

## ON THE INTERRELATIONS BETWEEN WALLACHIA AND BULGARIANS DURING THE 17TH CENTURY: BENEFACTORS AND BENEFICIARIES

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It is a well known fact that during the centuries after the Ottoman conquest of the Bulgarian territories the population of the enslaved Bulgarian lands maintained connections with Wallachia, although the issue of mutual contacts in this period has not been specifically investigated and considered systematically. Regarding the 17th century the emphasis in scientific research has been placed so far mostly on the contacts of the Bulgarian Catholics with the Wallachian ruler Matei Basarab and his entourage, as well as on the donations of Matei Basarab and Constantin Brâncoveanu in Bulgarian territories. Apart from these links, however, there are data on other aspects of the complex picture of the bilateral relationship. The aim of the present text is focusing on the different transmitters of influence: Wallachian rulers, representatives of the high clergy, wealthy people, craftsmen and icon painters, all of them viewed through the perspective of the question who were the benefactors and beneficiaries during this epoch and what were some of the mechanisms that triggered them.

**Keywords:** donations, benefactors, Wallachian voivodes, Târnovo Metropolitans, Arbanasi, Ottoman period.

Today we live in a digital age. Never before has the access to such a diverse and vast amount of information been so easy. Instant information exchange and the acquisition of the latest scientific achievements lead to one great advantage: today we have an even better idea of what we do not know. Romanian libraries and archives preserve arrays of historical documents from the late medieval era, many of which have been published, but remain unknown to the majority of Bulgarian specialists<sup>1</sup>. For various reasons, in Bulgaria we do not have such a rich heritage of written sources and while sometimes for a Romanian or a Russian it is possible to trace one's ancestral lineages up to the 15th century, in Bulgaria it is often difficult to ascertain our family roots more than three generations back. To recapture the past through genealogy may be only one of the many discursive practices for acquisition of historical knowledge, yet it is an eloquent example. The evidence is

<sup>1</sup> I am especially grateful to Radu G. Păun for reading the draft of this article, suggesting important improvements and bibliographical references, some of which I was able to implement in this text. I would like to also thank Ivan Biliarsky, Ovidiu Cristea and Ovidiu Olar for providing me with access to publications impossible to obtain in Bulgaria.

fragmentary not only for whole generations during certain periods, but also for certain settlements, or for the everyday urban and rural life as well, due to the relatively small number of primary domestic sources or archival evidence, which could give us credible information. Indeed, there are still unexplored collections in Bulgarian repositories. Such is the case with the collection of the Church-Historical and Archival Institute in Sofia<sup>2</sup> and with the Zograph monastery on Mt Athos, where the set-up and digitization of the whole collection of manuscripts<sup>3</sup>, printed books, monastery chronicle codices and icons is in progress.

This means that any additional source that can provide more information is of great value for Bulgarian specialists, be it the rich Ottoman sources referring to the period, foreign travellers' accounts, or Russian, Moldavian or Wallachian administrative and diplomatic chancellery documents. Serious efforts were invested thus far by Bulgarian Ottomanists in translating, studying and publishing Ottoman sources and the latter are implemented successfully in various cases; it will suffice to mention here the works of Elena Grozdanova<sup>4</sup> or Rossitsa Gradeva<sup>5</sup>. The leading Bulgarian specialist who worked with the documents from Romanian archives was Pavlina Boycheva. She dedicated much of her time to studying the ties between the Northern Danube principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia and the population in

<sup>2</sup> The work on the inventory of the Slavic manuscripts in the archive of the Church-Historical and Archival Institute, Sofia began more than fifteen years ago and the first volume appeared in 2009, see Б. Христова, Е. Мусакова, Е. Узунова, *Опис на славянските ръкописи в Църковно-историческия и архивен институт – София. Том 1: Библейски книги*, Sofia 2009. The collection of the Institute consists of 375 Slavonic, 220 Greek and approximately 100 other manuscripts, more than 600 old printed books and several thousand documents.

<sup>3</sup> The inventory of the Slavic manuscripts kept in the library of the Zograph monastery on Mt Athos is accessible online: <http://slav.uni-sofia.bg/zograflib/> last accessed 2015.09.12 and the collection with digital copies of these manuscripts is available at the Philological library of the Sofia University.

<sup>4</sup> Both scholars have rich bibliography, and here only some of their studies will be quoted: Е. Грозданова, С. Димитров, *Българската селска община през XV–XVIII век*, Sofia 1979; Е. Грозданова, *Българската народност през XVII в. Демографско изследване*, Sofia 1988; Е. Грозданова, С. Андреев, *Джелепкеианите в българските и съседните им земи през XVI–XVIII век: по документи от наши и чужди архиви*, Sofia 1998; Е. Grozdanova, “Bulgarian Ottoman Studies at the Turn of Two Centuries: Continuity and Innovation”, *Études balkaniques* XLI, 3 (2005), p. 93–146.

<sup>5</sup> R. Gradeva, “Ottoman policy towards Christian church buildings”, *Études balkaniques* XXX, 4 (1994), p. 14–36; id., “Turks and Bulgarians, 14th to 18th centuries”, *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* V, 2 (1995), p. 173–187; id., “Orthodox Christians in the Kadı Courts: The Practice of the Sofia Sheriat Court, Seventeenth Century”, *Islamic Law and Society* IV, 1 (1997), p. 37–69; id., “War and Peace along the Danube: Vidin at the End of the Seventeenth Century”, *Oriente moderno* XX, 1 (2001), p. 149–175; id., *Rumeli under the Ottomans, 15th–18th centuries: Institutions and Communities*, Istanbul 2004; id., “Towards the Portrait of ‘the Rich’ in Ottoman Provincial Society: Sofia in the 1670s”, in *Provincial Elite in the Ottoman Empire, Halcyon Days in Crete V.A Symposium Held in Rethymno, 10–12 January 2003*, ed. A. Anastasopoulos, Rethymno 2005, p. 149–199; id., *Frontiers of Ottoman Space, Frontiers in Ottoman Society*, Istanbul 2014.

the former Bulgarian territories in the 15th–18th centuries<sup>6</sup>, but after she passed away there are no substantial advances in this research field.

The present article, despite the expectations that its title might raise, has no ambition to fill this gap. Using pieces of different fragmentary information scattered in books and articles I should only like to comment briefly on the big problem of the transition of people, ideas, and money between Wallachia and former Bulgarian lands, in an attempt to provide more details for the overall picture of the mechanisms and motivations behind these movements and to shed light on the benefactors and beneficiaries who played a leading role in these processes during 17th century. In order to reconstruct some of these aspects I will provide as evidence documents and artefacts connected with representatives of the groups that have a high level of mobility during the late medieval period<sup>7</sup>: ecclesiastic

<sup>6</sup> П. Бойчева, П. Русев, “Кирило-Методиевските църковно-културни традиции във Влахия и Молдова”, in *Първи международен конгрес по българистика. Симпозиум Кирилometодиевистика и старобългаристика*, eds. П. Зарев, Д. Косев et al., Sofia 1982, p. 50–57; П. Бойчева, “Литературата на Втората българска държава и нейното разпространение в Молдова и Влахия”, in *Величието на Търновград*, ed. А. Попов, Sofia 1985, p. 274–278; P. Boycheva/Vojčeva, “Renseignements sur les Bulgares d’après des historiographes roumains”, *Études balkaniques* XXIX, 3 (1993), p. 30–37; П. Бойчева, Б. Бешевлиев, “Историкогеографски сведения в три документа, посветени на Михай Храбри (края на XVI-началото на XVII век)”, in *Общото и специфичното в балканските култури до края на XIX век: Сборник в чест на 70-годишнината на проф. Василка Тъпкова-Заимова*, ed. Г. Бакалов, Sofia 1999, p. 256–263; P. Vojčeva, “Sur un acte de donation de Constantin Brâncoveanu à l’Église orthodoxe de Târnovo”, *Études balkaniques* XXXVII, 1 (2001), p. 71–79; id. “Un document de Constantin Brâncoveanu relatif au monastère de Kapinovo (Sant-Nicolas) près de Târnovo”, in *Omagiu Virgil Cârdea la 75 de ani, vol. 1*, coord. P.-H. Stahl, Bucharest 2002, p. 97–107. For Pavlina Boycheva’s bibliography, see S. Rakova, “In memoriam Pavlina Boycheva (1946–2005)”, *Études balkaniques* XLII, 1 (2006), p. 173–176; Z. Mihail, “Recherches sur le vieux slave à l’Institut des Études Sud-Est Européennes”, *Revue des études sud-est européennes* XLV (2007), p. 451–459, 458.

