

Rule and Byzantine Heritage in Moldavia and Wallachia from the Seventeenth to the Early Nineteenth Century. Some Case Studies

The study of the reception of the Byzantine heritage north of the Danube can be traced back significantly to the work »Byzance après Byzance« by Nicolae Iorga, which was written in the interwar period¹. This interpretation was and still is very influential today. It has been taken up and developed further by numerous historians. The role of the imperial Byzantine tradition in the rule of the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia has been meticulously examined in several works, especially by Iorga's grandson, the historian Andrei Pippidi². Other scholars, however, have made claims in the context of the modern national ideology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries concerning the possible survival of a true »Christian empire« at the time of the Turkocracy in Moldavia and Wallachia. These include the Byzantinist Dumitru Năstase as well as other historians from Iași. The well-known Byzantinist Petre Ș. Năsturel also advocated the thesis of an imperial Byzantine inheritance by the Romanian rulers, but he formulated it in a much more moderate way. Apart from Pippidi, the legal historian Valentin Alexandru Georgescu and especially the Bucharest Byzantinist Nicolae Șerban Tanașoca were the most critical of the idea of imperial-Byzantine continuity north of the Danube³. In his book published in 2001, the Romanian historian Daniel Barbu goes the furthest and even poses the provocative question of whether it would not be more accurate to speak of »Byzantium against Byzantium« in the case of the principalities⁴.

According to Andrei Pippidi, author of the most important monograph concerning the political Byzantine tradition in the Romanian principalities, the characteristic outlines of the political programme that the princes of Moldavia and Wallachia took from the Byzantine tradition are the following⁵:

- the protection of the Orthodox Church
- governing according to byzantine models in a spirit of concord
- and the fight against the »pagan languages«.

This political programme, according to historians such as Pippidi and Tanașoca, Wallachian and Moldavian princes tried to put into practice. However, according to Pippidi, the suggestive power of this byzantine programme begins to crumble from the second half of the seventeenth century, when »the Phanariotic political order is initiated«⁶.

In the following, a few examples from the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries will be discussed, since particularly striking features of the adaptation of the Byzantine heritage can be found here. Among the characteristics of rulers, we will focus on names and titles, on the legitimization of rulership through symbols of power, and on the role of the church and culture in this context. Finally, some aspects of the so-called »phanariotic phase« will be mentioned.

When speaking of a Byzantine political programme of Romanian princes in this period, it must be said in advance that the only legitimate and possible emperor, the only successor with the title of Byzantine *Basileus* after the capture of the capital and the constitution of the Islamic Empire was the Ottoman sultan, the Padishah of Constantinople. I will give one example from a whole series of evidence. According to an inscription from 1538 in the fortress of Bender, it says there about Suleiman the Magnificent »I am the servant of Allah, and as ruler of the world I am Sultan ... I am the Shah of Baghdad and Iraq, Caesar of Rûm and Sultan of Egypt ...«⁷. The principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, which emerged in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries respectively as medium-sized dominions in northern south-eastern Europe and looked to Byzantium as a model in their ecclesiastical and political matters, very quickly came under the influence of the Ottoman Empire with its advance and had to pay homage to the Sultan as well as tribute and military service. Unlike the central Balkan territories, which were placed under direct Ottoman administration, the two principalities north of the Danube continued to exist as independent political and

1 Iorga, *Byzance*; Maner, *Byzance*; Olar, *Byzance*.

2 Pippidi, *Tradiția*; Pippidi, *Byzantins*.

3 Georgescu, *Bizanțul*; Tanașoca, *Tradiție bizantină*; Tanașoca, *Bizanțul*.

4 Barbu, *Bizanț*. For a comprehensive and fundamental discussion of the topic »Byzantium after the Nation« or the Byzantine heritage in the national historio-

graphies for Romania as well as for the Balkans, see Stamatopoulos, *Byzantium*; Mishkova, *Rival Byzantium*; Mishkova, *The Afterlife* 118-273.

