

Iordache Filipescu, the ‘last great boyar’ of Wallachia and his heritage: a world of power, influence and goods¹

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Abstract

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This study explores the manner in which two competing empires, the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire, acted through material culture and diplomacy to strengthen their influence in a territory lying at the periphery of Europe. To this end, the distribution, rhetoric and reception of the awarding of decorations is analysed, starting from the case of the great Romanian boyar Iordache Filipescu. Wallachia, an Ottoman province under Russian protectorate, in what is today south-eastern Romania, was at a moment of transition on the political level. Attracting loyalties and creating local action networks became diplomatic strategies, and one way in which pro-Ottoman and pro-Russian groupings may be traced in the Romanian space is through the intermediary of decorations. They transpose at the public level merits and services rendered to one of the two powers, but it is necessary to trace at the individual and family level the extent to which loyalty won in this way continued to exist. The message that the decorations transmitted remained a deceptive one: their possession was not equivalent to a transfer of power towards the holder in comparison with his compatriots, just as it did not guarantee complete adherence to the cause of the issuing power.

Keywords: Ottoman Empire, Russia, Wallachia, diplomacy

Ce nom de Philipesco est le grand nom de la Valachie, et le grand boyard qui le porte, l'idole du Roumain, qui retrouve en lui ce type national qu'il voit s'effacer a regret de jour en jour. Si Georges Philipesco, reniant ses somptueux habits, coupait sa longue barbe blanche, et abandonnait le kalpak d'Astrakan, cette apostasie causerait une douleur générale, qui prendrait les proportions d'un deuil public dans le peuple de la grande ville; et l'artiste, avide du spectacle encore si curieux de ce poétique pays, ne saurait désormais où retrouver le seul vestige élégant et splendide d'une société dont la

¹ This study is part of a research made within the ERC project, Luxury, Fashion and Social Status in Early Modern South-Eastern Europe (LuxFaSS), project no. 646489 hosted by New Europe College-Institute for Advanced Study (Bucharest). The author gratefully thanks to Iuliu Rațiu and James Brown for translating the text and once again to James Brown for the final language revision. For all French quotes the English translation has been made by James Brown.

réalité ne sera plus bientôt qu'un souvenir confus. (Charles Doussault, 'Église de Saint-Georges à Bucarest' in *L'Illustration*, no. 566, 31 décembre 1853, 445).²

Charles Doussault (1814–1880), French painter and illustrator, became known as an Orientalist painter following his journeys to the Ottoman Empire; he also paid special attention to Wallachia, which he visited during the first half of the nineteenth century. There he became an integral part of society and was welcomed into boyars' homes and at court so much so that, in August 1843, he was invited by Prince Gheorghe Bibescu (1804–1873)³ to be part of his delegation going to Constantinople to pay tribute to the sultan. In 1848, together with Michel Bouquet (1807–1890), he drew the illustrations for *Album Moldo-Valaque ou guide politique et pittoresque à travers les Principautés du Danube*, a work meant to introduce the Romanian territory to Europeans, commissioned by the former French Consul in Bucharest and friend of the Romanians Adolphe Billecocq (1800–1874).⁴ Doussault's notes about Wallachia appeared in the magazine *L'Illustration* during the Crimean War (1853–1856), as timely a publication as the above-mentioned album, enabling Westerners to better acquaint themselves with a space and a people much talked about on the political scene. At that moment, the menace of war was at the horizon as Russia occupied the Romanian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia in July 1853⁵ and there was a strong public sympathy for the Ottoman Empire seen as a victim of its expansionist neighbour.⁶ The author brings to the forefront the great boyar Gheorghe (Iordache) Filipescu, as the representative figure of both the Romanian *ancien régime* and the Ottoman Empire. Filipescu was the point of reference that gave Doussault the opportunity to discuss the need for a transition in changing regimes without deviating from contemporary politics, while serving, at the same time, the interests of his friends, the Romanians. The Frenchman was no 'armchair traveller', and used his acquired experience for diplomatic gains. His country

² This name of Filipescu is the great name of Wallachia, and the great boyar who bears it, the idol of the Romanian, who finds in him the national type that he is sorry to see disappearing day by day. If Gheorghe Filipescu, renouncing his sumptuous garments, cut his long white beard and abandoned his Astrakhan kalpak, this apostasy would cause general distress, which would take on the proportions of public mourning among the common people of the great city; and the artist, avid for the still so curious spectacle of this poetic country, would no longer know where to find the only elegant and splendid vestige of a society whose reality will soon be no more than a confused memory⁷.

³ Gheorghe Bibescu, Prince (*hospodar*) of Wallachia (1843-1848). On his reign see Georges Bibesco, *Roumanie: Règne de Bibesco*, 2 vols (Paris: Plon, 1893-1894).

⁴ Adolphe Etienne Billecocq, French consul in Bucharest (1839–1846). He wrote *Le nostre Prigioni! Ou le journal de Billecocq, diplomate français*, 2 vols. (Paris: Cosson, 1849-1850) while another part of his journal is at Romanian Academy Library cf. *Călători străini despre țările române în secolul al XIX-lea*, serie nouă, vol. V (1847-1851) ed. Daniela Bușă (București: Editura Academiei Române, 2009), 38-114.

⁵ Barbara Jelavich, *Russia and the Formation of the Romanian National State, 1821-1878* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 55-60.

⁶ Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War (1853-1856)* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 87-98. Later France, Britain and Sardinia will become the allies of the Porte against Russia.

was the first European ally of the Porte;⁷ it had economic privileges and its actions were coordinated with the recently founded Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1836), whose aim was to react to Russia's diplomatic endeavours in a modern European manner.⁸

As early as the reign of Peter I, but especially during that of Catherine II, Russia was extending its empire to the detriment of the Ottoman Empire, the hostility between the two powers leading to the repeated Russian–Turkish wars in the region. By the Peace of Kutchuk Kainardji (1774), Russia gained control of the Crimea and commercial access to the Black Sea, became the protector of the Christians of the Danubian Principalities (Moldavia and Wallachia) and Greece (including the Aegean Islands) and obtained permission to open diplomatic representations in the Ottoman Empire.⁹ The response that Sultan Selim III (1789–1807) sought to give through his military reform programme at the military level¹⁰ did not achieve the expected result, and the Peace of Bucharest (1812) led to the loss of Bessarabia too. From 1821, Moldavia and Wallachia, the native land of the great boyar described by Doussault, were no longer governed by Phanariots, ruling princes of Greek origin from the Phanar district of Constantinople, but by local rulers. Later, by the treaty of Adrianople (1829), the Principalities came under the protectorate of Russia, which also gained the right to administer them and to occupy them with troops until the Porte paid the reparations that it owed.