<sup>7</sup> Another such “mobile” group during this period were the men of letter, scribes and copyists. It goes beyond the scope of the present research, but here evidence from the period under discussion will be noted to not neglect the topic completely. The great figures among the scribes had always been “cosmopolitan” people who travelled extensively. Such an example from the period is Iov Šišatovac, born in Timișoara, he received his education in the Šišatovac monastery, Fruška Gora, worked on Mount Athos, and for some time resided in Bulgaria, where at The Holy Trinity Monastery near Vratsa worked with dyak Dragul, from the village of Kameno Pole, on the set of Mineia, and in 1612 wrote the Boyana bead roll, mentioning in a marginal note that he was a stranger there who stopped in at Sofia for a rest from the difficulties of his wondering, see М. Станчева, С. Станчев, *Боянският поменик*, Sofia 1963, p. 86. Scribes who travelled and worked on both sides of the Danube were not a rarity. Among them was the copyist Radul Grammarian who passed from Wallachia in Bulgarian lands in the end 16th century, see P. Atanasov, “L’activité littéraire de Radul le Grammaire en Bulgarie: Contribution aux relations culturelles bulgaro-roumaines”, *Études balkaniques* VI, 3 (1970), p. 70–95; G. Mihăilă, “Радул Граматик, деец на българската и румънската култура през втората половина на XVI в.”, in id., *Langue et culture roumaines dans l’espace Sud-Est Européen*, Bucharest 2001, p. 483–498. During the 17th century Bulgarian scribes travelled across the Danube for training and education, such was the case with the priest Stefan of Lovech, who in 1655 went to Tirgoviste to study with the “holy dascāl Daniil” – the writer, printer and poet Daniil Panoneanul, one of the scholars of the “Greek and Latin school” in Tirgoviste who was a marked figure for the middle 17th century literary activities in Wallachia. Due to this training, Stefan of

authorities, merchants and icon painters/craftsmen, as well as with the donations for the religious establishments both in Wallachian and Bulgarian sides, including Wallachian rulers' donations for Bulgarian churches and monasteries. The main source of evidence comes from the diocese of the Tărnovo metropolitan bishopric. This was the institution that inherited what was left by the Bulgarian Patriarchate after its submission to the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the first half of the 15th century<sup>8</sup>, and this was one of the biggest dioceses in the Balkans where Bulgarians, Greeks, Albanians, Vlachs and Serbs coexisted with each other and with the Muslim population. This multi-ethnicity of the Orthodox Christian population of the Tărnovo metropolitan bishopric is among the reasons to choose using data from its history in order to acquire relevant information. Significant for this choice was also the fact that several Bulgarian studies published recently shed more light into its situation during the 17–18th centuries, providing valuable information for the subject of this paper; all of these works will be quoted further in the text.

Another clarification should be made here, in line with the above mentioned, and in connection with the title of the present article. The use of the ethnonym “Bulgarians” should not be associated with an ethnocentric standpoint, but rather be considered similar to the way Dennis Hupchik used the same ethnonym in his book published in 1993<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, to distinguish in a convincing way “Bulgarian” presence north of the Danube during this century is very difficult: how to look for “foreign” presence, what to say for a diaspora, when dealing with people who have shared the same religion and, to some point in time, same language. In addition, sources from the period are not something which we can rely on to draw substantive conclusions in this direction, because the terms are either too general or ambiguous, in the sense that one and the same word, which for us may sound as defining ethnicity, in a specific context may also denote religious or professional identity<sup>10</sup>. Ottoman sources do not make it easier, since they show that in general

Lovech left the only example of syllabic poetry, known today from the 17th century Bulgarian literature, see Б. Христова, Д. Караджова, Е. Узунова, *Бележки на българските книжовници X–XVIII век. Том 2. XVI–XVIII век*, Sofia 2004, p. 121, 299–300.

<sup>8</sup> О. Тодорова, *Православната църква и българите, XV–XVII век*, Sofia 1997, p. 40–46.

<sup>9</sup> D. Hupchick, *The Bulgarians in the Seventeenth Century: Slavic Orthodox Society and Culture Under Ottoman Rule*, Jefferson, North Carolina and London 1993. For the ethnonym “Bulgarian” during the 15th–17th centuries see also Ц. Георгиева, “Етнонимът българин в системата на българския исторически спомен през XV–XVII век”, in *Изследвания в чест на професор д-р Христо Гандев. По случай 70 год. от рождението му*, ed. Д. Косев et al., Sofia 1983, p. 155–172.

<sup>10</sup> The bibliography that touches the problems of the ethnonyms before the age of the national identities formation is rich, see for example R. Detrez, “Pre-national identities in the Balkans”, in *Entangled histories of the Balkans. Volume I: National ideologies and language policies*, eds. R. Daskalov, Tc. Marinov, Leiden 2013, p. 21–75, with the thesis that in the Balkans during this age “ethnic, religious, social and professional identities were blurred, overlapping and melding” and “the terms “Christian” and to a lesser extent “Romaeon” and “Greek” (the latter connoting city-dwellers or traders) functioned as proper, common names for the entire orthodox Christian community in the Ottoman Empire”.

Ottoman authorities had no interest in making ethnic distinctions between different Christian groups: all Christian inhabitants south of the river were considered mainly as a flock of taxpayers – “*rayah*”, or as “*gavur*” (infidels) or “*rum*” in terms of their religious affiliation, and even during censuses they were not often asked to define their ethnic origin. The latter was likewise not clarified enough in Romanian sources from the period in which it is not unusual to designate Bulgarians, especially those coming from north-western Bulgarian territories, as *sârbi* (Serbs), a practice that persisted for a long time<sup>11</sup>. Obviously, within the common religious, cultural and linguistic ground that had been shared during late medieval time by the population on both sides of the Danube, differences would melt. This is the reason to now move away from nationalistic perceptions of the historical past, choosing instead a more moderate position and in assent to Rossitsa Gradeva’s view that:

“it makes more sense to approach the Balkan peninsula as a zone of an amazing ethnic, religious, linguistic, political, climatic and economic diversity, but also of some shared cultural traits, as a region cut by many cracks and crevasses, but also united by numerous, sometimes invisible, ties”<sup>12</sup>.

What I will try to do in this text is to trace some of these ties between the inhabitants of the former Bulgarian territories and Wallachia during 17th century. It is obvious from the above mentioned that not in all cases will this be connected with “Bulgarians”, but, rather, with different representatives of the multi-ethnic community that lived south of the Danube during this period.

In the late 17th century a great part of the river Danube, today’s Bulgarian-Romanian borderline, was controlled by the Ottoman Empire. It never lost its sense of a frontier – what laid north was Wallachia, indeed a tributary state with tangible interference by Ottoman authorities on the appointment of its rulers and heavy tax demands, but still free of religious oppression; and south – the former Bulgarian territories that were fully incorporated in the life of the Empire for two centuries

<sup>11</sup> М. Младенов, “За етнонима сърби (sirbi) ‘българи’ в румънския език и румънската топонимия”, *Българска етнография* X, 3 (1985), p. 3–11; Ş. Andreescu, “Popa Ignatie din Nicopol, episcop de Râmnic și mitropolit al Țării Românești. O identificare”, *Revista istorică* XX, 5–6 (2009), p. 413–418. The ethnic term “Bulgarian” appeared relatively rarely in Romanian written sources, and what we have in addition to *sârbi* is *șchei/șcheai/șchiai*, a derivative from the Latin *sclavus* but it again may denote Bulgarians or Serbians who, coming from the Ottoman territories, settled in Wallachia. More information concerning these terms see in C. Vătășescu, “De nouveau sur l’emploi en roumain de l’ethnonyme *sârbi* ‘Serbes’ pour désigner les Bulgares aussi”, *Linguistique balkanique/Балканско езикознание* XLIV, 1–2 (2005), p. 143–152. For a list of villages that are mentioned under the name *șchei*, or a derivative one, in Wallachian and Moldavian documents from 15th and 16th century, see A. Gonța, “Bulgarii și sârbii în Țările Române în secolele al XV-lea și al XVI-lea”, in id., *Studii de istorie medievală*, eds. M.M. Székely, Ş. Gorovei, Iași 1998, p. 72–88. For the usage of these terms in the Wallachian and Moldavian chronicles, see Boycheva, *Renseignements*, p. 30–37.