5 Pippidi, *Tradiția* 96 f.

6 Pippidi, *Tradiția*; Neagoe, *Instaurarea* 33-44.

7 Quoted according to Tanașoca, *Tradiție bizantină*; Pippidi, *Tradiția* 107-114.

administrative units until the beginning of the eighteenth century. Although their own Orthodox spiritual, political, military, social and economic elites as well as the rule of the voivodes and other institutions were able to survive, a profound change due to the adaptation to the Ottoman context cannot be denied⁸.

Incorporated into the Ottoman political order, the Christians of Southeast Europe had no possibility to lay claim to the Byzantine imperial succession or to establish an empire of any kind under the authority of a Southeast European prince. Only the open armed revolt of an Orthodox League or the participation of Orthodox south-eastern European Christians in a crusade organised by the major Christian powers, led by the Holy See, the Habsburg Empire or the Russian Empire, would, if successful, have made such a daring enterprise, the restoration of the Byzantine Empire under the authority of a Southeast European ruler, possible. But neither the Habsburgs nor the Romanovs would have accepted to grant a possible Southeast European pretender to the throne any rank other than that of a vassal prince entrusted with the duties of an imperial general⁹.

The Orthodox clergy, for their part, were also not convinced that it had really been the destiny of the princes of Moldavia or Wallachia to assume the imperial inheritance from Byzantium. Patriarch Dositheos II of Jerusalem (1669-1707), who spent a long time in Wallachia and became a trusted advisor to Șerban Cantacuzino (1678-1688) and Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714), was a secret supporter of the idea of an anti-Ottoman crusade, but he disapproved of possible efforts by Wallachian princes to imagine themselves as successors to Byzantine emperors. This can be seen in his statements about Prince Mihnea III, who ruled for only a very short time – he was in power for only one year from 1658 to 1659 – but also about Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714)¹⁰.

Nevertheless, imperial references can be found in the eulogies of Greek clerics and scholars addressed to the princes. These are, of course, at best merely a form of recognition of their own rule in a traditional Byzantine manner within the boundaries of their own principalities, and at worst, however, simple flattery to obtain public funding¹¹.

Research has so far not denied that princes of Moldavia and Wallachia, especially in the seventeenth century, selected elements from the imperial Byzantine ideology or resorted to attributes and functions of the *Basileus* that were necessary for the doctrinal foundations of their princely authority. The princes of Wallachia Matei Basarab (1632-1654), Șerban Cantacuzino (1678-1688), Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714)

and Ștefan Cantacuzino (1714-1716) as well as the prince of Moldavia Vasile Lupu (1634-1653) can be mentioned in this context.

The latter is singled out in particular. Iorga described his reign, as I have argued elsewhere, as a culmination of Byzance après Byzance. According to Iorga, Vasile Lupu explicitly modelled himself on Byzantine rulers. Born as Lupu Coci south of the Danube in the Razgrad region of present-day Bulgaria, he took the name »Vasile« (basileios) when he ascended the throne¹².

Starting with Iorga and other researchers, it has been pointed out several times that the name Vasile, or in Greek βασιλείος (deriving from the sovereign title of the Byzantine emperors βασιλεύς) means something like »imperial«, following the adjective. As a voevode, Lupu signed in Slavic and Romanian documents with the name »Iō Vasilie voevoda« (Иω Βασιλiе воевода), respectively in Greek documents with »Ιωάννης Βασιλείος Βοεβόνδας« and in Latin with »Basilus Dei gratia Princeps Terrarum Moldaviae«. In a letter of 1643 there is the description »Der ieczige Moldauische Wayuoda Lupolo oder Basileo«¹³.

The Greek name, which was part of the strategy of self-stylisation, seemed suitable to confer dignity, since it was an old ruler's name that had already been used by Byzantine emperors. Moreover, Greek had a higher prestige than the local language and culture, especially among the country's elites (from the seventeenth century)¹⁴.

