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## *Historia*

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# Thoughts on the Dacians of the Romanian Historical Imaginary\*

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**Abstract:** *Thoughts on the Dacians of the Romanian Historical Imaginary.* The paper is presenting some of the main issues concerning the “public image” of the Dacians in Romanian common thought and knowledge and is aiming to identify the sources of this vulgate set of representations of ancestors. The collective imaginary of the general public concerning the Dacians is partially fuelled by the scholarly literature and thus reflects some aspects of the archaeological discourse. However, archaeological research today is defined by a methodological approach which has an opposite direction, whereby the reconstruction of the past starts at the level of the micro-communities, of particular facts and regional features instead of levelling generalization. This seems to represent the essence of the divergence between the scientific approach characterized by a critical disposition and moderate scepticism on the one hand, and profoundly subjective traditionalist representations of the collective imaginary on the other.

**Keywords:** Dacians, dacianism, protochronism, historical imaginary, stereotypes

**Rezumat:** *Reflecții cu privire la dacii imaginarului istoric românesc.* Acest articol prezintă câteva dintre problemele principale referitoare la imaginea publică a dacilor în cultura de masă și în discursul științific din România, încercând să identifice sursele acestei imagini vulgarizate a strămoșilor. Imaginarul colectiv este alimentat parțial de literatura academică și, ca urmare, el reflectă anumite aspecte ale discursului arheologic. Cu toate acestea, cercetarea arheologică de astăzi este caracterizată de o abordare metodologică de sens contrar, în care reconstruirea trecutului pleacă de la nivelul micro-comunităților, al faptelor particulare și al trăsăturilor regionale, respingând generalizările și interpretările lipsite de nuanțe. Aceasta pare să reprezinte esența

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clivajului dintre abordarea științifică, definită de spirit critic și de un scepticism moderat, pe de o parte, și reprezentările tradiționaliste, profund subiective, ale imaginarului colectiv, de cealaltă parte.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** daci, dacism, protocronism, imaginar istoric, stereotipuri

The 'scientific historic imaginary', in this case referring to archaeology, encompasses an assemblage of representations, theories and reconstructions that make up the generic perception of historical reality. It is based on the archaeological discoveries and data as well as on the critical appraisal of the literary sources, brought together into a coherent corpus, as far as this can be achieved by historic scholarship. This furthermore contains various degrees of imagination inherent to scientific methodology in general in the shape of theories, alternative hypothesis, generalizations, analogies, with regard to aspects which are yet to be corroborated by factual evidence. The term '(scientific) imaginary' should not be understood in this case as a synonym for fantasy, but instead as the collection of ideas determined by reason and scientific thought, called upon to complete and interpret the empirical data resulted from the archaeological research<sup>1</sup>.

The collective imaginary of the general public concerning the Dacians is partially fuelled by the scholarly literature and thus reflects some aspects of the archaeological discourse. The process is however a selective one, involving high levels of subjectivity, and integrating other forms of representation as well, such as artistic expression, i.e. literature and cinema and also the often oversimplifying renderings put forward by the media. Common perception depicts the Dacians as the ancestors of modern Romanians alongside the Romans thus conferring them a privileged status compared to other 'participants' of the Romanian ethnogenesis (e.g. the Slavs) identified as such by the historical and linguistic approaches.

Within this collective imaginary a well-defined component stands out, i.e. that of the 'dacomaniac' discourse<sup>2</sup>.

The concepts of the Dacian people and state (i.e. Dacia) were integrated into the national historical narrative during the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the Romanian historiography and literature. The image thus constructed comprises the totality of stereotypes depicted by the ancient literary record to the extent that they contributed to the consolidation of

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<sup>1</sup> Simbotin, 2015, 22.

<sup>2</sup> Alexa, 2015, Grancea, 2007.

the newly formed national consciousness and identity. The need for prestigious origins marked by heroism as well as a sense of tragic destiny (see the figure of King Decebalus) meant to individualize the Romanian nation is based on the stereotype of the morally superior warrior 'barbarian' characterized by a firm belief in overcoming death. The Dacians, together with their specific cultural profile, thus join the Romans in the gallery of collective ancestors and protagonists of a national epopee that is gradually taking shape<sup>3</sup>. The most important historical sources with regard to this reconstruction are provided by a series of classical and post-classical authors.

The ancient nature of these literary texts has accounted for their undeniable legitimacy. Most often they were integrated into the literary discourse devised to assist the structuring of national ideology naturally by means of non-scholarly methods, as the critical reappraisal of the literary sources has only been under way since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The imaginary of this period encompasses a significant degree of subjectivity and affectivity, traits that will endure over the following periods as well.

The restitution and reconstruction of the Celtic ancestors (the Gauls) as part of the French nation-building process has had a similar course in 19<sup>th</sup> century France.