<sup>12</sup> R. Gradeva, “The Ottoman Balkans – a Zone of Fractures or a Zone of Contacts?” in *Zones of Fracture in Modern Europe: the Baltic Countries, the Balkans, and Northern Italy*, ed. A. Bues, Wiesbaden 2005, p. 61–75, 62.

already. While Christians from both sides experienced the chaos of warfare and the difficulties of peaceful life, the river did not appear to be an insurmountable obstacle to their passage. The move and resettlement of people in the Balkans was facilitated ever since the removal of old boundaries with the Ottoman conquest, and though far from being encouraged from both Wallachian and Ottoman authorities, it happened during 17th century too, due to different reasons. It did not reach the dimensions of the transition of the masses of people across the Danube in the end 16th century, when, during his military campaigns against the Ottomans, the Wallachian ruler Michael the Brave (1593–1601) penetrated deep in the territories south of the river, plundering cities and villages, but was compelled to retreat, gathering on his way back a multitude of people, who moved to Wallachia and settled there<sup>13</sup>. During these turmoil years, in 1595, the majority of the inhabitants of Chervena voda, a village in the district of Russe (former Ruscuk) also resettled, acquiring some privileges in their new residence in the district of Prahova<sup>14</sup>. Transfers of large groups of people did take place during the 17th century as well, for example after the suppression of the Chiprovtsi uprising (1688)<sup>15</sup>, when almost the entire population of four Catholic villages – Chiprovtsi, Kopilovets, Zheliazna and Klisura sought refuge north of the Danube; some of them preferred to settle in Wallachia, in Craiova, Rimnik, Campulung<sup>16</sup>.

From the same century we have evidence of a reverse movement: the inhabitants of entire villages passed in the lands south of the river, this time not because of war, but due to economic reasons. A document from March 10, 1635 issued by Matei Basarab's (1632–1654) chancellery refers to peasants of „satul Trănșanii” (Ialomița region) who fled across the Danube because they did not want to pay taxes<sup>17</sup>. It seems people from one side of the river could find shelter on the

<sup>13</sup> К. Велики, „Походите на Михай Витязул на юг от Дунав,” *Исторически преглед* XXIX, 1 (1973), p. 65–71; Бойчева, Бешевлиев, *Историко-географски*, p. 256–263. See also E. Siupiu, „L'émigration: condition humaine et politique dans le Sud-Est européen aux XV–XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles. Quelques remarques”, *Revue des études sud-est européennes* XLV (2007), p. 279–306, esp. 291–293.

<sup>14</sup> R. Gradeva, „Villagers in International Trade: The Case of Chervena Voda, Seventeenth to the beginning of Eighteenth Century”, *Oriente Moderno* XXV, 1 (2006), p. 1–20, 8, note 37 for the charter from 1602 of Simeon Movila (1601–1602 intermittently). They were exempted from paying some taxes, a privilege confirmed in the end 17th century by Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688–1714) with a charter from April 15, 1689, the document is available on-line: Constantin Brancovan vv Documente muntenești, CXXXIV/8, in: [monasterium.net](http://monasterium.net/mom/ConstantinBrancovan/Documente_muntene%C5%9Fti_CXXXIV%7C8/charter), URL <[http://monasterium.net/mom/ConstantinBrancovan/Documente\\_muntene%C5%9Fti\\_CXXXIV%7C8/charter](http://monasterium.net/mom/ConstantinBrancovan/Documente_muntene%C5%9Fti_CXXXIV%7C8/charter)>, last accessed 2015.09.12.

<sup>15</sup> Грозданова, *Българската народност*, p. 12, 565, 568.

<sup>16</sup> Another part went far north reaching Buda, see К. Телбизов, „Разселване на чипровчани след въстанието от 1688 г.”, in *Чипровци 1688-1988. Материали от научната сесия посветена на 300-годишнината от Чипровското въстание*, ed. Г. Нешев, Sofia 1971, p. 65–81; P. Király, „Die Čiprovecer in Ungarn”, *Studia Slavica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* XLVII, 1–2 (2002), p. 1–23.

<sup>17</sup> *Documenta Romaniae Historica. B. Țara Românească. 1635–1636*. Vol. 25, eds. D. Mioc et al., Bucharest 1985, p. 37–38. The same year, for similar reasons – being in “heavy needs” – the villagers from several of the settlements that belonged to the Tismana monastery escaped to the “Turkish land”, and Matei Basarab issued an order to find and return them, see *Documenta Romaniae*, p. 131–132.

opposite one. This holds true for brigands too, who from time to time operated across Ottoman territories during the 17th century. Here one of the examples will be cited because it reveals several aspects important for us. A *firman* from the beginning of December 1690 was issued in connection with a large group of brigands who rebelled, and, after acting for some time in the region between Vidin and Berkovitsa, crossed the river because of the Ottoman forces coming to manage the problem, and saved themselves from justice<sup>18</sup>. Here again we have an instance of people from south of the river having found their salvation in Wallachian territories, but another detail of this *firman* requires attention likewise. The document is addressed to the Wallachian ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688–1714), blaming him for the situation that happened solely because of his negligence and rigidly instructing him not to be sloppy in solving the problem.

These last comments lead to the important and complicated question of the exact position that Wallachian rulers occupied towards the Christian population south of the Danube in the eyes of the Ottomans. Obviously, there existed a certain pressure from the Ottoman authorities, who deliberately treated Wallachian rulers as responsible for the Christian population south of the Danube, thus seeking to integrate Wallachia into the Ottoman imperial system. An example of such policy is the practice of granting *timars* south of the Danube to Wallachian voivodes, as was the case with the Basarab monastery mentioned in a 15th century land register of the *sanjak* of Nikopolis<sup>19</sup>. That Wallachian voivodes were not prevented from owning properties across the Danube is also obvious from several late sixteenth-century documents, for example one from 1583 mentioning Kiajna, mother of Peter the Younger (1559–1568), who, after her son's death, sold a house and other property in Russe<sup>20</sup>. Another eloquent proof of the Ottoman authorities' delegation to the Wallachian rulers of responsibilities toward Christian populations south of the river is a *firman* of Suleiman the Magnificent from 1543, specifically stating that Radu Paisie (1535–1545) should take care of the monks of Rila monastery and ensure that their rights are respected, and that he should do this as a vassal of the sultan, but also as a voivode of these lands<sup>21</sup>. The same attitude could be traced in many of the documents issued by Ottoman sultans either as orders, or as decisions on different pleas of the Wallachian voivodes<sup>22</sup>. I realize the danger of unavoidable

<sup>18</sup> Документи за българската история. III. Документи из турските държавни архиви 1564–1908. Част I (1564–1877), ed. П. Дорев, Sofia 1940, p. 26, N 59.

<sup>19</sup> M. Dorin, "Romanian Possessions South of the Danube", *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire* XXV, 1–2 (1986), p. 107–112.

<sup>20</sup> Дорев, Документи, p. 15–16.

<sup>21</sup> A transcript of this in: Архимандрит Кирил Рилски, *Кратки спомени из миналия ми живот 1861–1931*, Sofia 1931, p. 146–147, unfortunately I did not see the original or the facsimile of this important document. More on this see in A. Куюмджиев, *Стенописите в главната църква на Рилския манастир*, Sofia 2015, p. 49.

<sup>22</sup> For example, the permission sent to Peter the Younger in response to his request on the settling of a group of his Wallachian fellows near the village of Radevtsi, the *kaza* of Târnovo, issued on August 6, 1560, see M. Калицин, К. Мутафова, *Подбрани османски документи за Търново и Търновска каза*, Veliko Târnovo 2012, p. 278. Or the instructions from November 16, 1577 towards

generalizations, but cannot resist the impression that, on one hand, Wallachian rulers were controlled by the Ottoman state elite, and, on the other hand, they themselves sought this control in times of personal or other kinds of trouble<sup>23</sup>. In any case, the fact that the Wallachian rulers had significant rights in the lands south of the Danube is apparent; their status was similar to that of the Ottoman dignitaries and more importantly they were able to use their position to help the local inhabitants.

The most significant display of this help are Wallachian voivodes' donations: paying for sustaining monasteries, which was done in maintenance of an already established tradition, or building and decorating churches. A shining example of the Wallachian rulers' continuous contribution in supporting ecclesiastical centers south of the Danube is that of the Rila monastery: its oldest surviving bead-roll names as benefactors Alexander II Mircea (1568–1517), Mihnea II (1577–1583, 1585–1591) and Constantin Brâncoveanu<sup>24</sup>. Another such example is the Holy Trinity monastery near Târnovo which was sponsored by several Wallachian voivodes with a certain amount of money paid annually, as is attested by the still extant charters issued in the 18th century, mentioning among the donors Matei Basarab (1632–1654), Constantin Brâncoveanu, and Ștefan Cantacuzino<sup>25</sup>. In addition, Matei Basarab

the *kadi* of Ruscuk to oversee the case of Mihnea II Turcitul (1577–1583), in connection with his request to issue a decision against false claims for old debts of his father, see Дорев, ed., Документи, p. 14, N 31.

<sup>23</sup> On the models and principals of power in Wallachia and Moldavia and on the role of the Sultan as a source of the Divine will and of legitimation in the political strategies of the voivodes, see R. G. Păun, "La circulation des pouvoirs dans les Pays Roumains au XVIIe siècle. Repères pour un modèle théorique", *New Europe College Yearbook* 1998–1999 (2001), p. 265–310, esp. 278–280.

<sup>24</sup> I. Gergova, "Das älteste Gedenkbuch des Rila-Klosters", *Bulgarian Historical Review* XXXVII, 1–2 (2009), p. 164–179.