That Russia's influence was increasing is beyond doubt, and indeed for a moment it turned from a traditional enemy of the Ottoman Empire into its ally against the growing power that Muhammad Ali Pasha was gaining in Asia. This was support given out of strategic interest and in a predominantly Muslim territory, not that of the Christians that it protected. The Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi (1833) revealed the goal: Russian control over the Dardanelles. The reward received by Russia for its assistance worried European diplomacy, which reacted immediately. The two empires returned to their former hostility in the Crimean War (1853–1856) and the war of 1877–1878 which culminated in the gaining of independence for Romania, Serbia and Montenegro. By the Treaty of Paris (1856), the Ottoman Empire entered the 'Concert

⁷ Christine Laidlaw, *The British in the Levant. Trade and Perceptions of the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 17–18.

⁸ Doğan Gürpınar, *Ottoman Imperial Diplomacy. A Political, Social and Cultural History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 57–85.

⁹ Mark Jarrett, *The Congress of Vienna and Its Legacy. War and Great Power Diplomacy after Napoleon* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 287; Jelavich, *Russia and the formation of the Romanian national state, 1821-1878*, 5-6.

¹⁰ Tuncay Zorlu, *Innovation and Empire in Turkey. Sultan Selim III and the Modernisation of the Ottoman Navy* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), who presents the role of foreign missions (French, Swedish and British technicians) and Ottoman specialists in consonance with the new administrative regulations. However, due to internal and external factors the modernisation process did not have the expected rapid positive outcome (166). On how the new measures were implemented see Virginia H. Aksan, *Ottoman Wars, 1700-1870: An Empire Besieged* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 180-213.

of Europe' launched by the Congress of Vienna (1815), which sought to maintain the security of borders. However at that moment there was already a 'pattern in the Balkans [...] confusing in its detail but clear in overall direction.'¹¹ Through the intermediary of diplomatic meetings, territorial losses took place so that the balance of power between Russia and the Porte might be maintained. The challenge of reconciling 'forces of movement' that manifested themselves at the local level, in provinces, with 'forces of order'¹² emanating from the centre was a general one at the European level. For Russia and the Ottoman Empire it became necessary both for an extensive diplomatic system to be implemented, efficient and organized and consonant with that of the West,¹³ and for actions to be carried out at local level to ensure the cooperation of the elite.

The importance of local leaders had proved crucial for the stability and durability of Ottoman presence in border areas and peripheral territories. Ali Pasha of Ioannina, Osman Pasvantoğlu from Vidin or Muhammad Ali in Egypt are handy examples to show the volatility of ruling over such territories. Ali Yaycıoğlu has argued that, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire, following other unsuccessful options, chose partnership between central and local elites as a solution to its problems.¹⁴ Regardless of the path chosen, the aim was adaptation to the changes taking place at the European level.¹⁵ Christine Philliou showed that the 'expansion of diplomacy as a factor in Ottoman court politics'¹⁶ made the empire to react to what happened in Europe and the examples are Stephanos Vogorides and his family.¹⁷ To accommodate to the new diplomatic situation, the Porte established a Ministry of Foreign Affairs, permanent embassies and a Translation Office, all new initiatives that emerged under the reign of Selim III and were reinforced under his successors.¹⁸

This context also shows the dynamic between the two powers on the periphery of Europe: one growing to the detriment of the other and both wishing to adapt and to remain active in the general diplomatic game, without, however, this putting their territory at risk. Thus, there were four levels of connection: 1) between both Russia

¹¹ Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 56.

¹² Jarrett, *The Congress of Vienna and Its Legacy*, 353-4.

¹³ M.S. Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy, 1450-1919* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 123.

¹⁴ Ali Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 14-15.

¹⁵ Suraiya Faroqhi, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

¹⁶ Christine M. Philliou, *Biography of an Empire: Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 130.

¹⁷ Philliou, *Biography of an Empire*, 170-173 through Vogoride's son-in-law Constantine Musurus who was Ottoman representative in London and also his son, Alexander, governor of Eastern Roumelia.

¹⁸ Philliou, *Biography of an Empire*, 132-135; Gürpınar, *Ottoman Imperial Diplomacy*, 59-62; Ömer Kürkcüoğlu, 'The Adoption and Use of Permanent Diplomacy' in *Ottoman Diplomacy. Conventional or Unconventional?* ed. A. Nuri Yurdusev (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 114-130.

and the Ottoman Empire and the West; 2) between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, as neighbouring and often competing powers; 3) between one of these powers and a province of the other; and 4) between the Western powers and the provinces of these two empires. The opening of diplomatic representations followed this route that linked the capitals of Europe to Russia and the Ottoman Empire and then to the capitals of their provinces. For Wallachia this comes after the treaty of Kutchuk Kainardji (1774), when the Great Powers open consulates in Bucharest: Russia in 1782, Austria in 1783 while France and Britain in 1803.¹⁹

The present study seeks to shed light on the way in which both province (Wallachia) and centres, traditional (the suzerain power, the Ottoman Empire) and new (the protecting power, the Russian Empire), interacted in a game of power, using members of the elite and the networks built around them. The case of Iordache Filipescu is the starting point from which may be observed the manner in which objects of a diplomatic character, specifically decorations, were used by the boyars for the display of political loyalty and the maintenance of aspirations to the title of Ruler of Wallachia. For this purpose, two concepts are important: that of network and that of political loyalty. The social sciences have defined and made use of the first concept, and in applying it to history, Peter S. Bearman has come to the conclusion that, in the case of the elite, networks help to better position individuals in society because they constitute ‘a structure of tangible social relations in which persons are embedded.’²⁰ Such a structure permits a fluidity of culture, in our case diplomatic culture, and through the intermediary of the activities that individuals produce, identities are generated.²¹ A European diplomatic network comprising London, Constantinople, St. Petersburg and Bucharest displays increasing complexity as it incorporates other locations and comes to resemble Paul McLean’s ‘triads’, whose fundamental characteristics are hierarchy, reachability and centrality.²² None of these nodes remains always the same; rather they change according to their relations with the others and with the centre around which they gravitate. What counts is closeness and the resonance that it has, the difference lying precisely in the relation.

