though the article portrayed him as a unionist partisan. The same was true for Iordache Filipescu because his contemporaries did not see the paradox of him being both “the last great Oriental boyar” and the supporter of a larger autonomy from the Ottoman Empire, a political position contrary to the interests of the suzerain power.

Iordache Filipescu's sons – Constantin, George and Emanuel – all abandoned political careers in favor of cultural and, more importantly military lives, being first officers in the Russian Army and then in the Romanian one. By far, among the brothers, Constantin Filipescu (1804–1847) had the most powerful personality. Like his father before him, he married a woman from Moldavia³⁵ and was educated in France. A colonel and logothete, he would welcome foreign visitors to Bucharest, would show them the most picturesque locations and offer them quasi-official information, which the visitors would later use in their travel accounts. Thus, as a host, Filipescu is able to impose his point of view

³² „Buletinul G.A.”, XII (1843), p. 449.

³³ *Gazeta de Moldavia*, XXVI (1854), p. 37. Tudor-Radu Tiron, “Despre folosirea decorațiilor în stemele boierilor din Moldova și Țara Românească în perioada domniilor regulamentare” in *Muzeul Național*, XVII, 2005, p. 102 even talks about a „renaissance of private heraldry” referring to those who receive such decorations, which they later incorporate in family seals and portraits, like their European counterparts.

³⁴ *Călători străini*, IV, p. 362.

³⁵ This is his cousin, Aristița Balș (1812–1880).

to foreign travelers who experience the principalities through his eyes. Both Anatoli Demidov and Doussault, from whom our discussion started, enjoyed Filipescu's hospitality when he accompanied them throughout the country and lodged them in his own house or in the houses of well-to-do villagers. Constantin's name and uniform opened doors everywhere they went. However, he is not just an officer and state official, he is also a writer and translator. In 1845, he is a member of the steering committee of the newly launched "Association for the Advancement of Literature" which funded and promoted the publishing of Romanian books.³⁶ His works and translations are included in the repertoire of Filarmonica Society Theater from Bucharest³⁷ and are published in the Romanian press. Constantin Filipescu is described as "gentle, charitable and caring towards everybody"³⁸; indeed, this is a portrait matching his nature and character. His involvement in the short-lived 1848 Romanian revolution is overlooked while the participation of his brother George (Dedu) (1811–1889) to the same event is dismissed as a youthful error of a "cuconaș" (boyar's son) together with his family friends.³⁹ As a cavalry colonel, George would later fight in the Crimean War, being awarded a honorary sword for his courage. After the 1859 union of Wallachia and Moldova, George leaves the Russian Army and joins the Romanian one as a captain. As a reservist, in 1877 asked to be reenlisted in order to fight in the Romanian Independence War. His wish is granted and fights alongside Duke Nicolae, the highest-ranked officer of the Russian forces in Bulgaria. Information about the third brother, Emanuel, is almost nonexistent so he remains lost to history.

³⁶ Ștefan Golescu, Gr. Alexandrescu, I. Văcărescu and I. Voinescu II were also part of this committee. For details, see *Vestitorul Românesc*, IX (1845), p. 153–154, 161–2; *Albina Românească*, XVII (1845), p. 169–170; *Gazeta de Transilvania*, XVII (1845), p. 169–70 and *Gazeta de Transilvania*, IX (1846), p. 415–6; an activity report can be found in *Albina Românească*, XIX (1847), p. 60.

³⁷ For details, also see *Notițe în legătură cu repertoriul teatrului Societății Filarmonica* in *Curiosul*, 1836–1837, p. 75–77, where Romanian poet C. Bolliac praises his activity together with that of his contemporaries I. Voinescu II, I. Roset etc. Worth mentioning here is also an article written by Ion Heliade Rădulescu, participant to the 1848 Revolution in Wallachia, academician and writer, who, upon Constantin's death in 1848, wrote that his literary works were „sweet as his words, young as his heart” cf. *Curierul Românesc*, XX (1848), p. 52 and *Albina Românească*, XX (1848), p. 67–68.