<sup>25</sup> The charters in question are issued by the chancelleries of the Wallachian voivodes from the 18th and 19th centuries, the charter of Ștefan Cantacuzino being the earliest one, dated from 1715. They were found in the mid-19th century when the building of the Holy Trinity monastery catholicon was renewed, in a niche of the church building, where they were walled up by the monks in the troubled times during the *kârdzali* raids in the region. Apparently the first source to mention these documents is the Romanian bishop Melchisedec Ștefănescu (1822–1892), who wrote in his travel notes from Bulgaria that Dr. Vasil Beron (1824–1909) showed him the charters in Târnovo, see Episcop Melchisedec, "O excursiune în Bulgaria", *Revista pentru istorie, arheologie și filologie* II, 4, 5, (1885), reprint in Melchisedec Ștefănescu, *Despre ortodoxie, națiune și alte chestiuni de actualitate*, ed. A. Jinga, Bucharest 2006, p. 84–148; the same in Bulgarian: *Румънски пътеписи от XIX век за българските земи*, eds. М. Младенова, Н. Жечев, Sofia 1982, p. 181–183. Konstantin Jireček wrote that in 1884 he saw these original charters in Sofia, see К. Иречек, *Княжество България. Част II. Пътувания по България*, Plovdiv 1899, p. 238–239 and note 15. In Bulgarian literature the charters were discussed more thoroughly as early as the 1930s, in a study of the history of the Holy Trinity monastery: see А. Жеков, *Един светилник в миналото. Царският и патриаршески манастир „Св. Троица“ при Търново и великите му основатели Преподобний Теодосий Търновски и Патриарх Евтимий. Кратък исторически очерк*, Sofia 1936, p. 61–76. Today these documents are kept in the National Church Museum of History and Archaeology in Sofia, and Romanian and Bulgarian historians are well aware of their existence. Virgil Căndea's compendious collection of evidence of the Romanian cultural and historical heritage beyond Romania's borders listed all of them, see V. Căndea, *Mărturiile românești peste hotare: creații românești și izvoare despre români în colecții din străinătate*. Vol. 1.: *Albania – Etiopia*, eds. I. Feodorov, A. Pippidi, A. Timotin, D. Cain, Bucharest 2010, p. 312, 415.



made donations for St. Petka church in Vidin and the Holy apostles Peter and Paul church in Svishtov<sup>26</sup>. One more monastery situated in the former Bulgarian territories but not present today – Lipnic monastery, was aided by Wallachian voivodes, as attested by the charters written in the chancelleries of Grigore I Ghica (1660–64; 1672–73) and Constantin Brâncoveanu<sup>27</sup>. There is evidence for the financial support of Constantin Brâncoveanu for the Prisovski and Kapinovski monasteries as well, both located near Târnovo<sup>28</sup>. From Constantin Brâncoveanu's

<sup>26</sup> Historians linked these and other monuments in Bulgarian lands with Matei Basarab as early as the end of the 19th century; various local studies and research monographs have frequently mentioned them without a comprehensive analysis of the related data, see A. Грабар, "Материали по средновековому искуству въ Болгарии", *Годишник на Народния музей* II (1920), Sofia 1921, p. 97–164, 133; C. Giurescu, *Două ctitorii ale lui Matei Basarab în Bulgaria*, „Revista Istorică Română” XI–XII (1941–1942), p. 390–391; V. Hrisicu, *Câteva ctitorii românești în Bulgaria*, „Boabe de grâu. Revistă de cultură” III, 3–4 (1932), p. 88–96, 95; P. Panaitescu, *Români și bulgari*, Bucharest 1944; V. Antonov, *Des vestiges roumaines a Šištov*, „Revue des Études sud-est européennes” XVI, 1 (1978), p. 162–164; Căndea, *Mărturii românești*, p. 408, 415, 417–418. I have attempted to clarify the existing data on these donations and to comment on some possible reasons for Matei Basarab's patronage over holy places in the former Bulgarian lands elsewhere, see M. Куюмджијева, "Към въпроса за българо-румънските връзки през XVII век: дарителската дейност на Матей Басараб", in *Етрополската книжовна школа и българският XVII век. Сборник материали от Националната конференция „Етрополската книжовна школа и културният живот през XVII век в българските земи”, София, 20–21 май 2010*, eds. E. Мусакова, E. Узунова, Sofia 2011, p. 286–296, an edition of the same text in M. Kuyumdzhieva, "Some Remarks on Donations by the Wallachian Prince Matei Basarab in Bulgarian Territories", in *Histoire, mémoire et dévotion. Regards croisés sur la construction des identités dans le monde orthodoxe aux époques byzantine et post-byzantine*, coord. R. G. Păun, Seyssel 2016, p. 185–206.

<sup>27</sup> P. Zahariuc, *În mijlocul străinătății. Două hrisoave de danie pentru mănăstirea Lipnic din Bulgaria*, in id., *De la Iași la Muntele Athos. Studii și documente de istoria Bisericii*, Iași 2008, p. 209–221. Pavlina Boycheva mentioned a donation for the same monastery, made by Constantin Brâncoveanu, but experienced difficulties in identifying this holy place and its location, see П. Бойчева, "Един документ на Константин Брънковяну за Къпиновския манастир 'Св. Никола'", *Духовна култура* LXXXIII, 7 (2003), p. 24–32, 25. Thanks to Petronel Zahariuc's article this holy place, situated somewhere near Russe, close to Danube river, is brought to light making possible the further reconstruction of its history in the future work of the researchers, both Romanian and Bulgarian. On the other hand, in the same article several other donation examples are enumerated, but give incorrect information, see Zahariuc, *În mijlocul*, 210. The author mentions Radu the Great as a benefactor of the Kremikovci monastery, an old hypothesis which was long ago rejected in Bulgarian literature, see Г. Баласчев, "Кремиковският манастир 'Св. Георги' и древните му християнски останки", *Минало. Българо-македонско научно списание*, anniversary issue (1942), p. 29–38 (reprint from *Народен страж*, VII, 14, 1. XI. 1925); Ст. Михайлов, "Ктиторският портрет в Кремиковската манастирска църква в светлината на българо-румънските културни връзки през XV в.", *Археология* II, 3 (1960), p. 23–29. The last publication commenting on the question of the Kremikovtci ktetors the metropolitan Kalevit and his son – the local dignitary Radivoi, belongs to Asen Kirin who gave a more precise reading of the inscription and, based on other inscriptions and evidence, proved the close father-son relation between the donors; his opinion having been accepted by all who has written something on the church afterwards, see A. Кирич, "Ктиторският надпис от 1493 г. в Кремиковския манастир", in *Paleobulgarica* XIII, 2 (1989), p. 87–100. On the icon painters' atelier that executed the 15th century murals in Kremikovtci church see Ts. Văleva, "Sur la question sur la soit-dite „École artistique de Kastoria”, *Vužavivá* XXVIII (2008), p. 181–221.

<sup>28</sup> Bojčeva, *Sur un acte de donation*, p. 71–79; Бойчева, *Един документ*, p. 24–32.

charter for the Kapinovski monastery issued in 1694 it becomes clear that in April of the same year the hieromonk Simeon – hegumen of the monastery – came to the court of the Wallachian voivode to ask for material help, relying on the previous support of Mihnea II, for which he had shown as proof the relevant document<sup>29</sup>. The content of this and other published charters of the same kind attests of a routine, according to which, at the renewal of a ruler's donations for a certain holy place, earlier documents were usually shown, the existence of which is specifically mentioned in the newly issued charters<sup>30</sup>. Having in mind the accounts for earlier aid described in these documents it would appear that many of the Wallachian rulers were zealous patrons of Christian monasteries in the Bulgarian lands. On the other hand, these documents show that the bestowing of material support happened mainly as a response to the initiatives of the local ecclesiastical authorities – most often the hegumens, who carried out such missions in order to gain ruler's benevolence thus ensuring the survival and wellbeing of their monasteries.

It is possible that in some of these cases the Wallachian rulers' donations were solicited by metropolitans, for instance those who were ahead of the Târnovo Metropolitan bishopric. The future search for possible indications in this direction may turn out to be fruitful, because of the evidence for close contacts between the two sides. In his travel notes, Paul of Aleppo, for example, described how abbots, priests, monks of Wallachia and other countries gather in Tîrgoviste to bless the waters on the Eve of Theophany and pointed out that the metropolitan of Târnovo usually participated in that ritual<sup>31</sup>. Nicolae Iorga made a remark about a document dated from 1633, which mentions a travel of "Târnovo Metropolitan Makarios – the man of the Patriarch Cyril Loukaris, in Wallachia"<sup>32</sup>. The Metropolitan Makarios I (1626–35; 1637–39; 1639–42; 1643–44; 1644–46)<sup>33</sup> seems to have been a prominent figure in Wallachia judging by his involvement as an expert witness in the court case of the divorce between Vasile spatar and his wife Maria, which begun during the days of Leon Tomşa (1629–1632)<sup>34</sup> and finished during the

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 26–27.