During the pre-modern period as well as that of the Revolution, the Gauls were called upon to render legitimacy to a discourse which aimed to change the existing social order (see the famous political pamphlet by Abbé Sieyès entitled 'What is the Third Estate?'). Just as in the case of the Dacians, the Gauls were placed in a territory defined by natural frontiers, and perceived to be the absolute native population of the region<sup>4</sup>. During the reign of Napoleon III the scale of the archaeological research carried out on historical sites linked to pre-Roman Gaul as well as the setting up of certain monuments (e.g. the statue of Vercingetorix at Alesia - bearing the physiognomic features of the emperor), suggests that we are dealing with a national project. "*Nos ancêtres, les Gaulois*" have found their way into the history manuals<sup>5</sup>. The Gauls were also summoned to legitimize and back the resistance during the Franco-Prussian war, the siege of Paris being compared to that of Alesia, later becoming relevant once more in the context of the national trauma caused by the loss of the two eastern provinces of France.

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<sup>3</sup> Boia, 1997, 95-96; Dana, 2008, 300.

<sup>4</sup> Buchsenschutz, 2007, 12.

<sup>5</sup> Collis, 2010, 198-200.

The public image of the Gauls as revealed by modernity from the ancient sources has ingrained a series of clichés into the French public consciousness which require a systematic effort of scholarly deconstruction especially concerning the heroic and violent characteristics or attributed to them and occasionally alternated with idyllic traits<sup>6</sup>.

### **Scientific imaginary and collective imaginary during the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

The century at hand has been marked by a duality in the approach concerning the Dacian past, the two tendencies which dominated the intellectual and public spheres being laid out already at the beginning of the period. On one hand we are dealing with the phenomenon known as 'dacianism', while on the other hand we have the scientific discourse based on a proper methodology and a critical approach. The two movements which coexisted and evolved in a parallel fashion, the former being marginal, while the latter one essential, can be traced back to two fundamental books, 'Dacia preistorică' (*Prehistoric Dacia*) by N. Densușianu (1913), and 'Getica. O protoistorie a Daciei' (*Getica. A protohistory of Dacia*) written by V. Pârvan (1926).

The former is a pseudo-archaeological narrative comprised of mythologized facts and marked by an excessive and uncritical use of etymologies, being essentially a fantasy novel as described by Pârvan himself, which depicts a wide array of gods, heroes and civilizations that brought to life a lost prehistoric world. Furthermore, the book portrays episodes of mythical events reconstructed from folklore and toponymy. Placed within a fictive chronology and a sacralised geography, the text is a fusion of valid and fictional information structured around the fantastical 'Pelagian empire', the source of the entire history of Europe with its epicentre in the region of modern-day Romania. The lack of a critical approach combined with an overstretched enthusiasm worthy of a better cause have brought to life a massive volume which creates the illusion of erudition and has become the 'holy book' of dacianism and implicitly the main source of legitimation for pseudo-archaeology today. The book of N. Densușianu, criticized right from the start, is essential for a proper comprehension of the Romanian protochronistic discourse started somewhat later as well with regard to today's senseless dacomaniac imaginary. The main issues put forward in *Dacia preistorică*

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<sup>6</sup>Buchsenschutz, 2007, 262.

were reiterated by the nationalist movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as well by the dacomaniac exaggerations of today<sup>7</sup>.

'Getica' alongside the entire scholarly activity of V. Pârvan after 1918 has laid the foundation for the archaeological research of the Iron Age civilizations of Romania and has put forward a methodological model rooted in the contemporary European historical discourse. His support was vital for the commencement of archaeological investigations in the Orăştiei Mountains coordinated by the University of Cluj, which has naturally become a fundamental source for a valid scientific data. Archaeology, with its discoveries and researched sites was employed to sketch the collective portrait of the ancestors who were called upon to take part in the reestablishment of Romanian history and civilization within the new geographic setting of Greater Romania. The main characters of the book are the Getae/Dacians reconstructed using the data provided by the written sources (interpreted without a proper critical approach) and that of the archaeological record available in those times. The atmosphere of this reconstruction projected back into Antiquity the spirit of the times depicting the Dacians as a community of peaceful, pious and wise farmers. Dacia and Greater Romania were in the vision of the author superimposed, creating an idealized and almost ahistorical image<sup>8</sup>. This was also prevalent in the French historiography of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with reference to the natural and cultural frontiers of ancient Gaul<sup>9</sup>. At the same time the Dacians represented in Pârvan's conception a homogeneous community with well-defined social structures, who founded a great kingdom - which was in fact a projection into the past of the realities of his time<sup>10</sup>. This attitude persisted for a long time both in Romanian historiography and public consciousness.

All the same, Pârvan can be credited with laying down the scientific framework of Late Iron Age studies, especially considering that the ideas of Densușianu in the respective period were particularly popular, drawing a large number of adherents. All in all the respective archaeological investigations and literature were highly valuable notwithstanding the methodological shortcomings inherent to the period.