³⁸ *Însemnările Androneștilor*, critical edition and introduction by Ilie Corfus, București, 1947, p. 110 mentioned the date of 12 February 1848.

³⁹ *Amintirile colonelului Lăcusteanu...*, both Costache Cantacuzino and Iancu Bălăceanu are mentioned. Similarly, *Călători străini V*, p. 200 argues that since his father, Iordache Filipescu, was a minister of interior, this gave him the power to walk freely throughout the city.

DO GOODS FOLLOW POLITICAL POWER?

Family Residences

The wealth of any family with some political power is built around its house, which is emblematic and easily recognizable according to the family’s public prestige, and the Filipescus are no different. Their residence was situated in the center of the city, on Podul Mogoșoaiei,⁴⁰ according to written accounts and 19th-century documents, we now know it had an open plan, with large rooms and different functionalities. Built during the 18th century to resemble a “small fortress,” the mansion was used by Dinu Filipescu both as living quarters and as official place to attend to political and administrative issues. During his appointment as *ban* of Craiova, he did the same with the administrative and judicial institution under his control. The mansion in Bucharest, inherited by Iordache, had the same double role, though afterwards it fell from favor until the end of the 19th century, when it became the property of the Romanian royal crown. Such a residence was bequeathed to the future head of family who was entrusted to take over and continue the family’s public role. Dinu and his son Iordache Filipescu were both worthy of the family’s name and succeeded in keeping the family as an important player in the top Bucharest diplomatic and social circles. During his documentary voyage, Russian Anatoli Demidov wrote the following about Iordache’s house:

“Lorsque nous eûmes joui longtemps de ces délassements champêtres, nous nous hâtâmes de nous rendre dans les beaux et vastes salons de M. Philipesco, où le bal le plus élégant avait rassemblé l’élite des danseurs de Bukharest. Je ne connais aucune ville en Europe où l’on puisse réunir une société plus complètement agréable, où le meilleur ton se montre constamment uni à la plus douce gaieté. Ce charmant bal se prolongea fort avant dans la nuit. Rien n’était plus gracieux à voir que le maître de ce beau logis, l’aga Philipesco, dans son large costume de boyard, sa noble tête encadrée dans sa longue et soyeuse barbe blanche, environné d’un essaim de jeunes et jolies danseuses, dont les gazes et les rubans s’accordaient si bien avec la douce physionomie du majestueux vieillard. C’était là un emblème bien vrai de la situation de ce pays, qui a adopté tout d’abord les plaisirs et les libres allures de l’Occident. En vain la robe

⁴⁰ Ștefan Ionescu, *Manuc Bei...*, p. 57.

sévère des boyards voudrait-elle s'opposer à cet envasement des modes et des frivolités modernes, il faut à la génération actuelle un salon spacieux où la valse et le galop puissent se dérouler et tourbillonner à loisir ; il lui faut un costume qui ne mette point d'entraves aux passes élégantes de la mazurka, qui ne s'embarrasse pas dans le labyrinthe étroit des quadrilles français."⁴¹

The image he presented is a bit off here since the presence of the Oriental garb would not exclude the adoption of Western values, as we have seen in the case of Filipescu. Using clothing as a clear marker of different generations and political options is not easily applicable here because things are more nuanced. Thus, the urban residences became for the Filipescus the centre of their political informal network, from which they could influence local elite (in Craiova), the Prince, foreign diplomats and Romanian dignitaries (in Bucharest).

Personal Assets

Constantin was supposed to be the head of the family, but he passed away in 1848, six years before his father, Iordache, did in 1854. Because the other children were both underage and orphaned, the family's patrimony was taken over by an institution called the Public Trusteeship (*Obșteasca Epitropie*). The institution had been organized under the *Organic Regulation* (1831) and administered the wealth of minors throughout the principality, irrespective of its value.⁴²

Comparing the parents' patrimony to that of their children emphasizes the cultural influences regarding acquired goods throughout the time. While Constantin Filipescu's

⁴¹ *Voyage dans la Russie Méridionale et la Crimée par la Hongrie, la Valachie et la Moldavie exécuté en 1837 par Anatole de Demidoff, illustrée de soixante-quatre dessins par Raffet*, Paris, Ernest Bourdin, 1840, vol. I, p. 142–143 (*Călători străini*, IV, p. 623).