<sup>30</sup> For similar examples with Athonite monasteries, see P. Năsturel, *Le Mont Athos et les Roumains. Recherches sur leurs relations du milieu du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle à 1654*, Rome 1986, p. 126, 130, 177, 203 et all.; R. G. Păun, "La Valachie et le monastère de Chilandar au Mont Athos. Nouveaux témoignages (XV<sup>e</sup>–XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles)", *Medieval and Early Modern Studies for Central and Eastern Europe II* (2010), p. 137–184, esp. 155–156.

<sup>31</sup> Павел Алеппский, *Путешествие Антиохийского Патриарха Макария в Россию в половине XVII века, описанное его сыном, архидьяконом Павлом Алеппским*. Выпуск 1. От Алеппо до земли казаков, transl. Г. Муркос, *Чтения в обществе истории и древностей российских* 4 (179) (1896), Moscow 1896, p. 121.

<sup>32</sup> "Macarie exarhul de la Tarnova, omul lui Chiril Patriarhul din Tarigrad" in "Țara Românească", see *Documente privitoare la istoria Românilor. Volumul XIV al colecției „Hurmuzaki”*. *Documente Grecești privitoare la istoria Românilor publicate după originale, copiile Academiei Române și Tipărituri de N. Iorga. Partea I, 1320–1716*, Bucharest 1915, p. 162, note 1.

<sup>33</sup> И. Тютюнджиев, *Търновската митрополия през XV-XIX век*, Veliko Târnovo 2007, p. 205–220.

<sup>34</sup> C. Ghițulescu, *Familie și societate în Țara Românească (secolul al XVII-lea)*, „Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medic” XX (2002), p. 89–114, 112.

reign of Matei Basarab<sup>35</sup>. On his part, the Târnovo Metropolitan Athanasios I (1687–1692) wrote a *Polychronion* greeting for Constantin Brâncoveanu<sup>36</sup>. In his official chronicle of Brâncoveanu's reign Radu Greceanu noted the presence of Târnovo Metropolitan Dionisie IV (?1707–1713) who was among the dignitaries invited on the occasion of the consecration of the newly rebuilt church of St. George the New monastery in Bucharest in 1707<sup>37</sup>. In spite of these facts, which require additional study, it should be said that no document is known to prove the existence of a Târnovo Metropolitan's request of material support for building or renovation work on churches. The same holds true for the Metropolitans of Dristra (Siliistra) who also had contacts with the Wallachian elite, from whom they perhaps benefited<sup>38</sup>. There is evidence of the financial support of Wallachian rulers for the Metropolitan church in Siliistra which comes from a charter of Alexander Ypsilantis (1775–82; 1796–97) issued in connection with his donation for two other churches in the region<sup>39</sup>. In this document there is a mention that Grigore I Ghica built the Metropolitan church in Siliistra on older foundations. For some reason, it was repaired in a later period, as is attested by a *firman* from 1741 to the *cadi* of Siliistra informing him that the Wallachian voivode, not mentioned by name in the document, had renovated the church in that town without permission. Brief instructions follow: to look very carefully into the matter of whether this was a reparation of an already existing building, or an erection of a new one<sup>40</sup>, which was considerably restricted in Ottoman territories<sup>41</sup>. Obviously even for Wallachian

<sup>35</sup> *Documenta Romaniae Historica. Seria B. Țara Românească. Volumul 25: 1635-1636*, 7–8, Document N 6 from January 10, 1635.

<sup>36</sup> He was elected later as Patriarch of Constantinople Athanasios V (1709–1711), for his years as Târnovo metropolitan see Тютюнджиев, Търновската, p. 76. Another Târnovo Metropolitan, Iosif II (1714–1722), dedicated some of his writings to Nicolae Mavrocordat (1709–1716, 1719–1730), with whom he had good fellowship, see Тютюнджиев, Търновската, p. 287–288; И. Снегаров, “Търновски митрополити в турско време”, *Списание на българската академия на науките* LII, (1935), p. 228. See also *Documente privitoare la istoria Românilor. Volumul XIII. Texte Grecești privitoare la istoria Românească culese și publicate de A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus*, Bucharest 1909, p. 267–275, and the Romanian translation in *Scrieri și documente Grecești privitoare la istoria Românilor din anii 1592–1837 culese și publicate în tomul XIII din documentele Hurmuzaki de A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus traduse de G. Murnu și C. Litzica*, Bucharest 1914, p. 245–251.

<sup>37</sup> Pavlina Boycheva was the first Bulgarian scholar to pay attention to this data, which helped subsequently Ivan Tiutiundzhiev to clarify the first years of the tenure of Metropolitan Dionisie in Târnovo, see Бойчева, Един документ, p. 26–27; Бойчева, Относно едно дарение, p. 359; Тютюнджиев, Търновската, p. 283–286.

<sup>38</sup> *История на Добруджа. Том III*, eds. С. Димитров, Н. Жечев, В. Тонев, Sofia 1984, p. 105.

<sup>39</sup> N. Stoicescu, *Unitatea românilor în Evul Mediu*, Bucharest 1983, p. 128.

<sup>40</sup> Дорев, Документи, p. 41, N 88.

<sup>41</sup> For the procedure and Ottoman regulations towards building churches see R. Gradeva, “From the Bottom Up and Back Again until Who Knows When: Church Restoration Procedures in the Ottoman Empire, Seventeenth-Eighteenth Centuries (Preliminary Notes)”, in *Political Initiatives “From the Bottom Up” In the Ottoman Empire. Halcyon Days in Crete VII. A Symposium Held in Rethymno*, 9–11 January 2009, ed. A. Anastasopoulos, Rethymno 2012, p. 135–163.

voivodes, in spite of their high rank and positions, it was not easy to assist the construction or renovation of religious establishments south of the Danube.

Therefore, some other mechanisms for support of the Orthodoxy in the Ottoman territories were also in use. There was a practice in Wallachia to bestow a local religious foundation to certain Eastern Orthodox monasteries – usually a prominent one or such with stauropegial status – the so-called “îchinarea mănăstirilor”, which was a characteristic feature for the religious life in both of the Northern Danube principalities during end 16th–18th centuries<sup>42</sup>. In accordance with this practice, the dependant monasteries – *metohia* – usually had to transfer a portion of their income excess to the places that they were dedicated to. Wallachian documents from the 17th century mention the monastery of Holy Apostles Peter and Paul in Bucharest, known by the name “Târnovului”, or “Arhimandritul”<sup>43</sup>. According to Virgil Căndea’s opinion this monastery was a *metohion* of the Holy Trinity monastery near Târnovo<sup>44</sup>. Another interpretation appeared recently, independent from Căndea’s one, considering close relations of representatives of Cantacuzino family with this establishment during the late 16th – early 17th century and presuming that its erection was initiated by the Târnovo Metropolitan Dionisie Rally (1580–1598), who built up this church in Bucharest as a *metohion* of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul metropolitan church in Târnovo<sup>45</sup>. Even though the exact beneficiary is not yet identified and the case needs further clarification, obviously this is another example of sustaining monasteries outside Wallachia through this practice, this time connected with the former Bulgarian territories south of the Danube. Usually the bestowing of a monastery was made according to the will of its founders, yet in the case of Târnovului there is no information relevant to its establishment. Other moments of its history are likewise problematic. There is evidence of its stauropegial status<sup>46</sup> at least from the year 1677 onwards, which makes its functioning as a *metohion* doubtful after this date. There are also ambiguities concerning Târnovului’s foundation documents. Two different sources mention their absence, explaining that they were either located

<sup>42</sup> M. Lazăr, *Acte domnești reglementând statutul mănăstirilor inchinate*, „Revista istorică” VII, 5–6 (1996), p. 427–436; L. Cotovanu, ‘*Qu’on prie pour moi là-bas et ici*’. *Donation religieuse et patriotisme local dans le monde orthodoxe des XVI<sup>e</sup>–XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, in R. Păun (coord.), *Histoire, mémoire et dévotion*, p. 207–256.

<sup>43</sup> C. Giurescu, *Istoria Bucureștilor: din cele mai vechi timpuri pînă în zilele noastre*, Bucharest 1966, p. 67, 72; N. Stoicescu, *Repertoriul bibliografic al monumentelor feudale din București*, Bucharest 1961, p. 271–274. I would like to thank Professor Tereza Sinigalia for drawing my attention to this case.

<sup>44</sup> Căndea, *Mărturii românești*, p. 415, N 1196.

<sup>45</sup> M. Cazacu, *Despre câteva biserici bucureștene din veacurile XVI–XVIII*, in *Aut viam inveniam aut faciam*, p. 469–492, esp. 474–475.