In letters to the High Porte, however, the Moldavian prince refrained from using the name Vasile. He referred to himself as an »old subject of his lord« and called himself »The subject [...], Lupul, the present voivode of Moldavia«. A document that is not more precisely dated, dating from the period between 1638-1644, is introduced as follows: »I lay my face on the ground after the presentation of my submission to the earth under the feet of the illustrious person of His Highness, my strong and happy lord«¹⁵. In a letter from 1641, which was probably addressed to the Grand Vizier, it says the same of Lupu, the »lowly slave and speck of dust«: »I lower my face and wipe with my cheek the blessed dust of the illustrious feet of His Highness, my mighty and generous and fortunate Sultan [...] The most just and exalted Lord [...] the generous Sultan may increase his life and power and glory and greatness day by day; Amen!«¹⁶

How did the name Vasile, referring to the title of the Byzantine emperor, fit in with the submissive tone of the documents sent to Constantinople? Throughout his reign, Lupu always saw himself as a loyal servant of the High Porte, and in no way did he intend to provoke the leadership of

8 Ursprung, Walachei; Ursprung, Moldau; Panait, Status; Papp, System 399-404.

9 Tanașoca, Tradiție bizantină.

10 Tanașoca, Tradiție bizantină; Pippidi, Tradiția 312.

11 Tanașoca, Tradiție bizantină; Pippidi, Tradiția 149.

12 Maner, Byzance 35; Șerban, Vasile Lupu; Babinger, Originea 137-146; Cotovanu, L'émigration sud-danubienne 4.

13 Here quoted according to Ursprung, Herrschaftslegitimation 142; Năstase, Coroana 48; Mureșan, Bule de aur 52.

14 Ursprung, Herrschaftslegitimation 142. On the importance of the Greek language for the principalities, see Nicolau, Pătrunderea limbii grecești 231-249.

15 Mehmed, Documente nr. 166. 165 f.

16 Gemil, Relațiile nr. 107. 244 f.

the Ottoman Empire. The adoption of the name »Vasile« was primarily related to the person of the ruler as well as the local ruling conditions.

Lupu quickly made up for the lack of legitimacy due to his foreign origin. Once he succeeded in purchasing landed property, he also achieved the high rank of a high judge (»vornic«) among the boyars. He also married the daughter of a high Moldovan official, Costea Bucioc, who was himself related to the Cantacuzino family from Wallachia. In this way, Lupu established kinship relations with the most notable boyar families of the principalities¹⁷. Despite the integration, or precisely because of the striking rise, Lupu »because he was also one of the Greeks« had to defend himself against opposition not only from the ranks of the local boyars¹⁸.

Lupu also gained recognition and prestige in other ways. The pomp that the prince staged at his court, which fascinated many of his contemporaries, served to illustrate his claim to power in a way that could be grasped by the senses. In this way, the Byzantine model, which was used for legitimization purposes, was to be given a material form. In general, the princes gave their court an imperial appearance not only through the splendour and festivities of the ceremonial but also through the buildings¹⁹.

Vasile Lupu not only had to compensate for his lack of autochthonous roots. In addition, when he came to power he was considered a favourite of the High Porte, who had gained his position through intrigues and bribery, among other things against potential rivals or even his predecessor Miron Barnovschi²⁰. The name Vasile was intended to serve the prestige of the Moldovan prince. The prince did not intend to challenge the sovereignty of the sultan. He repeatedly expressed his devotion to the Ottoman Empire. Thus on his seal is written: »Lupu, voivode in the territory of Moldavia, servant in the dust of the feet of the Osman dynasty«. Lupu's letters to the High Porte are written in a similarly submissive tone²¹.

As Daniel Ursprung explains, such verbal subordination rituals, which in today's understanding are reminiscent of slavish dependence, cannot be understood as stigmatising submission. Rather, the position of a servant was expressed, which presupposed closeness to the ruler and thus honour as well as the possibility of influence²².

