

# THE INNS OF BUCHAREST. A STUDY OF POTENTIAL PATTERNS USED IN THE WALLACHIAN CAPITAL

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**Keywords:** Inns of Bucharest, Venetian *Fondaco*, Genovese trading post, Ottoman Inn.

**Abstract.** The present paper aims to draw a general perspective on the possible models which the builders of the great inns of Bucharest might have considered when they decided to erect those ensembles. The directions indicated by the 19<sup>th</sup> century bibliography point towards the Italian Peninsula, with the Venetian *Fondaci* and the Genovese trading posts as reference points. The ideas therein would be adopted by the historians and researchers of the following century with no attempt to further the investigation on this topic towards a thorough analysis of the general context or the architectural form. Doubts regarding the filiations from the western world are expressed no sooner than the second half of last century, when the alternative of the Near East is brought to discussion, a much more probable hypothesis given the economic and political relationships that Wallachia used to have with the Ottoman Empire. Despite the seemingly general consensus reached by this new research direction, it has not yet stirred any attempt to go deeper into the subject so as to address the inns of the Ottoman Empire beyond the general and vague descriptions.

**Rezumat.** Studiul de față încearcă să contureze o perspectivă generală asupra posibilelor modele pe care constructorii marilor hanuri din București le-au avut atunci când au decis realizarea acestor ansambluri. Direcțiile sugerate de bibliografia secolului al XIX-lea trimit către Peninsula Italică, *fondaco*-urile venețiene și cantoarele genoveze constituind puncte de reper. Ideile formulate vor fi preluate de istoricii sau cercetătorii veacului următor fără a exista o încercare de aprofundare a subiectului în care să fie analizat contextul general sau formele arhitecturale. Îndoieli cu privire la filiațiile venite din lumea occidentală sunt enunțate abia în a doua jumătate a secolului trecut când este pusă în discuție alternativa Orientului Apropiat, ipoteză mult mai probabilă având în vedere relațiile politice și economice pe care Țara Românească le avea cu Imperiul Otoman. Deși noua direcție de cercetare pare să fi întrunit consensul general, până în prezent nu a existat o încercare de detaliere a subiectului în care studiul hanurilor din Imperiul Otoman să depășească formulări vagi.

Out of the old inns built in Bucharest, only three cases can be still explored, and those have been several times rebuilt. They are *Manuc's Inn*, built by Emanuel Mârzaian, the rich merchandiser, in the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the *Inn with a Linden Trees* built in 1833 by Ștefan Popovici and Anastasie Hagi Gheorghe Polizu, as well as *Gabroveni Commercial Passage*, almost totally rebuilt following the great fire in 1847, by Hagi Tudor Tudorache, the engross merchandiser. Considering that all of them were built in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the programme was in decline, the particular "passage" configuration of the last two may lead to insufficiently researched hypotheses on the architectural analysis of such buildings. While trying to get more reliable information, the archaeological explorations undertaken along time, the analysis of lithographies or the plans completed by mid-19<sup>th</sup> century may provide satisfactory results, yet insufficient especially if we consider the grand compounds run by monasteries or local princes. The study of similar examples built outside Wallachia may offer solutions as long as the debate focuses on a wide comprehensive context part of the political, economical, cultural and geographical background. The attempt to identify possible models followed by the builders of the 17<sup>th</sup> century is a constant in nearly all writings on this topic, by making references to Western Europe or the Orient. No matter what the current stand, none of the authors tried to detail or seriously back up the assumed viewpoint; there were statements only, which leave no room for further interpretation.

## Research directions

While referring to inns, this topic comes up treated successively in the exterior Carpathian area by various travellers, diplomats or military officers who, on their stop in such buildings, describe the general configuration of station places, observing the impressions and personal experiences during that time. Some of those descriptions are noteworthy, so much more as they are often mentioned again by other several coming travellers. Among those leaving suggestive images of inns, we could mention Anton Maria Del Chiaro, the princely secretary of Brancovan Waywode, abbot Bošković while crossing Wallachia and Moldavia in his trip from Constantinople to Poland at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and this list should also include Ion Ghica, the text of the latter being adopted in a more or less precise way by all those trying to suggest the shape of old

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