<sup>46</sup> See the document from 1677 signed by the Patriarch of Constantinople Dionysius IV, confirming the stauropegial status of the monastery: *Documente privitoare*, XIV/I, p. 217, N 304.

south of the Danube because of troubled times<sup>47</sup>, or that they were destroyed during the mutiny of the seimeni of 1655 when the monastery was attacked<sup>48</sup>. In addition, in the 50s of the 17th century Paul of Aleppo mentioned the same monastery as dedicated to one of the Athonite monasteries<sup>49</sup>. In any case it is clear that the details and the exact connections of the Târnovului monastery with Bulgarian Holy Trinity monastery near Târnovo or with the Târnovo metropolitan church still require clarification.

Another church in Bucharest has been regarded in Bulgarian historiography as an example of “Bulgarian” presence: The Holy Virgin Church, which is mentioned in the documents by the name Biserica Scaune<sup>50</sup>. The exact time when the church was founded is unknown, but there is evidence of its existence during the second half of the 17th century, which were brought to light by Ștefan Andreescu, according to whom the Scaune church was erected by the guild of the butchers (*măcelari*) probably between 1664 and 1681<sup>51</sup>. Two names are mentioned in the donors’ inscription carved above the entrance of the church: Tanasie of Târnovo and his nephew Stavro and a date is pointed out in the same inscription – September 8, 1705<sup>52</sup>. Most possibly this writing commemorates the rebuilding of the church that happened at the beginning of the 18th century on the money donated by Tanasie from Târnovo and his nephew Stavro<sup>53</sup>. The only Bulgarian scholar who was familiar with the existence of this church was the art historian Atanas Bozhkov, who misinterpreted some details of the donors’ inscription, giving an unreasonably earlier date – 1633, and speaking

<sup>47</sup> See the document from November 30, 1626 for the confirmation of the properties of Târnovului monastery issued by Alexandru Coconul (1623–1627) in *Documenta Romaniae Historica B. Țara Românească*, Vol. XXI (1626–1627), ed. D. Mioc, Bucharest 1965, p. 300–302, N 163.

<sup>48</sup> Stoicescu, *Repertoriul bibliografic*, p. 271; *Documente privitoare*, XIV/I, p. 217, N 304.

<sup>49</sup> Павел Алеппский, *Путешествие антиохийского патриарха Макария в Россию в половине XVII века, описанное его сыном, архидиаконом Павлом Алеппским*. Выпуск 5. Обратный путь. Молдавия и Валахия. Малая Азия и Сирия. Результаты путешествия, transl. Г. Муркос, *Чтения в обществе истории и древностей российских* 2 (199) (1900), Moscow 1900, p. 61.

<sup>50</sup> For the history of the Scaune church see Stoicescu, *Repertoriul bibliografic*, p. 268–269; Ș. Andreescu, *Contribuții la istoricul bisericilor Scaune și Săpunari din București*, „Glasul bisericii” XXIII, 1–2 (1964), p. 105–119. Ștefan Andreescu was the first who clarified the facts relevant to the early history of the Scaune church, differentiating it from “biserica Săpunarilor”, located nearby until mid 18th century and non-existent today. The two names – “Scaune” and “Săpunarilor” – were often wrongly considered as referring to one and the same church, which caused incorrect interpretation of the 17th century sources in some of the publications.

<sup>51</sup> Andreescu, *Contribuții*, p. 111. The author points out that Scaune church appears in some 18th century documents under the name “biserica Măcelarilor” as well.

<sup>52</sup> The inscription was published as early as the beginning of the 20th century by Nicolae Iorga, see N. Iorga, *Inscripții din bisericile României. Fascicula II-a. N-rele 766–944*, Bucharest 1907, p. 319, N 773, with the correction of the date reading in Andreescu, *Contribuții*, p. 105. New publication in *Inscripțiile medievale ale României. Orașul București, I (1359–1800)*, ed. Al. Elian *et al.*, Bucharest 1965, p. 363–364, N 356.

<sup>53</sup> Andreescu, *Contribuții*, p. 111–112.

of Tanasie from Târnovo as a “Bulgarian merchant”<sup>54</sup>. None of these details are evident by the sources, even the occupation of the donor Tanasie; what we know today is only the fact that in the district of the Scaune church there were several places for butchers’ needs where the meat was cut, the so called “scaunele de carne”<sup>55</sup>. Yet the link with commerce is not far from logical, given the fact that such a donation had to belong to a wealthy person and a considerable part of the rich people during these times were exactly merchants<sup>56</sup>. There is a mention of Târnovo as a trade centre in the *condica* prepared in 1698 by the grammarians of Brâncoveanu’s chancellery<sup>57</sup>.

In the late 16th and the 17th century, apart from the big cities, as Târnovo, there were several villages in Bulgarian lands that became distinguished through wealth acquired in international trade, among them Chervena voda and Arbanasi<sup>58</sup>. The core part of their inhabitants were settlers from northern Epirus, mixed with people of Slavic origin, all of them Greek-speaking Christians who enjoyed important advantages because of the privileged status of their settlements within the Ottoman administrative system, for instance the exemption of some of the taxes and the right to possess arms. They were involved mainly in cattle-breeding and trade with animal products in the Ottoman Empire and across Europe<sup>59</sup>, acquiring broad contacts and considerable wealth. Some of these traders settled in the Wallachian and Transylvanian cities, but continued to maintain contacts with Bulgarian lands, as

<sup>54</sup> А. Божков, “Към въпроса за взаимните връзки между българското и румънското изкуство през XVI-XVII век”, *Известия на Института за изобразителни изкуства VII* (1964), p. 41–98, 67, 69.

<sup>55</sup> Andreescu, *Contribuții*, p. 109; Ș. Olteanu, C. Șerban, *Meșteșugurile din Țara Românească și Moldova în Evul Mediu*, Bucharest 1969, p. 186.

<sup>56</sup> The bibliography on the trade and commerce in the region from this period is abundant, here some of the studies will be cited: T. Stoianovich, *The Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant*, „The Journal of Economic History” XX, 2 (1960), p. 234–313; С. Панова, *Българските търговци през XVII в.*, Sofia 1980; С. Маслев, *Търговията между българските земи и Трансилвания през XVI–XVII в.*, Sofia 1991; G. Lazăr, *Les marchands en Valachie, XVII<sup>e</sup>–XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Bucharest 2007; V. Barbu, *Les Arbanassi: un réseau marchand aux frontières de l’Empire ottoman au début du XVIIIe siècle*, „Études balkaniques” XLVI, 1–2 (2010), p. 206–222; С. Ракова, “Търговията на Брашов с градовете по брега на Дунав (кр. на XIV–XV век)”, *Mediaevalia* V (2012), p. 41–73; O. Katsiardi-Hering, *Commerce and merchants in South-eastern Europe, 17th–18th centuries: ‘micro-districts’ and regions*, „Études balkaniques” LI, 1 (2015), p. 19–35.

<sup>57</sup> D. Giurescu, *Anatefterul. Condica de porunci a Visteriei lui Constantin Brâncoveanu*, „Studii și materiale de istorie medie” V (1962), p. 353–493, 446; Бойчева, Един документ, p. 28.

<sup>58</sup> Gradeva, *Villagers*, p. 1–20. The publications on Arbanasi near Târnovo are numerous, see the most recent studies with the earlier literature cited there: X. Вачев, *Резиденции, църкви и манастири в Търновската митрополия през XV–XVIII век*, Veliko Târnovo 2012; Д. Гетов, О. Тодорова, “Две неизвестни гръцки приписки с подписите на търновски митрополити от първата половина на XVIII век и нейният исторически контекст”, *Библиотека* VI (2014), p. 32–44.

<sup>59</sup> Gradeva, *Villagers*, p. 4–5.

was the case of Arbanasi merchants who drop by in their houses in Arbanasi when traveling to buy goods or to deposit currency<sup>60</sup>.

There is evidence that some of the Arbanasi inhabitants were leaders of the Greek trade companies established during the 17th century, and maintained ties with Italy, Poland, Russia, Wallachia, Moldavia. As a result of trading, financial operations and speculation, a group of people in the village was formed who had significant financial resources. At some point of the Arbanasi history among this wealthy society appeared representatives of the prominent Greek family of Cantacuzinos. As it is known by sources, in general, all the members of this prominent Greek family were well educated and accumulated big capital. They had good connections with the Church and Ottoman authorities in Constantinople, having spent some time in Phanar, the quarter where the Orthodox patriarchate was located. Some of them were appointed in high positions in the Ottoman administration, others joined the retinue of the Wallachian and Moldavian voivodes. During the 17th century they impersonated the Orthodox Christian elite having influential positions in the Empire and in the Danubian principalities<sup>61</sup>.