By using the name »Vasile«, Lupu finally signalled that he followed an autocratic imperial ideal of rule. The idea of Lupu is traced in research to Emperor Basileios I (the Mace-



Fig. 1 Prince Matei Basarab, receives the sceptre of rulership from the Archangel Gabriel. – (Photo Țetcu Mircea Rareș, CC BY-SA 2.5, via Wikimedia Commons).

donian, 867-886), but the Moldavian prince is said to have followed the policies of the last imperial dynasty of the Palaiologians²³. This was not only met with approval by contemporaries, as can be seen from Miron Costin's characterisation. The chronicler saw in Lupu a »man of arrogant and imperial disposition«²⁴. This view was also held by an oligarchic boyar opposition²⁵.

In addition to the sultan as a source of rule and as a justification for rank and dignity, the princes of Wallachia and Moldavia in the period considered in these explanations also make references to the divine legitimation, indeed the divine origin of their absolute power as autocratic rulers. The image of princes chosen by divine grace is often found in the iconographic representations of the monasteries, as can be illustrated by two examples. In the monastery church of Arnota in Wallachia, in a fresco from 1644, its founder, Prince Matei Basarab, receives the sceptre of rulership from the Archangel Gabriel (fig. 1)²⁶. God's grace becomes even clearer in a fresco in the church of the Horezu Monastery, which was built

17 Căndeia, *Istoria Românilor* 136f.

18 Costin, *Letopisețul* 81; Armbruster, *Grausame Zeiten* 128.

19 Wasiucionek, *Simulation von Souveranität*. For the buildings, see below.

20 For the procedure, see also Kármán, *Networks* 125, fn. 20.

21 Ursprung, *Herrschaftslegitimation* 143. 180-182; Iorga, *Vasile Lupu* 212.

22 Ursprung, *Herrschaftslegitimation* 144.

23 Căndeia, *Istoria Românilor* 138; Negrău, *Cultul suveranului* 108.

24 Costin, *Letopisețul* 100; Armbruster *Grausame Zeiten* 151. The characterisation must take into account Miron Costin's pro-Polish stance. Joudiou, *Le rôle des chroniques roumaines* 215.

25 Pippidi, *Tradiția politică 176-178*. The extent to which the boyars pursued a »Polish model« through their resistance, as Ursprung (*Herrschaftslegitimation*

136. 180) assumes, cannot be read from the sources. According to Murgescu (*Țările Române* 215), Lupu possessed the Polish indigenous status and thus benefited from the rights of the Polish nobles. In order to be able to shed more light on this fact, the difficult position of the principality between the great powers of the Ottoman Empire and the Polish-Lithuanian noble republic must be considered. Chelcu, *Istorie moldo-polonă* 37-78; Baidaus, *Politica și diplomația; Gemil, Țările române*. Moldavia's position between the powers was also recorded by contemporaries such as the chronicler Miron Costin. Costin, *Letopisețul* 123; Armbruster, *Grausame Zeiten* 178.

26 Pippidi, *Tradiția* 68 Anm. 210 Fig. 4, 187.



Fig. 2 Constantin Brâncoveanu receives crown from Christ. Votive image in the monastery church of Horezu. – (Photo Dan Mihai Pitea, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons).



Fig. 3 Abraham van Westervelt, Basilius Prince of Moldovia. – (Photo Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, P-Slg. illum. 3.8).

in 1690-1693. The depicted founder Constantin Brâncoveanu receives the crown from Christ (**fig. 2**)²⁷.

The extent to which the princes of Moldavia and Wallachia related to Byzantium to legitimise their rule can also be illustrated by other elements. In the case of the Wallachian princes Șerban and Ștefan Cantacuzino, the name was already the programme and, as already mentioned, Vasile Lupu and Constantin Brâncoveanu are also related to the Cantacuzini.

Other symbols stood for the special lordly authority. First of all, the components that characterised his rule appear in the images of Vasile Lupu. In addition to the coat of arms with the imperial crown, there are contemporary images showing Lupu wearing a fur cap derived from regional or Ottoman influences (**fig. 3**). Furthermore, in addition to the Moldavian bull's head, the Moldavian prince also used the emblem of the Byzantine double-headed eagle as his coat of arms and sigil²⁸. The symbol of the double-headed eagle is frequently encountered in the context of the princes mentioned here. The elements frequently appear on the rulers Șerban and Ștefan Cantacuzino²⁹: for example, on the tomb slab for Șerban Cantacuzino from the Cotroceni monastery dated 21 October 1689 (**fig. 4**)³⁰. The preface of Șerban Cantacuzino's Bible of

27 For both illustrations see Negrău, *Cultul suveranului* 119f.

28 One example is the bronze candelabra that Lupu gave to the monastery church of Trei Ierarhi. Illustration in Cădea, *Istoria Românilor* 139.