As Stephan Fuchs shows:

The core has a very firm and highly selective boundary; the overall network’s boundary shifts and expands, with no clear rules or criteria for extension or contraction. In the

¹⁹ Keith Hitchins, *Români, 1774-1866*, 3rd edition, translated by George G. Potra, Delia Răzdolescu (București: Humanitas, 2013), 63, 64, 67, 71. For Serbia, which was also under the Russian protectorate after the Treaty of Adrianople (1829), this happened only later: 1835 (Austria), 1837 (Britain), 1838 (France) cf. Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans. Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 241.

²⁰ Peter S. Bearman, *Relations into Rhetorics: Local Elite Social Structure in Norfolk England, 1540-1840* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993) apud Michael P. Hanagan, ‘Cliometrics and Quantification’ in *Encyclopedia of European Social History*, ed. Peter N. Stearns (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons), 113.

²¹ Paul McLean, *Culture in Networks* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), 24.

²² McLean, *Culture in Networks*, 32-40.

peripheries, there is more uncertainty and ambivalence. Relations among nodes are more indirect, loosely coupled, and fragmented here. The paths extend into more unknown and uncertain territory, and there are fewer signs pointing home, to the core.²³

At micro level, elite local families make use of primary (status, wealth, power) and secondary (lineage, control of land/estates, patron-client networking, titles as part of prestige) features in their relationship with the centre and society.²⁴ In direct connection with this is the concept of loyalty, which was for these political actors multi-layered and in continuous change, depending on political events and their regional and local implications.²⁵

The Filipescu Family, Wallachia and Relations with Russia and the Ottoman Empire

In 1853, when writing for *L'Illustration*, Charles Doussault also made a sketch of Iordache Filipescu (see picture), close in representation to how his compatriot Louis Dupré depicted in his lithographs Ali Pasha of Iannina and Michael Soutsos, the Prince of Moldavia.²⁶ There were other old boyars who had not given up the old clothes, but Iordache Filipescu exuded an Oriental opulence. And this, in a time when under the Russian protectorate and administration, the Romanian elites largely embraced the French language and culture as vehicles of Westernisation, continuing a process that had started under the Phanariotes. Under the Russian administration led by general Pavel Dmitrievich Kiselev they adopted the first Romanian constitution (*The Organic Regulation*, 1831) and started



Courtesy of the 'Nicolae Iorga' Institute of History (Romanian Academy)

²³ Stephan Fuchs, *Against Essentialism. A Theory of Culture and Society* (Cambridge–London: Harvard University Press, 2001), 289.

²⁴ Antonis Anastasopoulos, 'Introduction', in *Provincial Elites in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. A. Anastasopoulos (Crete: Crete University Press, 2005), xxi–xxii.

²⁵ Hannes Grandits, Nathalie Clayer and Robert Pichler, 'Introduction', in *Conflicting Loyalties in the Balkans. The Great Powers, the Ottoman Empire and Nation-Building*, ed. Hannes Grandits, Nathalie Clayer and Robert Pichler (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 5–7, 12.

²⁶ Louis Dupré, *Voyage à Athènes et à Constantinople, ou Collection de portraits, de vues et de costumes grecs et ottomans peints sur les lieux, d'après nature, lithographiés et coloriés* (Paris : Imprimerie de Dondey- Dupré, 1825).

social-cultural reforms.²⁷

Doussault observed the aspirations of the younger generation, captured the transition from the old to the new, and raised the question of whether elites could suddenly give up being Oriental (Turkish) to become Western.

But there is another component that makes Filipescu a typical example of the Oriental tradition, a component that does not transpire from Doussault's account, but from old family testimonials and from internal documents. While he is the protagonist and his family an emblem, Iordache Filipescu is better understood by assessing the knowledge and aspirations he had received from his father and, in his turn, passed down to his son.

The Filipescu family was one of the local boyar families (*boieri pământeni*) who managed to maintain their leadership position in Wallachia even after the arrival of the Phanariots, Greeks sent by the Porte to rule the principality. They appreciated culture²⁸, and cultivated their diplomatic sense, etiquette and refinement without completely abandoning the spirit and customs of their country. Iordache Filipescu's ancestors were successively in conflict with both the Phanariotes and the Russians. His grandfather was sent in exile to Mount Athos by the former while his father, Dinu, was punished twice. The first time it was by the Russians because he used various methods to spy for the Turks and their French allies during the Russian–Turkish war of 1806–1812. While little is known about this aspect of his life, his activities were consequential and they led to the Russians losing the Battle of Giurgiu (24 March 1809). In the opinion of Russian General Langeron, these effects determined the situation of the Russian troops in this part of the Balkans.²⁹ When Dinu Filipescu came back from his first exile to Ecaterinoslav he held the position of treasurer during the reign of Phanariot Prince Gheorghe Caragea. He was in direct contact with well-known money-lenders such as Ion Hagi Moscu, Manuc Bey, or Sachelarie, who lent large sums of money and did business with the state.³⁰ He tried, unsuccessfully, to dethrone the

²⁷ Barbara Jelavich, *Russia and the Formation of the Romanian National State, 1821-1878*, 31-33 on the separation of the executive and legislative powers and the creation of a centralized state system; Dan Berindei (coord.), *Istoria Românilor*, vol. VII, tom. I (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2003), 85-90 adds information about the creation of a national Romanian army, welfare institutions, national archives and so on. Also Ioan C. Filitti, *Les Principautés Roumaines sous l'occupation russe (1828-1834). Le Règlement Organique. Étude de Droit Politique et d'histoire diplomatique* (București: Imprimerie de l'Indépendance Roumaine, 1904).