⁴² *Regulamentul Organic: întreruput cu legiurile din anii 1831, 1832 și 1833, și adăogat la sfârșit cu legiurile de la anul 1834 până acum, împărțite pe fiecare an...*, București, Tipărit la pitarul Z. Carcaleki, 1847; for a discussion and another example from the Romanian boyar class see Nicoleta Roman, "Orfanii evgheniți ai familiei Oteteleşanu în Valahia primei jumătăți a veacului al XIX-lea" [The rich and aristocratic orphans of Oteteleşanu family in the first half of 19th century Wallachia] in Mircea Ciubotaru, Lucian Valeriu-Lefter (eds.), *Mihai Dimitrie Sturdza. Omagiu la 80 de ani*, Iași, Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2014, pp. 877–918.

private documents contain goods belonging to the house in Bucharest and to the estate in Ciumași, most of the goods are either taken by his father or are being sold at public auction. Of interest to us is what goods the great boyar kept from this private property. Well, here they are: arms collection; French books; accessories; horse, the cart and the harness for horse-back riding; jewelry (1 ring and 1 gold watch) and decorations; furniture; foreign and Romanian wines and a few clothes. Passionate about hunting and weapons in general, Constantin had a beautiful collection: a wide scimitar, a carbine rifle, swords of different origins, a soldier rifle, a knife with coral handle, "a machine for cleaning rifles" and many more.⁴³ That his father did not keep a lot of the clothes is no surprise and it was normal to give them away since for poor people they were luxury items. The documents do not mention whether the clothes were in good condition or not (3 overcoats, 4 frock-coats, 2 blouses, 4 vests, 3 pairs of pants, etc.). A "Turkish" coat is given to Pavel, a house servant, and the son's Turkish decorations are donated to the treasury, while the father keeps the other two ones. The wife, Aristița Balș, takes over the rest of the movable goods (silverware, porcelain, coffee machine, the samovar, furniture, carriages, linens and clothes) and real estate (the estates) in order to pass them down to their children.⁴⁴ Practically, Iordache Filipescu acquires what could be called masculine goods, mostly new or hardly used, including prestige objects such as the Russian decorations, which he could use or pass down to his heir George (Dedu).

The great boyar maintains at a high cost the ostentatious luxury of his Bucharest residence and invests a similar amount in his Oriental garb. His constructed image is the one of high dignitary, similar with a grand vizier of old passed times.⁴⁵ He must maintain this image as his political endeavours make him a constant presence in the Russian and Ottoman diplomatic circles. As an interior minister, he is in direct contact with important individuals from the region and receives regular accounts of what is happening in the principality. Nothing escapes his attention. After 1848 pays a short visit to Constantinople; while there

⁴³ Biblioteca Academiei Române / The Library of the Romanian Academy (hereafter BAR), *Documente Istorice*, MCDXXXIX/153. Catagrafia și socoteala lucrurilor răposatului logofăt Costache G. Filipescu.

⁴⁴ The son of Constantin and of Aristița Balș, Gheorghe, will become a senator, while their daughter Maria (1835–1877) will marry the governor of Kiev, Mihail Catacazi.