29 For Șerban Cantacuzino see. Cosovan, *Domnitori* 25-27. Coat of arms and seals of the rulers Șerban and Ștefan Cantacuzino in Lazăr, *Cantacuzinii* 50-69.

30 For the Cantacuzini and Cotroceni see also Cantacuzino, *Cantacuzinii și Cotrocenii* 73-82.



Fig. 4 Tombstone of Prince Șerban Cantacuzino, Cotroceni Monastery October 21, 1689. – (Photo Colecția Mănăstirea Stavropoleos, no. 87).



Fig. 5 Coat of arms of Serban Cantacuzino. – (After Biblia de la București [1688] fol. 1).

1688 (fig. 5) says of the prince³¹: »Pride of the Hellenes, glory of Byzantium, splendour of the Cantacuzini and power of all Mysia«. The double-headed eagle can also be seen prominently on various building complexes. Mention can be made here of the Mogoșoaia Castle, built by Constantin Brâncoveanu between 1698 and 1702, and the Horezu Monastery³².

The close ties to the Church, its support and the protection of the Orthodox faith can be illustrated once again by Vasile Lupu. His »imperial project« or self-presentation, which he pursued with particular coherence³³, also included strong influence on the Orthodox Church in the Ottoman Empire. He established foundations throughout the empire and intervened in the political affairs of the Orthodox Church by exert-

ing decisive influence on the deposition and appointment of patriarchs, e.g. in the deposition and subsequent execution of Kyrillos Loukaris in 1638. He also exerted influence on dogmatic disputes. In 1642, for example, he convened an ecumenical synod in the Trei Ierarhi church in Iași, which he himself presided over like his Byzantine models³⁴.

Researchers also see a similar approach to the Church and tendencies to exert influence in the case of the Wallachian prince Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714), who came from the Cantacuzini family on his mother's side. He fought the propaganda of the Church united with Rome and favoured Orthodoxy. He, like other princes of the seventeenth century, apart from Vasile Lupu, especially Matei Basarab and Șerban

31 The preface is by Nikolaos Glykys and the Bible was printed in Venice. <https://muzeulbibliei.ro/biblia-de-la-bucuresti> (11.02.2025). For the Bible of 1688: Piticari, Cultură și heraldică 61-96.

32 For the castle: Szemkovics, Coats of Arms 187-197; for the Horezu Monastery: Szemkovics/Teodorescu, Analysis 703-711. On the role of the Cantacuzini and the Byzantine references, see Căndeia, Stolnicul 113. 116.

33 See Wasiucionek, Simulation von Souveränität 113.

34 Suttner, Vasile Lupu 32-72; Iorga, Vasile Lupu 207-236; Pall, Les relations 66-140. See also Păcurariu, Istoria bisericii 29. 261 f.



Fig. 6 Church of the Three Hierarchs, Iași. – (Photo Pudelek, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons).

Cantacuzino, built numerous churches and monasteries³⁵. An outstanding example that illustrates the ruling claim as well as the Byzantine programme is the monastery church of Three Hierarchs (Trei Ierarhi) built by Vasile Lupu in 1637-1639 (fig. 6)³⁶.

The princes mentioned here also supported monasticism financially, spiritually and culturally on an extensive scale, showering all the monasteries from the Holy Mountain of Athos, from the Near and Middle East with donations and protecting them. Iași, the princely seat of Moldavia and Bucharest that of Wallachia were considered centres of Byzantine concentration for the heads of Orthodoxy. The cultivation of Byzantine traditions was also expressed in the «Brâncoveanu style» named after Constantin Brâncoveanu, which contains Byzantine elements and was reflected in both ecclesiastical and secular buildings even after the prince's death (fig. 7-8)³⁷.