²⁸ Constantin Filipescu Căpitanul wrote *Istoriile domnilor țerii românești*, from the beginning to 1688, published by Nicolae Iorga in 1902. Constantin (Dinu), Iordache Filipescu's father, encouraged and sponsored cultural events, and Romanian poet Barbu Paris Mumuleanu was one of his protégés.

²⁹ *Mémoires de Langeron, général d'infanterie dans l'armée russe, campagnes de 1812, 1813, 1814*, publiés d'après le ms. original par L.G.F(abry) (Paris, 1902), 134; *Călători străini despre țările române în secolul al XIX-lea*, I, ed. P. Cernovodeanu (București: Editura Academiei Române, 2004), 325.

³⁰ G. Ionescu Gion, *Istoria Bucureștilor* (București: Socec, 1899), 472. For example, only in 1816 Wallachia owed to Sachelarie 910.681 *thalers*; and to pay it back, the principality ceded the profits from one branch of its income (*busmeturi*) for a year. Ionescu, *Manuc Bei*, 113. On the importance of Manuc

Prince through various subversive measures,³¹ and was ultimately sent back into exile under guard, this time to his estate in Bucov.

Thus, previous generations of Iordache Filipescu's family passed on to him political aspirations that he himself embraced. In 1834, at the height of his popularity, he stood as a candidate for the position of prince. In the end, one of the new political leaders defeated him and he decided to withdraw, although he was to be again among the candidates for the throne in 1842. Marquis Bois-de-Comte reports the explanation that Filipescu, reflecting his future endeavours, offered at a friendly meeting:

We were three old men as candidates, he told me. The Russians dismissed the three of us and they were right to do so. Our ideas and feelings were obsolete. The new generation must have its own leaders. We have remarkable people to lead us: Știrbei, Bibescu and others. Our duty is to watch, to council well and to object to unjust and hasty gestures. As soon as the prince comes, I will resign but I will stay in the Assembly (*Adunare*); I'm not completely without power.³²

J.A. Vaillant, the French tutor of Iordache Filipescu's children, believed the Russians did not favour him because he was 'too humane and liberal'.³³ That he was considered humane is no surprise, since he was a philanthropist: his soup kitchen fed the poor on a daily basis, a tradition resembling Ottoman *imarets*.³⁴

Gheorghe Bibescu, the man with whom he was in a competition for the position of prince in 1842, enjoyed dressing luxuriously and displaying his status, and shortly after his election he appeared in public wearing the Ottoman decoration of *Nişan-ı İftihar*, an object considered by the French consul 'ridiculement riche de diamants'.³⁵ This object provoked some discontent among the Russian diplomatic party in

Bey's activity in South-eastern Europe see Ștefania Costache, 'From Ruscuk to Bessarabia: Manuk Bey and the Career of an Ottoman-Russian Middleman at the Beginning of the 19th Century in *Cibanniüma*. Tarih ve Coğrafya Araştırmaları Dergisi Sayı III/1 – Temmuz 2017, 23-43.

³¹ V.A. Urechea, 'Justiția sub Ioan Caragea', in *Analele Academiei Române*, seria II, tom XX. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice, 1898, 275, 277. On the attitudes of Romanian boyars towards the Porte and the Phanariotes see Victor Taki, 'The Russian Protectorate in the Danubian Principalities: Legacies of the Eastern Question in Contemporary Russian-Romanian Relations in *Russian-Ottoman Borderlands. The Eastern Question Reconsidered*, eds. Lucien J. Frary, Mara Kozelsky (London-Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), 40-48.

³² *Călători străini*, III, 163.

³³ *Călători străini*, IV, 362.

³⁴ Historian Amy Singer defines and contextualises the charitable institution of imarets, attributing to them three functions: 1) to distribute food; 2) to legitimise a dynasty and 3) 'a means of Ottomanization', as they were present, from the fourteenth century in many Ottoman towns such as Istanbul, Edirne, Iznik, Salonica, Belgrade, Mecca, Damascus etc. cf. Amy Singer, 'Imarets', in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (London–New York: Routledge, 2012), 84. For more details see Amy Singer, *Constructing Ottoman beneficence: An Imperial Soup Kitchen in Jerusalem* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002) and 'The "Michelin Guide" to Public Kitchens in the Ottoman Empire', in *Starting with Food: Culinary Approaches to Ottoman History*, ed. A. Singer (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2010), 69–92.

³⁵ George Bibesco, *Roumanie*, tom. I (Paris: Plon, 1893), 257.

Bucharest. Establishing a custom that the tsar and the sultan should offer symbolic gifts to each other's envoys in the territory to mark a political understanding, on this occasion, the tsar had taken the first step by giving the Ottoman representative a tobacco case. The sultan likewise had sent the Russian consul, Dashkov, a tobacco case, but the latter considered it 'd'une valeur si ordinaire que celui-ci la montrait a ses intimes comme une expression fort douteuse de la munificence du Grand Seigneur.'³⁶ The example demonstrates Russian expectations in public diplomacy: how could a prince subordinate to them wear a decoration while the protecting power's envoy received only a tobacco case, albeit richly adorned? The misunderstanding was quickly resolved thanks to Bibescu himself, who intervened before the sultan for the Russian consul also to receive the precious Nişan-ı İftihar. Accepting hierarchy and knowing his political place in this ever-changing diplomatic world was something Iordache Filipescu was good at. Always in Oriental clothes, opulent but not such as to offend sentiments and pride, he left it to the princes to appear in public and in portraits wearing the insignia of both powers, suzerain and protector. He did not copy them in his gestures as even the other great boyars, elderly men like himself, tried to do.

Following the event, Prince Gheorghe Bibescu granted to Iordache Filipescu the title of 'first boyar' because: 'from times past [first boyar] was the rank which elevated the most venerable members of the nobility to the highest respect of the community.'³⁷ It was an attempt to make the former opponent a man of trust, a man of his own in a hierarchy of power. On the other hand, it was another type of formal recommendation that strengthened the social and political capital of Iordache Filipescu and underlined that 'office and ancestry are keynote features in the design of family honor'.³⁸ In what future family generations concerns, Iordache Filipescu's sons all abandoned political careers in favour of cultural and military lives, serving as officers in the Russian and Romanian armies.