The representatives of Cantacuzino family had properties in the village of Arbanasi. In the Bulgarian historiography there is a supposition that their house was located close to the church of St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel<sup>62</sup>. Recently an archaeological research of the necropolis at this church was conducted which revealed important findings. Of special interest is the burial № 16 located in one of the most prestigious burial sites – near the southeast corner of the church building, and dated from the 17th – early 18th century. This was a burial of a female person in whose hand a ring with a stylized image of a two-headed eagle was found. The image is linked by the researchers with the stem of the Cantacuzino family, giving grounds to assume that in the burial № 16 from the necropolis at the church of St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel a member of Cantacuzino family was buried<sup>63</sup>. If the dating is correct, then this finding is by far the earliest evidence for the presence of Cantacuzinos in Arbanasi. Here comes one important problem: there is an inclination in Bulgarian historiography towards the hypothesis that Wallachian

<sup>60</sup> In a letter to the trader Hadji Stan Jianu of Craiova, while mentioning the traders from the village, it is said that they will go to Sliven fair, but will first pass through their houses in Arbanasi, see К. Велики, “За търговията на българските градове в Австрия в края на XVIII и началото на XIX век”, *Исторически преглед* XV, 6 (1959), p. 61–74.

<sup>61</sup> For the role of this family on the Wallachian political stage in late 16th century, see Ș. Andreescu, *Boierii lui Mihai Viteazul*, „Studii si materiale de istorie medie”, XII (1994), p. 47–93 reprint in id., *Restitutio Daciae III. Studii cu privire la Mihai Viteazul*, Bucharest 1997, p. 339–419; M. Cazacu, *Stratégies matrimoniales et politiques des Cantacuzène de la Turcocratie (XVe–XVIIe siècles)*, « *Revue des Études Roumaines* », XIX–XX (1995–1996), p. 157–181.

<sup>62</sup> X. Вачев, М. Станчева, “Кой е погребан в гроб N 16 от некропола на църквата Св. Архангели Михаил и Гавриил в Арбанаси?”, *Известия на регионалния исторически музей Велико Търново* XXI (2006), p. 125–130. The authors do not support their opinion for this location of Cantacuzino’s house with source information.

<sup>63</sup> Вачев, Станчева, Кой е погребан, p. 129–130.

families, who had their properties in Arbanasi, actually originated from that village, settled at some period in time in Wallachia, but kept relations to their native place<sup>64</sup>. Though such a conjecture is tempting, it should be proved by some serious evidence, which up to now is absent. If we have to make any assumptions at all, lacking enough information, then it will be better to think in other directions: as far as the Cantacuzinos are concerned, it is possible that their occurrence in Arbanasi happened in the years after Grigore Ghica came to power for the second time in 1672, which was followed by the persecution of the members of this noble Greek family, who fled the country, some of them seeking shelter south of the Danube in the Ottoman empire<sup>65</sup>. From a later period – the last quarter of the 18th century – dates the evidence for the presence of heirs of Brâncoveanu and Văcărescu families in Arbanasi, i.e. the gravestone from 1790 of the young nobleman Constantine Brâncoveanu, which is widely known among specialists<sup>66</sup>, and that of Marioara Văcărescu<sup>67</sup>.

Some other data for the connections of the representatives of noble families of Wallachia with Arbanasi come from the field of art studies. In his small study, entitled “Old-Romanian and old-Bulgarian art,” Bogdan Filov wrote on the “close cultural Bulgarian-Romanian relations”, which were “obvious by the artistic production of the two countries” and emphasized the special place of Arbanasi as an intermediary in those relations<sup>68</sup>. Among Bogdan Filov’s arguments was the observation that the iconostasis of St. George church in Arbanasi was created by the master of the iconostasis of the church of St. George the New in Bucharest<sup>69</sup>. As a result of recent studies, his opinion is confirmed and substantially enhanced. Comparative analysis showed that the iconostasis in the nave of the Nativity church and St. Nicholas church, as well as parts of the iconostasis in St. George church

<sup>64</sup> Among earlier promoters of such a hypothesis were Dimiter Papazov (see Д. Папазов, “Село Арбанаси. Лични спомени и събрани данни”, *Сборник на Българската Академия на науките* XXXI (1936), p. 31) and Ivan Galabov (see “Изказвания по докладите относно произхода, характера и развитието на Арбанашката къща”, *Известия на института по градоустройство и архитектура* X–XI (1957), p. 159) with the opinion that Wallachian families in Arbanasi were descendants of Târnovo boyars. In continuation came the similar opinion of Velda Mardi-Babikova, see В. Марди-Бабикова, *Церкви Арбанаси*, Sofia 1978, p. 13. See also the more moderate, but also speculative, position in the same direction of Rossitsa Gradeva in Gradeva, Villagers, p. 11.

<sup>65</sup> *Istoria Țării Românești. 1290–1690. Letopisețul cantacuzinesc*, eds. C. Grecescu, D. Simonescu, Bucharest 1960, p. 168–170; for the Cantacuzino family see J.-M. Cantacuzène, *Mille Ans dans les Balkans: Chronique des Cantacuzène dans la Tourmente des Siècles*, Paris 1992.

<sup>66</sup> Căndea, *Mărturii românești*, p. 291, no 4. For the presence of the heirs of the Brâncoveanu family in Arbanasi, see also Т. Драганова, С. Попова, “Родът Бранковани в Арбанаси”, *Годишник на музеите в северна България* II (1976), p. 234–237.

<sup>67</sup> Căndea, *Mărturii românești*, p. 291, no 5.

<sup>68</sup> Б. Филов, “Старо-румънско и старо-български изкуство”, *Златорог* VI, 4 (1925), p. 191–200. See also Божков, Към въпроса, p. 41–98.

<sup>69</sup> Филов, *Старо-румънско*, p. 198.



from the first decade of the 18th century, all of them in Arbanasi, are made by one and the same team of masters that probably came from Wallachia<sup>70</sup>. Their work is considered the earliest evidence of the influence of Brâncoveanu style on religious easel art in Bulgarian lands and, again, the iconostasis from St George the New monastery in Bucharest is pointed among the closest parallels for this art in Wallachia<sup>71</sup>. Both Arbanasi iconostases include in a central place of their decoration the carved two-headed eagle, which reasonably was interpreted by most Bulgarian researchers as the Cantacuzinos' stem<sup>72</sup> the presence of which is disclosing the donation activities of the members of the Cantacuzino family in Arbanasi<sup>73</sup>.

Judging by the wood carving, it is logical to assume that icon painters from Wallachia were commissioned too in order to paint churches in Arbanasi. Indeed, because of the notion for the presence of heirs of Cantacuzinos' and Brâncoveanu's families in Arbanasi, there were statements in Bulgarian historiography that icon painters from Wallachia worked in Arbanasi churches in the first decade of the 18th century: Andrei Protić was the one who claimed that the painters Stoiu and Nediu who in 1724 executed the frescoes in the narthex of St. Athanasios church in Arbanasi came from Wallachia, as well as the masters of the frescoes from 1710 in St. George church in Arbanasi – Hristo and Stoio<sup>74</sup>. Even today Bulgarian art historians keep searching for possible direct links of Arbanasi mural ensembles with the painting production known from the Wallachian churches of the end 17th – early 18th centuries<sup>75</sup>. Yet, it should be said that this problem appears to be much more complicated. Recent studies have revealed convincingly the belonging of the masters mentioned by Andrei Protić to the Triavna icon painters' centre, discovering some details of their family ties and some influences from the works of the icon painters' teams from northern Greece<sup>76</sup>. Links with the artistic

<sup>70</sup> И. Гергова, "Църквата "Св. Георги" в Арбанаси", *Проблеми на изкуството* 3 (2005), p. 47–53.

<sup>71</sup> Гергова, Църквата, p. 48.

<sup>72</sup> Х. Вачев, "Изображения на двуглав орел върху паметници от късносредновековната епоха", in *Дни на науката. Сборник на съюз на учените в България. Клон Велико Търново, Veliko Târnovo* 1997, p. 102–109; Гергова, Църквата, p. 48.

<sup>73</sup> Гергова, Църквата, p. 48. Here it is worth to mention again the fact that the Târnovo Metropolitan Dionisie IV (?1707–1713) witnessed the consecration of the newly rebuild church of St. George monastery in Bucharest in 1707 and, on the other hand, the iconostasis in St. George church in Arbanasi was created most probably during 1709 and in this context one should not neglect the possible involvement of Metropolitan Dionisie in the process of the commissioning of this piece of art and in the choice of the craftsmen team.

<sup>74</sup> А. Протич, "Денационализиране и възраждане на нашето изкуство от 1393 до 1879 г.", in *България 1000 години. 927–1927*, Sofia 1930, p. 425. Exactly Protić's opinion, which is not based on any written source or other data, was considered in Cîndea, *Mărturii românești*, p. 291.