⁴⁵ See the example of 17th century Ottoman vizier analyzed in Hedda Reindl-Kiel, "The Must-Haves of a Grand Vizier. Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Pasha's Luxury Assets" in *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, Bd. 106 (2016), pp. 179–221. For him the most valuable were the jewellery (diamonds), sable furs and gold.

is not much information about the trip, we do know it was politically motivated. Surviving letters from Rechid Pasha and from the great *seraschier*⁴⁶ Muhammad Ali, dating from February and March 1850, substantiate the political purpose of the trip and confirm a meeting with the Sultan. Amicably calling him “cher ami,” Rechid reiterates the goodwill of the Porte toward Iordache Filipescu:

“Je saisis cette occasion pour vous assurer que je garde un souvenir bien agréable de votre visite à Constantinople et que Sa Majesté Impériale, notre Auguste Souverain vous conserve toujours cette bienveillance dont vous avez été l’objet de sa part, pendant votre trop court séjour dans sa capitale.”⁴⁷

In fact, Iordache received in 1849 the Ottoman order Nişan Işktar, probably awarded during the above-mentioned trip. Truth be told, however, there were a lot of recipients of this particular order simply because the Porte was awarding it left and right at that time.

It was only upon his death, in 1854, that his efforts to keep appearances surfaced: he was in so much debt that his underage heirs wanted to give up the inheritance. The mansion of his Tăriceni estate, in Prahova county,⁴⁸ was in such disrepair in 1855 that refurbishing and renovating the Russian stoves, the furniture and the local finishes (roof beams, doors, windows) needed a considerable amount of money. Because the boyar mostly lived and socialized in the city, his properties in the countryside were seriously neglected, but a year after his death the authorities notice that the “big houses” on Podul Mogoşoaia and greenfield in the Boteanu neighborhood of the capital also need to be maintained. The cost of repairs and cleaning was considerably high for a State which had other similar situations to administer; nevertheless, it decided to continue to invest. And, the profit incurred from managing the estate needed to be used to help the children. Still underage, as an officer in the imperial Russian Army, George “was in a great bind” and borrowed money from anyone willing to lend it to him. Russian merchant Vasilie Vişoşepschi filed a complaint with the *Epitropia*, the Guardianship, in order to recover his money. With all the bureaucratic entanglements, the state decided to continue to manage the estate of the great

⁴⁶ Army commandant and war minister in the Ottoman Empire.

⁴⁷ BAR, *Documente Istorice*, DCCCXXV/163 f. 1.

⁴⁸ Before that, the estate belonged to Miloş Obrenovici, whose affairs Iordache Filipescu managed.

ban. And that is because “all the debt know to us until today is no larger than 33000 *galbeni*” while the landed estates, vineries, and the salt mountain brought in an annual income of 4,000 *galbeni*; still, items and estates could be sold and, consequently, debts could be paid and profits could be made.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

We started this paper by looking at the image propagated in the West by Charles Doussault of a representative Wallachia’s old elite, Iordache Filipescu. The image was meant to both satisfy the rising interest regarding the Ottoman Empire and to portray Filipescu as somewhat of a symbol of this borderland. Called the “last great Romanian boyar” but Oriental in looks and manners, Filipescu, who hold high administrative positions in this Turkish province and was a throne pretender, had to meet the expectations of the audiences who read about him. However, documents attesting his political and private life show us that Doussault’s portrayal is in part false. Like his father before him, Iordache Filipescu donned Oriental clothes for diplomatic gains and, mainly, to appease the Porte. Furthermore, he keeps his Oriental appearance even after the Adrianople Treaty (1829), when he is courageous enough to be candidate for the position of prince and when the Russian influence is on the rise. Of course, for Westerners, he is an attractive and exotic character in a picturesque place, but things are more complicated than that. He plays along both the Russians and the Turks because the experience of many princes and rulers of Ottoman provinces taught him politics is uncertain as long as the Ottoman Empire continued to exist. However, still, he is aware that times are changing and he believes in change. That is why he gives his sons access to Occidental education, encourages them discreetly to build ties with the Russians and join the imperial army. Towards the end of his life, in the same discreet manner renounces to Turkish items and even agrees with the union of Romanian principalities, although this position conflicted with what he publicly represented. Even though there is no way of knowing for sure, we can surmise that, as his father Dinu did during the Phanariots’ time, Iordache hoped his sons would become princes one day; on his part, he at least tried. Indeed, in the same family, the Filipescus in this case, when different generations have opposing political allegiances, they support one another.