Two Empires, one province and a relationship through orders and decorations

Constantin (1804–1848) should have succeeded Iordache as head of the family, but he died in 1848, seven years before his father. Constantin Filipescu's private documents contain references to goods belonging to his house in Bucharest and to his estate in Ciumaşi, most of which were either taken by his father or sold at public auction. Of interest to us is which of these items the great boyar kept: an arms collection; French books; accessories; horse, cart and harness for riding; jewellery (one ring and one gold watch) and decorations; furniture; foreign and Romanian wines and some clothes.

³⁶ 'of such an insignificant value that he showed it to his friends as a very questionable expression of the munificence of the Grand Seigneur' Bibesco, *Roumanie*, 247.

³⁷ *Buletinul. Gazetă Administrativă* XII (1843), 449.

³⁸ Paul D. McLean, *The Art of the Network. Strategic Interaction and Patronage in Renaissance Florence* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 75.

Passionate about hunting and weapons in general, Constantin had a beautiful collection: a wide scimitar, a carbine rifle, swords of various origins, a soldier's rifle, a coral-handled knife, 'a machine for cleaning rifles' and many more.³⁹ That his father did not keep many of the clothes is no surprise: it was normal to give them away, since for poor people they were luxury items. The documents do not mention whether they were in good condition or not. A 'Turkish' coat was given to Pavel, a house servant, and Constantin's Turkish decoration was donated to the treasury, while his father kept the Russian one. His widow took over the rest of the movable goods and real estate in order to pass them down to their children.⁴⁰ Basically, Iordache Filipescu acquired what might be called masculine goods, mostly new or hardly used, including prestige objects such as the Russian decoration.

Starting from these items divided between Constantin's widow and father, I examine the practices and significations associated with decorations. Of the two received by Constantin Filipescu from the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire, it was the first that his father chose to keep as a family memento, representative for his son's public life. This raises obvious questions. Why this choice? How common was the presence of such objects in Romanian society? What significance did they have for political options?

In order to understand Iordache Filipescu's action, we must consider the context and return to the time, two decades previously, when medals and decorations made their appearance in the material culture of the Romanian elite. In both empires they were connected to a process of Westernisation, launched for Russia under Peter the Great while for the Porte it was the Napoleonic Wars that brought change. The highest Russian order, that of Saint Andrew, was instituted in 1699 on the English model. It was followed in order of importance by those of Saint George, Saint Vladimir (1782), Alexander Nevsky, the White Eagle, Saint Anne and Saint Stanislaus, these last three being originally Polish.⁴¹ The Porte in its turn had its own system, which came to European attention when Admiral Horatio Nelson was rewarded for his services in 1798–1799 in Egypt with a chelengk (Tk. *çelenk*), a Turkish decoration resembling a jewelled brooch, worn by sultans in their turbans. It is described as a 'feather set with

³⁹ Biblioteca Academiei Române (hereafter BAR), *Documente Istorice*, MCDXXXIX/153.

⁴⁰ The son of Constantin and of Aristița Balș, Gheorghe, became a senator, while their daughter Maria (1835–1877) married the governor of Kiev, Mihail Catacazi.

⁴¹ Sir Bernard Burke, *The Book of Orders of Knighthood and Decorations of Honour of All Nations* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1858), 241–3, where the Order of Saint Catherine for women is also mentioned. The Polish orders were incorporated after 1831, the White Eagle being the most important; R.E. Wyllie, *Orders, Decorations and Insignia: With the History and Romance of their Origin and a Full Description of Each*, (New York-London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1921) 1921, 163; Ulla Tillander-Godenhielm, *The Russian Imperial Award System during the Reign of Nicholas II* (Helsinki: [Finnish Antiquarian Society], 2005), 73, 137 argues that for St. Andrew, Peter I was inspired by Scotland's Order of the Thistle.

diamonds', with a clockwork mechanism to rotate the central star.⁴² A year later it was followed by the Imperial Order of the Crescent, created on the English model to reward foreign diplomats.⁴³ Although for Turks this was still a sort of chelengk, albeit awarded only to foreigners, it was soon interpreted in the West as the first Ottoman order of chivalry,⁴⁴ although in reality this distinction belongs to the Order of Glory (Nişan-ı İftihar), instituted in 1831. Showing characteristic adaptability, the Porte aligned itself with European practice by accompanying the object itself with a diploma and a rule.⁴⁵ It was behind in comparison with Russia, which that same year started to decorate Ottoman subjects in the Romanian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia in its capacity as the protecting power, as established by the Treaty of Adrianople (1829), thus embarking on a somewhat problematic relationship with the suzerain power.

Decorations and medals are a vector of change,⁴⁶ and Russia made diplomatic use of their conferral in these two provinces on the Ottoman periphery. It did not award any of its high orders, but only the lower grades of those of Saint Vladimir, Saint Anne and Saint Stanislaus, as was to be expected given that those of Saint Andrew, Saint George and Alexander Nevsky were for the imperial family, Russian generals and crowned heads. A single exception was made for Metropolitan Veniamin Costache of Moldavia, who in 1831 received the Order of Saint Anne, First Class, 'with imperial crown and star.' In 1833, a large number of Wallachian petty boyars, functionaries and doctors were gifted rings with brilliants by the tsar for 'exceptional zeal' shown in eradicating cholera. The following year, great boyars and government officials in the principality received the Orders of Saint Anne, Saint Stanislaus and Saint Vladimir in various grades, while those responsible for judicial matters and public order received tobacco cases adorned with brilliants forming the imperial monogram. The explanation for these successive gestures of 'monarchical recognition' was the cooperation that these members of the elite demonstrated in the creation of the first Romanian constitution under the coordination of the Russian general Pavel Kiselyov. As the tsar's representative, he sought to assemble a loyal team to implement reforms, to boost the economy and to bring Wallachia closer to Russia. Of all those he met, the person he most appreciated for his ability and his response to requests was Barbu

⁴² Edhem Eldem, *Pride and Privilege. A History of Ottoman Orders, Medals and Decorations* (Istanbul: Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Centre, 2004), 22–25; Terry Coleman, *The Nelson Touch. The Life and Legend of Horatio Nelson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 179, argues that the chelengk alluded (through its thirteen fingers) to the thirteen ships used in his victory at the Nile.