<sup>75</sup> There is a supposition for such relations in the murals in the narthex of St. Nicholas church in Arbanasi, based on iconographic and stylistic parallels, see Е. Попова, "Стенописите в притвора на църквата „Св. Никола" в Арбанаси", *Проблеми на изкуството* 3 (1999), p. 3–17.

<sup>76</sup> Гергова, Църквата, p. 50; В. Сапунджиева, "Ранната тревненска живопис и ателието на „даскалите" зографи", *Известия на специализирания музей за резбарско и зографско изкуство*

production of the most influential centres of the epoch – Epirus and Linotopi, can be observed in all 17th century frescoes in Arbanasi churches. Therefore, it is difficult to answer the question if these murals were made by Wallachian masters, because of the lack of evidence in written sources and because the presence of similarities in the murals' iconography and style is not enough as an argument for such attribution.

Evidence that a painter coming from Wallachia worked in Arbanassi dates from a much later time – mid 18th century. This is the inscription for the authorship of the murals in the narthex of the Church of the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel, which reveals the names of the painters: Mihail from Thessaloniki and Georgi from Bucharest<sup>77</sup>. Prior to the appearance of this inscription there are no sources discovered that prove a presence of a Wallachian master in Arbanasi. On the other hand, this example is very symptomatic for something characteristic for the work of icon painters during post-Byzantine epoch in the Balkans – the collaboration of painters with mixed origin, usually the leading master in this case being a Greek. The movement of itinerary workshops of Greek painters, especially those from Linotopi, Grammos valley, through all the Balkans during the Ottoman period is impressive<sup>78</sup>. Being considered as highly skilful and educated in the best traditions of Orthodox art, they received commissions by wealthy locals in distant places, where they had the opportunity to demonstrate their proficiency and artistic taste, which sometimes turned into a model for local masters. Some of these Greek painters trained local artists, working together with them on the decoration of churches. Such cases existed both in Wallachia and in the former Bulgarian territories during 17th and early 18th century. Therefore, if we return to our main problem – the direct links between art production in Arbanasi and in Wallachia during the same period – there is always a possibility that the commissioners in both Arbanasi and Wallachia invited masters associated with one

I (2008), p. 70-80; *id.*, “За една ранна тревненска икона от Къпиновския манастир”, *Търновска книжовна школа IX* (2011), p. 797-801; *id.*, “Османотурските данъчни регистри от 1691 г. и от 1702 г. – нови данни за зографите от Трявна”, *Известия на специализирания музей за резбарско и зографско изкуство IV* (2015), p. 308–317.

<sup>77</sup> For the history of this church, its paintings and their masters see И. Гергова, Е. Попова, Е. Генова, Н. Клисаров, *Корпус на стенописите в България от XVIII век*, Sofia 2006, p. 177–201.

<sup>78</sup> The publications on the painters from Linotopi are numerous, here only part of them will be quoted: А. Тούρτα, *Οι ναοί του αγίου Νικολάου στη Βίτσα και του αγίου Μηνά στο Μονοδένδρη. Προσέγγιση στο έργο των ζωγράφων από το Λινοτόπι*, Athens 1991; Α. Tourta, “The Painters from Linotopi (Greece) and the Serbian Church”, *Zbornik Matice srpske za likovne umetnosti XXVII–XXVIII* (1994), Novi Sad 1994, p. 319–325; Ε. Δρακοπούλου, “Ζωγράφοι από τον ελληνικό στον βαλκανικό χώρο: οι όροι της υποδοχής και της αποδοχής”, in *Ζητήματα Μεταβυζαντινής Ζωγραφικής στη μνήμη του Μανόλη Χατζηδάκη*, ed. Ευγενία Δρακοπούλου, Athens 2002, p. 101-139; Κ. Giakoumis, “The Activity of the Painters from Linotop in the Regions of the Orthodox Church of Albania”, in *2000 Years Church Art and Culture in Albania*, eds. P. Thomo, G. Bushaka, Tirana 2005, p. 229–257; Θ. Τσάμπουρας, *Το έργο του ζωγράφου Νικολάου από το Λινοτόπι στο καθολικό της Μονής Μεταμορφώσεως Δρυοβούνου*, Thessaloniki 2005.

and the same workshops, probably from Northern Greece, and the similarities were due to this fact, and not the work of Wallachian painters in Bulgarian territories.

Indeed, the question about icon painters is the least studied part of the problem of the mutual interactions and ties between Wallachia and Bulgarian territories during the 17th century. Although many assumptions have been made thus far, we actually have very little accurate data<sup>79</sup>. There are attempts to survey the presence of Greek painters in the territory of 17th century Wallachia, but they do not pay particular attention to the more complex context of mutual relations with local masters and to the reasons for these painters' emergence north of the Danube<sup>80</sup>. As an art historian, I have nothing to add to the matter at this stage of the study, apart from the opinion that our knowledge of specific artistic links between Wallachia and Arbanasi and of contacts between painters from both sides of the Danube is still at an early stage.

One final remark in connection to Arbanasi village near Tărnovo – it touches on the big question of the migratory flow of the inhabitants from northern Epirus towards north and the Danubian principalities. These Orthodox communities known by different terms in different publications – *Arbănași*, *Albanians*, *Vlachs*, *Aromanians* – were multilingual with dominance of the Greek language and have privileged status, which gave them more possibilities to move free within and beyond the borders of the Ottoman empire and to accumulate wealth. They headed north because of different historical or economic reasons, and scattered throughout south Danubian regions, where many villages still bare traces of their presence. The move of these communities, their interrelation with and incorporation in Wallachia and Moldavia and the set of their donations on both sides of the Danube river has been a hot topic of research by contemporary Romanian scholars<sup>81</sup>. Their

<sup>79</sup> One such example is the monk and goldsmith Gregory of Vratsa who in 1669 donated a censer and a gilded cross to Arnota monastery, see P. Panaitescu, *Români și Bulgari*, Bucharest 1944; Божков, Към въпроса, p. 66. Relatively more information is provided in connection with the goldsmiths from Chiprovtsi workshop, who were commissioned to produce precious church vessels by the elite of the Wallachian society during 17th century, see D. Giurescu, "Maîtres orfèvres de Kiprovac en Valachie au XVIIe siècle", *Revue d'Études Sud-Est Européennes* II, 3–4 (1964), p. 467–510; Е. Генюва, *Църковните приложни изкуства от XV–XIX век в България: златарство, миниатюрна дърворезба, везба*, Sofia 2004; N. Petkova, *In Focus: Francesco Markanich and His Precious Gospel Cover*, „Apulum: Acta Musei Apulensis. Series Historia & Patrimonium” LI (2014), p. 173–185.

<sup>80</sup> For information on Greek icon painters who were invited to work in Wallachia, see E. Drakopoulou, *Remarques sur la peinture post-byzantine dans les Pays roumains. Les peintres provenant de l'environnement grec*, in *Relations gréco-roumaines. Interculturalité et identité nationale*, eds. P. Kitromilides, A. Tabaki, Athens 2004, p. 149–165.

<sup>81</sup> L. Cotovanu, *Le diocèse de Dryinoupolis et ses bienfaiteurs de Valachie et de Moldavie. Solidarités de famille et traits identitaires multiples (XVIe–XVIIe siècles)*, in *Contribuții privitoare la istoria relațiilor dintre Țările Române și bisericile răsăritene în secolele XIV–XIX*, ed. Petronel Zahariuc, Iași 2009, p. 219–360; V. Barbu, *Les Arbanassi*, p. 206–222; L. Cotovanu, *L'émigration sud-danubienne vers la Valachie et la Moldavie et sa géographie (XVe–XVIIe siècles): la potentialité heuristique d'un sujet peu connu*, „Cahiers balkaniques” XLII (2014): <https://ceb.revues.org/4736>; id., 'Qu'on prie pour moi là-bas et ici', p. 207–256; L. Cotovanu, M.C. Amăriuței, O.V. Olar, *Phanariot Donations to the Mega Spileon Monastery (18th Century)*, „Annales Universitatis Apulensis. Series Historica” XVIII, 1 (2014), p. 219–247.

hypotheses and conclusions, together with the developing publication of vast written sources from Wallachia and Moldavia give a wide field for rethinking of the similar material provided by the historic heritage of today's Bulgaria and probably will affect the future Bulgarian historiography.

The notion of the mutual relations and cultural interactions between people on both sides of the Danube during the 17th century was already extant in Bulgarian historiography, only it was somehow conjectural and scattered in different articles and books. The main task of the present text was not to draw general conclusions, which is impossible on the basis of fragmentary information, or to discuss each case in detail, but to summon some of these facts in order to provide more glimpses of the historical and cultural ties between Wallachia and the Christian population in the former Bulgarian territories during the 17th century. All of this was done in an attempt to reunite the parallel narratives of Bulgarian and Romanian scholars in the field.