Not only Brâncoveanu, but also the other princes mentioned here, promoted a style in culture and art that borrowed from Byzantine elements, although this was primarily mediated by Bulgarian and Serbian precedents and models. In short, they adapted the Byzantine heritage to local needs and necessities, as Pippidi points out³⁸.

The princes also founded printing works where books were published not only in Greek. And just as lasting were the schools founded, where instruction in Greek was offered to the children of the boyars and the clergy by and for the Greeks who had emigrated and emigrated to the principalities in not insignificant numbers. These included the academy founded by Vasile Lupu in Iași in 1640 and the school founded by Șerban Cantacuzino in Bucharest, probably in 1679, which was transformed into an academy by Brâncoveanu in 1694³⁹. In addition to the Byzantine tradition, from the seventeenth century onwards these institutions were influenced not only

35 Păcurariu, *Istoria bisericii* 216f.

36 Trișcu, *The »Three Hierarchs«*; Păcurariu, *Istoria bisericii* 26f.; Szekely, *Un proiect nerealizat* 537-540.

37 Mihăescu, *Artele brâncovenesti*; Barbu, *Arta brâncovenească* 233-261; Negrău, *Byzantine legacy* 89-100. On Bucharest in the time of Constantin Brâncoveanu, see Panait, *Orașul București* 46-67.

38 Pippidi, *Tradiția politică* 293-306. 315-344.

39 Camariano-Cioran, *Academiile Domnești*. On the cultural model at the time of Brâncoveanu, see Duțu, *Modelul* 156-169. See also Busuioceanu, *Constantin Brâncoveanu* 9-23.



Fig. 7 Kretzulescu church, Bucharest. – (Photo Diego Delso, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia-Commons).



Fig. 8 Stavropoleos church, Bucharest. – (Photo Andrei Dan Suciu, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons).

by Western and Russian influences, but also by Greek ones. Evidence of the activity in the printing works and schools are a whole series of manuscripts, including manuscripts with theological, legal and philosophical content, but also texts concerning Byzantine music⁴⁰.

Among the teachers of the Academy in Bucharest are some renowned Greek scholars: Sevastos Kyminitis (1689-1703); Grigorios Konstantas (1782-1787); Lambros Photiadis (1792-1805, rector) or Rigas Feraios or Velestinlis (1757-1798). While the teachers of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth centuries in particular were still oriented towards the imperial Byzantine model, from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards the ethnonational concept increasingly appeared in the speeches and writings of the scholars.

A high point of the borrowing from Byzantine models under Vasile Lupu was also evident in the prince's extra-ecclesiastical activities. Thus, he initiated a collection of legal texts in order to put an end to the uncertainty in the finding of law, which was predominantly based on customary law and, in addition, on a number of Byzantine legal sources. The great code of laws compiled under Vasile Lupu brought together Byzantine legal sources (an agrarian and penal code dating back to Justinian) into a unified body of law. In 1646, the »Cartea românească de învățătură de la pravilele împărătești și de la alte giudețe« (Romanian textbook according to the imperial laws and other judgements) appeared in Iași in Romanian⁴¹.

The borrowing of Byzantine forms was not intended to question Ottoman rule in south-eastern Europe and to resurrect the Eastern Roman Empire, as it were. The Ottoman Empire formed the framework in which the representation of rule took place. In all cases, the invocation of Byzantine models probably arose from more obvious local reasons.

For example, Vasile Lupu was not only able to express his aversion to the model of limiting the power of the rulers, as advocated by various boyar factions, but also to expand his sphere of influence. The reference to Byzantium cannot be interpreted as a questioning of the Ottoman claim to sovereignty; on the contrary, it represented a strategy of integration into the Ottoman ruling alliance, in contrast to the repeated orientation of policy towards Poland-Lithuania in Moldavia in the seventeenth century.