⁴³ Eldem, *Pride and Privilege*, 37–38, argues that it was established at the suggestion of a British diplomat at the Porte, Spencer Smith, as a decoration to integrate with European costume while at the same time displaying Turkish symbolism (the crescent).

⁴⁴ Eldem, *Pride and Privilege*, 38.

⁴⁵ Eldem, *Pride and Privilege*, 112–114.

⁴⁶ Simion Câlția, 'Ordinele militare ale secolului al XVIII-lea', in *Muzeul Național „Regele Ferdinand I”. 90 de ani în slujba istoriografiei și muzeografiei militare: 1923–2013*, ed. Olimpiu Manuel Glodarencu (Craiova: Sitech, 2013), 74.

Dimitrie Știrbei, initially secretary of the government, then member of the National Assembly (*Adunarea Obștească*), minister and, finally, prince. This *cursus honorum* was accompanied by public recognition of his merits: the diploma awarded by the National Assembly for services to the country (1831), the Orders of Saint Anne and Saint Stanislaus (1834) and the Nişan-ı İftihar (1838).⁴⁷

Three things may be noted from the example of Știrbei: that a political figure might hold decorations from both foreign powers (suzerain and protector); that the reward for patriotism was conferred by a Romanian institution but for services carried out under Russian coordination; and that the Porte was slow to respond in this 'diplomatic game'. This delay did not mean it was ignorant or inactive. On the contrary, Russian decorations were conferred and worn with the Porte's approval, and a short glance at the sources shows us its mechanisms of adaptation to the initiatives of its neighbour. Immediately after its defeat and the Treaty of Adrianople, the Porte noted that a large number of Russian decorations were being awarded to various people in Wallachia. The information was centralised and, at the request of Russia, it was established who might wear them in public and in what form. As interior minister (*vornic al Trebilor Dinlăuntru*), Iordache Filipescu was designated in 1831 to deal with this issue at principality level. As the correspondence between Bucharest and the county centres shows, each individual had to bring before the appropriate local official documents proving their receipt of the decoration. This coincided with or anticipated the launch of another 'enquiry', concerning the population and territory of Wallachia, culminating in the census of 1838. In these early years after the Treaty of Adrianople, Russia installed an occupation force in the principality, sent General Kiselyov to select the people with whom he would work at the local level and, at the same time, gathered the information necessary to know the elite and the population of Wallachia. Because there was an associated protocol and regulation, it was necessary to establish who could wear decorations and how. In Vâlcea county, the Russians agreed, through the intermediary of the Romanian authorities, that only four individuals could wear them 'for their service' in the war with Turkey. They applied two criteria: 'only those who were in service as officers and in true warfare and secondly even those who were in lower ranks, a gift for exceptional bravery in war.'⁴⁸ At the time, as a defeated power, the Porte could do nothing but accept the situation: a Romanian boyar class declaring itself, partially, on the other side of the barricade. However this was not a total surrender before its neighbour.⁴⁹ Soon it would also accord the Nişan-ı İftihar, as a recognition of loyalty and at the recommendation of the prince, stating on each

⁴⁷ Nicolae Iorga, *Viața și domnia lui Barbu Dimitrie Știrbei* (Vălenii de Munte: Tipografia 'Neamul Românesc', 1910), 19, 30; BAR, *Diploma emisă de Obșteasca Adunare Extraordinară de Revizje vornicului Barbu Știrbei pentru serviciile aduse țării în calitate de secretar al statului și pentru contribuția avută la alcătuirea Regulamentului*.

⁴⁸ Arhivele Naționale. Direcția Județeană Vâlcea, *Prefectura Județului Vâlcea*, 67/1831, f. 8.

⁴⁹ Eldem, *Pride and Privilege*, 115–116.

occasion where the decoration was to be worn (at the throat or on the chest). From 1834, the first information appears through the French consul in Bucharest, Adolphe Etienne Billecocq, who recalls how the sultan awarded the prince and his associates ‘the highest military honours that he can grant’, namely the decoration and the sword of honour. This was because they had stamped out a revolt that was about to start on the Bulgarian border, instigated by the Russian consul in Galați.⁵⁰ Later, the sultan himself came to Silistra and was met by the prince and the great boyars of the country, including Iordache Filipescu.⁵¹ This was not an isolated case, however, and the decoration thus became for the Porte a symbol of the attenuation of a conflict, while also, like its Russian equivalent, serving to attract former opponents into its sphere of influence⁵² or to reward political loyalty. An analysis of the Romanian cases reveals a further aspect. The majority of Romanian recipients of the Nişan-ı İftihar were great boyars, relatively advanced in years, but still with considerable local influence. The formula that we find in the accompanying document, in the case of individual rather than group awards, is: ‘out of consideration towards your family, for your advanced age and for the services that you have rendered honourably, faithfully and worthily.’⁵³

In terms of family chronology, Iordache Filipescu’s son Constantin was, in 1834, the first to receive the Order of Saint Vladimir, Fourth Class,⁵⁴ although regarding the events on the Bulgarian border his father had been on the side of the Turks. Three years later Iordache received the highest grade of the Nişan-ı İftihar, to be worn at the throat. The award was made on the recommendation of the Prince and was for a whole group, including the bishop of Râmnic.⁵⁵ It was not till 1845 that Constantin, now grand *logofăt*, received a Turkish decoration ‘out of consideration towards your family and for the services you have rendered.’⁵⁶ Thus, we see an attempt to win the younger, pro-Russian generation via a family with a history of loyalty to the Ottoman Empire. The tilting of the balance in diplomatic sympathies called for time, patience and persuasion, and the political ‘balancing act’ that we find in this peripheral space was far from easy for boyar families in which there were divergences of this nature. Moreover, the fluctuating relations between the surrounding empires became part of political normality.

The revolutions of 1848 in Wallachia and Austrian Transylvania brought a moment of cohesion and cooperation between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, and

⁵⁰ *La principauté de Valachie sous le Hospodar Bibesco, par B.A., ancien agent diplomatique dans le Levant*, (Bruxelles, 1847), 128; *Călători străini*, vol. V, 77–78.

⁵¹ *Însemnările Androneștilor*, ed. Ilie Corfus (București: Imprimeria Națională, 1947), 70.

⁵² Eldem, *Pride and Privilege*, 115, offers the Serbian example of Prince Miloš Obrenović recommended by Hüseyin Pasha, the military commander of Widdin.

⁵³ *Buletin Oficial*, 17 October, no. 97/1845, 385, the example of Mihail Cornescu.

⁵⁴ *Buletin Oficial*, 6 September, no. 29/1834, 119–120.

⁵⁵ *Buletin Oficial*, 19 August, no. 32/1837, 36.

⁵⁶ *Buletin Oficial*, 17 October, no. 97/1845, 386.

decorations came to the Romanian elite from both sides simultaneously. This was because foreign diplomacy at the time considered that the supplies and assistance coming from Wallachia, and implicitly from the Ottoman Empire, were decisive in putting down the series of revolutions in the region. The Russian general Alexander N. Lüders even stated, only half joking, that 'sans le biscuit valaque l'armée russe n'aurait pas pu faire la campagne.'⁵⁷ Younger and older boyars alike were now rewarded for opposing the Romanian revolution and, equally importantly, for supplying the Ottoman, Russian and Austrian troops in the territory. The *caimacam* himself, Constantin Cantacuzino,⁵⁸ received the Order of Saint Stanislaus, First Class, from the Russians,⁵⁹ and from the Turks (but only after it had been awarded to Iordache Filipescu) 'a decoration of functionary, second class, first grade, and a tobacco case adorned with brilliants and the portrait of H[is] M[ajesty].'⁶⁰ He was also granted, but would not accept, the right to compensation for the expenses he had incurred. The Austrians too awarded decorations by way of thanks,⁶¹ starting with the *caimacam*, who received the Grand Cross of the Order of Saint Leopold. Part of the Romanian elite, however, regarded these boyars as traitors, complicit with Russia in the violent repression that had taken place. In a brochure published anonymously in Paris in 1850, Iordache Filipescu and other boyars are described as conspirators who had prepared 'des massacres' and with the Russians sabotaged the Romanian revolution.⁶² This aspect is absent from the portrait sketched by Doussault in *L'Illustration* three years later, with which we began. Passivity and opulent Oriental elegance do not, however, exclude politically necessary cunning and cruelty, for, let us not forget, supporting Russia now meant supporting the Porte. We know that after these political events Iordache paid a short visit to Constantinople; while there is not much information

⁵⁷ 'Without Wallachian biscuits the Russian army could not have gone on campaign.' cf. Nicolae Iorga, *Mărturii istorice cu privire la viața și domnia lui Știrbei-Vodă* (București, 1905), 47: the statement was noted by the French consul.

⁵⁸ *Caimacam* (or *kaymakam*), temporary replaced for the prince in the Romanian Principalities, appointed by the Porte – equivalent to a provincial governor. Constantin Cantacuzino (1793–1877), was appointed *caimacam* (1848–1849) on the basis of an agreement between the Russian and Ottoman empires.

⁵⁹ *Vestitorul Românesc*, 10 September, 1849, XIII, no. 72; it was conferred also in the principality of Moldavia.

⁶⁰ *Albina Românească*, 8 December 1849, XXI, 410; *Vestitorul Românesc*, 17 September 1849, XII, no. 74, 297; in addition to the two named, only one other Wallachian boyar, I. Bibescu, received this decoration, but in the second grade.

⁶¹ *Vestitorul Românesc*, 5 November 1849, XIII, no. 88. For a short biography see Sergiu Iosipescu, 'Constantin Cantacuzino, caimacam al Țării Românești' in *Familiiile boierești din Moldova și Țara Românească. Enciclopedie istorică, genealogică și biografică*, ed. Mihai Dim. Sturdza, vol. III (București: Simetria, 2014), 245–8.

⁶² *Le Protectorat du Czar ou La Roumanie et la Russie. Nouveaux documents sur la situation européenne par J. R., témoin oculaire des événements qui se sont passés en Valachie de 1828 a 1819* (Paris: Comon Editeur, 1850), 45. Presumably written by Ion Heliade Rădulescu (1802–1872), Romanian revolutionary, writer and politician, founding member of the Romanian Academy. He was a receiver of the Nişan-ı İftihar; cf. *Buletin Oficial*, 17 October, no. 97/1845, 385.

about the trip, surviving letters from Reshid Pasha and from the great *serasker*⁶³ Muhammad Ali, dating from February and March 1850, confirm its political purpose and that it included a meeting with the Sultan. Amicably calling him ‘cher ami’, Reshid reiterates the goodwill of the Porte toward Iordache Filipescu: ‘Je saisis cette occasion pour vous assurer que je garde un souvenir bien agréable de votre visite à Constantinople et que Sa Majesté Impériale, notre Auguste Souverain vous conserve toujours cette bienveillance dont vous avez été l’objet de sa part, pendant votre trop court séjour dans sa capitale.’⁶⁴ And it was just after the 1848 Romanian revolution that Iordache Filipescu received the Ottoman order Nişan-ı İftihar, an order highly appreciated for its opulent display.

The danger for the recipients of such gifts was that they did not correctly interpret them. The great boyars over-evaluated the gesture, failing to realise that the gift in itself did not symbolise political support in their rise to power. Confusion reigned among those who received decorations and other valuable objects from the tsar and the sultan and who came close to the decision-making circles of the Powers. This may be observed in the atmosphere surrounding the appointment of the prince, when the great boyars nursed hopes of being chosen from among the candidates. Iordache Filipescu had undergone such an experience, and in 1849 it was the turn of the *caimacam* to be rejected. He too, decorated by all three empires, was standing for the post of prince. But Russia, with the agreement of the Porte, favoured his junior, Barbu Ştirbei.⁶⁵ How can we explain this almost generalised confusion among the boyars? One answer comes from the older cultural tradition from which they had not yet detached themselves. Accustomed to the sultan’s awarding caftans and insignia at a prince’s investiture, and with valuable gifts symbolising his favour to those close to him, they saw decorations in terms of this paradigm. The more their decorations and the more diverse in origin, the more confident they were that they would obtain the princely throne or some other position of power. Pride in exhibiting decorations took hold of the entire elite, who had themselves painted wearing them with either Oriental or Western clothes.⁶⁶ But times had changed and so had the role of such gifts. The decoration no longer symbolised the legitimation of local power, but merely the

⁶³ Army commandant and war minister in the Ottoman Empire.