But the link to Byzantium also offered a point of connection for the large number of Greeks who came to Moldavia and Wallachia from the Ottoman Empire⁴². To a certain extent, it stood for their own cultural identification, for the connection

with the glorious past of the Orthodox Empire in the Eastern Mediterranean, in whose tradition they saw themselves. Byzantium could therefore become the common point of reference for the local elites as well as for the Greek upper class newly settling in the country. Existing fierce conflicts could thus be masked and an integrating, meaningful effect could unfold based on the reference to the idea of a Byzantine tradition. Beyond the daily quarrels and disagreements, the disputes between different boyar factions, i.e. the native boyars and the *homines novi*, about power and influence, the Byzantine model established a shining example on which everyone could in principle agree. This also concealed a centralist-absolutist policy of the princes that was opposed to the aspirations of the boyars⁴³. The focus was less on concrete questions of implementation, but rather on affective attributions of meaning that condensed into a symbol in which the most diverse meanings overlapped. The values shared with Byzantium, above all the Orthodox confession, made it easier to internalise the Byzantine model and to identify with it. The symbol could thus be declared binding without much resistance and the elites committed to it. The consensus established in this way represented a powerful resource from which legitimacy could be drawn by whoever gained the power of interpretation over it.

Byzantium was therefore not so much a real phenomenon as a concept that was conceived in the mind, onto which a whole series of ideas about society and its functioning could be bundled. The decisive factor was that this invented tradition had a meaningful effect that placed the rule of the Moldavian and Wallachian princes in a larger context and thus granted them a place in a universal divine plan of salvation. The reference to Byzantium, the handling of the ideal and material complex described as »Byzantine heritage« at the Moldavian and Wallachian princely courts is not least a reference to the ideal striving for sovereignty on the one hand and the real political conditions and claims of the local powers (Poland-Lithuania and the Ottoman Empire in the case of Moldavia and the Ottoman Empire in the case of Wallachia) on the other⁴⁴.

In a final short section, some observations on the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, referred to by historiography as the »period of the Phanariots«, will be summarised⁴⁵. Even if the demarcation, as Bogdan Murgescu pointedly points out, is a historiographical construct, according to Andrei Pippidi, who agrees with this construct, new developments can also be identified from the eighteenth century onwards, some of which, however, were already present in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries⁴⁶:

40 Cartoian, *Istoria literaturii* 91-173; Păcurariu, *Istoria bisericii* 18-28; Jumară, *Tradiția bizantină*.

41 Georgescu, *Bizanțul* 119. 191. 225. 230.

42 On the following see Ursprung, *Herrschaftslegitimation* 181 f.; Nastase, *Imperial claims* 185-224.

43 Negrău, *Cultul suveranului* 106.

44 Wasiucionek, *Simulation von Souveränität* 107.

45 Murgescu, *Țările Române* 59.

46 Pippidi, *Tradiția politică* 313.

1. the transformation of the princes into officials of the Ottoman Empire, appointed by the Sultan without being elected in advance in the country;
2. the administration of both principalities by a bureaucracy of Greek origin;
3. the intensification of the economic exploitation of the two principalities; and
4. the emergence of a new epoch in the history of culture and mentality, which comprised the eighteenth century and the first twenty or thirty years of the nineteenth century.

The form of rule of the Phanariots in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is characterised by the following main features: an even greater openness to Western European modernity, an increase in the intellectual standard of living, a decline in the interest of the boyars in pursuing a military career for the planning of a crusade in favour of employment in advantageous economic enterprises or in administration, and the increase in the importance of Constantinopolitan Greekness in the public and cultural life of the Danubian principalities.

Byzantine elements are thus found both in the ideology of the native princes and in that of the Phanariots, because their common purpose was to justify and consolidate, in Christian terms, the authority of the rulers. One piece of evidence is an allegorical painting from 1789, which shows an

apotheosis of the deeds of the Prince of Wallachia Nikolaos Mavrogenis (1786-1790). The person of the prince can be seen in the centre as a luminous figure by the grace of God, sitting elevated on a gilded throne. The text to the left and right of the image refers to two central intentions, both of which were denied to him: to rule over a large empire and to achieve hereditary rule⁴⁷.