⁶⁴ ‘I take this opportunity to assure you that I have a very pleasant memory of your visit to Constantinople and that His Imperial Majesty, our August Sovereign still regards you with the benevolence that you were the object of on his part during your too short stay in his capital.’ Cf. BAR, *Documente Istorice*, DCCCXXV/163, f. 1.

⁶⁵ Iorga, *Viața și domnia*, 32. Indeed, failing to understand the diplomatic mechanism, Constantin Cantacuzino would stand again in 1854, but again without success. Ibidem, 163–4; Harold Temperley, ‘The Union of Roumania in the Private Letters of Palmerston, Clarendon and Cowley, 1855–7’ in *Revue Historique du Sud-Est Européen*, XIVe année, no. 7–9, 1937, 235.

⁶⁶ Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu, *Engheniți, ciocoi, mojici. Despre obrazele primei modernități românești* (București: Humanitas, 2013), 46–7.

recognition of some current merit or the attenuation of a conflict. It was the end of a process, not the beginning of another, and this is what the great boyars had to learn.

The great boyar Iordache Filipescu kept up the ostentatious luxury of his Bucharest residence at great expense and invested similar amounts in his Oriental garb. His constructed image was that of a high dignitary, like some grand vizier of former times⁶⁷ and he had to maintain it as he was a constant presence in Russian and Ottoman diplomatic circles. In 1854, at the height of the Crimean War, he was decorated by the Russian emperor with the Order of Saint Anne⁶⁸ in recognition of his support given to Russian officers. By this time, he had also formed a clear position regarding the unionist current which was becoming dominant in Romanian political circles. Many were in favour of bringing in a foreigner to head both principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, and he argued for 'neither Turk, nor Greek nor Jew.'⁶⁹ While he thus did not explicitly exclude a Russian, the likelihood of a Russian prince was slim because the Romanians had set their hopes on a French or Belgian one.

It was only upon his death, in 1855, that his efforts to keep up appearances surfaced: he was in so much debt that his underage heirs wanted to give up their inheritance. The mansion on his estate at Tărceni, Prahova county,⁷⁰ was in such disrepair in 1855 that refurbishing and renovating the Russian stoves, the furniture and the interior decoration called for considerable expenditure. Because the boyar had mostly lived and socialised in the city, his properties in the country were seriously neglected, and a year after his death the authorities noticed that his 'big houses' on the Mogoșoaia Road in the capital also needed maintenance. The cost of repairs and cleaning was considerable for a State which had other similar situations to administer; nevertheless, it decided to continue to invest and to use the profit from the estate to help the surviving underaged children.

Conclusions

We started this paper by looking at the image propagated in the West by Charles Doussault of a representative of Wallachia's old elite, Iordache Filipescu. The image responded to rising interest in the Ottoman Empire and portrayed Filipescu as somewhat of a symbol of this borderland. Called the 'last great Oriental boyar' in appearance and manners, Filipescu, holder of high office in this Turkish province and a candidate for the throne, had to meet readers' expectations. He kept his Oriental

⁶⁷ See the example of the seventeenth-century Ottoman vizier analysed in Hedda Reindl-Kiel, 'The Must-Haves of a Grand Vizier: Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Pasha's Luxury Assets', *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, Bd. 106 (2016), 179–221. For him the most valuable items were jewellery (diamonds), sable furs and gold.

⁶⁸ *Gazeta de Moldavia*, XXVI (1854), 37.

⁶⁹ *Călători străini*, IV, 362.

⁷⁰ Previously, the estate had belonged to Miloš Obrenović, the Serbian Prince, whose affairs in Wallachia Iordache Filipescu had managed.

appearance even after the Treaty of Adrianople Treaty (1829), when he was a candidate for the position of prince and Russian influence was on the rise. For Westerners, he was an attractive and exotic character in a picturesque place, but things were more complicated than that. He played along with both the Russians and the Turks because the experience of living at the Ottoman border had taught him about the uncertain, volatile nature of political alliances and the continuous shifts in terms of loyalties and aspirations. Towards the end of his life, he discreetly gave up a prestigious Turkish item inherited from his son, the Nişan-ı İftihar, a decoration that he already possessed in his own right. In the 1830s and 1840s, such objects were the interface of the political loyalties of the Wallachian elite, and at the same time symbolic of the conflictual relations between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. The former entered Romanian society by the channel of Orthodoxy, awarding its first decoration to the metropolitan of neighbouring Moldavia, and then turned mostly towards young boyars, functionaries and career officers. The latter started later, banking on the older generation of great boyars, through whom it sought to reach the younger members of their families and their entourage. The strategies of attraction were different and each power banked on a different generation to maintain the balance of local influence. Only for the revolutionary moment of 1848 can we speak of cooperation between the Porte and Russia; thereafter their relations resumed the same conflictual course. Although for them decorations had a clear purpose, they generated confusion in the narrow circle of the local elite who felt they justified their aspiring to the throne of the principality – to no avail, as Iordache Filipescu himself found out. These objects took on a double significance, different for those awarding them and those receiving them, making the political message variously interpretable at the public level. The confusion was perpetuated because it served the interests of the two empires, which acted through individuals and families with contrary political sympathies. The Filipescus, father and son, were in different camps. Thus for Iordache, the Russian decoration was his son's true political inheritance, and so he kept it. The Nişan-ı İftihâr, which he gave to the treasury, signified opulence and political attraction via the family, aspects to which Constantin had not been sympathetic. Divergent loyalties, coexisting in public and in the family, transposed the political divide between the generations of the Romanian elite. Contrary to expectations, the old loyalties would fade and give way to a political project instrumentalising the international context in order to break the principality away from the Ottoman empire. In 1853, during a new phase of the Eastern Question, the contemporaries of Iordache Filipescu did not see the paradox of his being both 'the last great Oriental boyar' and the supporter of greater autonomy from the Ottoman Empire, a political position contrary to the interests of the suzerain power.