The Phanariots did deepen dependence on the Porte and the Constantinopolitan patriarchy through their rule. At the same time, however, they contributed to an opening towards Western European influences. The victory of Greek as the language used in culture and in not only elevated communication in the eighteenth century among the Phanariots can be seen as the fulfilment of a development that was in the offing in the sixteenth century and came to fruition in the seventeenth century. However, while at the time of Constantin Brâncoveanu Greek was still cultivated as the language of the »Christian people«, so to speak of the orthodox Romaic millets (millet-i Rûm), it was to gradually become the language of the Greek people among the Phanariots, through the victory of Enlightenment thought and the new concept of the nation.

Finally, from the eighteenth century onwards, a new component of the Byzantine idea, a new chapter, began to emerge through the increased infiltration of knowledge from Western Europe: Next to the Greek Empire came the Roman Empire and the increased reference in the principalities to Roman roots. A new myth was to replace another.

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Summary / Zusammenfassung / Résumé

Rule and Byzantine Heritage in Moldavia and Wallachia from the Seventeenth to the Early Nineteenth Century. Some case studies

Based on historiography, the paper focus on the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, since we find here particularly striking features of the adaptation of the Byzantine heritage in the two principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. Finally, some aspects of the so-called »Phanariotic phase« are discussed. Using the example of the princes of Wallachia Matei Basarab (1632-1654), Șerban Cantacuzino (1678-1688), Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714) and Ștefan Cantacuzino (1714-1716) and the prince of Moldavia Vasile Lupu (1634-1653) it is about the Byzantine legacy in the political and cultural sphere. The reference to Byzantium played a central role in the legitimation of rule (e.g. symbols of rule), the relationship to the church and in the area of education. Finally, continuities and new developments in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are pointed out.

Herrschaft und byzantinisches Erbe in der Moldau und der Walachei vom 17. bis zum frühen 19. Jahrhundert

Ausgehend von der Geschichtsschreibung konzentriert sich der Beitrag auf das 17. und frühe 18. Jahrhundert, da wir hier besonders auffällige Merkmale der Anpassung des byzantinischen Erbes in den beiden Fürstentümern Moldau und Walachei finden. Schließlich werden einige Aspekte der sogenannten »Phanarioten-Phase« diskutiert. Am Beispiel der Fürsten der Walachei Matei Basarab (1632-1654), Șerban Cantacuzino (1678-1688), Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714) und Ștefan Cantacuzino (1714-1716) und des Fürsten von Moldau Vasile Lupu (1634-1653) geht es um das byzantinische Erbe im politischen und kulturellen Bereich. Der Bezug auf Byzanz spielte eine zentrale Rolle bei der Legitimation der Herrschaft (z. B. Herrschaftssymbole), dem Verhältnis zur Kirche und im Bildungsbereich. Schließlich werden Kontinuitäten und neue Entwicklungen im 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert aufgezeigt.

Le pouvoir et l'héritage byzantin en Moldavie et en Valachie du XVII^e au début du XIX^e siècle

En partant de l'historiographie, la contribution se concentre sur le XVII^e siècle et le début du XVIII^e siècle, car c'est à cette époque que l'on trouve les caractéristiques les plus frappantes de l'adaptation de l'héritage byzantin dans les deux principautés de Moldavie et de Valachie. Enfin, certains aspects de la »phase phanariote« sont discutés. L'héritage byzantin dans les domaines politique et culturel est abordé à travers l'exemple des princes de Valachie Matei Basarab

(1632-1654), Șerban Cantacuzino (1678-1688), Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714) et Ștefan Cantacuzino (1714-1716) et du prince de Moldavie Vasile Lupu (1634-1653) il s'agit de l'héritage byzantin dans les domaines politique et culturel. La référence à Byzance jouait un rôle central dans la légitimation du pouvoir (par exemple les symboles du pouvoir), dans les relations avec l'Église et dans le domaine de l'éducation. Enfin, les continuités et les nouveaux développements au XVIII^e siècle et au début du XIX^e siècle sont mis en évidence.