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<sup>7</sup> Grancea, 2007, 98.

<sup>8</sup> Boia, 1997, 59.

<sup>9</sup> Buchsenschutz, 2007, 12-13.

<sup>10</sup> Boia 1997, 100.

The Interwar period and the rise of the far-right movement in Romania resulted in the escalation of the dacianist ideas against the backdrop of the sombre political atmosphere sweeping across Europe and promoting aggressive ideologies. In the process, themes such as native 'racial identity' were activated and derived from protohistory alongside the reinterpretation of a Zalmoxian mysticism which advocated the triumph over death through heroism and thus offered a justification to the violent mythology of the Romanian legionary movement<sup>11</sup>. The autochthonic rhetoric tinted with dacianist overtones has taken over the public discourses, the press, as well as the literary and philosophical scene, including the works by some of the most remarkable representatives of Romanian culture at the time such as L. Blaga, M. Eliade, P. P. Panaitescu etc. This episode was relatively short-lived, however its aftershocks did not disappear, resurfacing in attenuated forms and specific nuances during the post-war decades. This is illustrated by the lengthy career of Ioan G. Coman, professor at the Faculty of Theology, and later at the Orthodox Theology Institute<sup>12</sup>. His conception was partly based on the forced synthesis between the cult of Zalmoxis and orthodox Christianity. This association, clearly irrational in historical terms can still be found in different shapes within the contemporary dacianist discourse.

Following World War II the systematic investigation of a number of Dacian archaeological sites as well as the publication of the results laid the framework of the subsequent scientific approach. The main cultural-historical argument of the approach that has dominated Romanian historiography over the last century is centred on the association of the archaeological data with the Dacians known from the historical sources. During this period archaeology was called upon to provide new evidence that underpins the historical analysis and synthesis, thus archaeological interpretation is integrated in the historical narrative reconstructed from the ancient texts.

The impact of Mircea Eliade<sup>13</sup> is essential in drawing up both the Romanian scientific imaginary as well as the popular reception of the historical discourse concerning the Dacians. His interwar works and especially his highly influential books published after the last world

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<sup>11</sup> Boia, 1997, 106-107; Grancea 2007, 99; Dana, 2008, 310-316.

<sup>12</sup> Dana, 2008, 315-319.

<sup>13</sup> Dana, 2008, 265-287.

war<sup>14</sup> were embraced not only by the scientific community, but also by the general public, especially after the Romanian editions were also published. The weight of his international authority provided an uncontested legitimacy to his theories regarding the religion of the Getae/Dacians, perceived as a defining feature of their civilization in Herodotus' account as well as in its lengthy historiographical afterlife.

The evaluation of Dan Dana (see above) shows the extent to which the work of Eliade (today criticized mostly in the foreign literature) influenced the Romanian scholarly literature during the 1980s, giving rise to a dominant school of thought in the local historiography. A simplified expression of this concept can be found in the 'public' image of the Dacians represented in the collective consciousness. Some important historical and archaeological works (e.g. the studies published by H. Daicoviciu and I. H. Crişan during the 1970s and 80s) also enjoyed a relatively large circulation. They were in fact mediums for the dissemination of the abovementioned ideas in the public consciousness, while the history schoolbooks consolidated them at other levels of public perception. The aforementioned authors have also published popularising works that enjoyed high levels of approval within the general public. As shown above, the mechanism whereby the subjective public imaginary concerning the Dacians is created involves the selective and vulgarized adoption of certain aspects of the scientific literature that are viewed as typical and spectacular and thus rapidly transformed into stereotypes.

### **Protochronism and its posterity**

*Avant la letter* protochronist tendencies have made their presence felt as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, rooted in the same inferiority complexes compensated through an exceptionality and autochthonic notion. This line of thought, marked by an obsession with an idealized and fictive Dacian past was consolidated by the work of N. Densuşianu (*Dacia preistorică*) who effectively created a mythology that is still enduring today.

The debate concerning protochronism has drawn attention and began exerting influence following the famous theoretical paper by Edgar Papu published in 1974<sup>15</sup>. The contention has polarized the views

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<sup>14</sup> *A History of Religious Ideas*, I, The University of Chicago Press, 1978, II, 1982, III, 1985 and especially *Zalmoxis, the Vanishing God*, The University of Chicago Press, 1972.

<sup>15</sup> Verdery, 1994, 152-204.

of many Romanian intellectuals concerning the issue of the origin of the national civilization. The protochronistic exaggerations have surfaced in most areas of the cultural sphere, the nearly-official dacianism representing its most obvious historical manifestation<sup>16</sup>.

The national-communist propaganda through one of its main hubs, the History Institute of the Romanian Communist Party has reactivated more or less officially the dacianist and protochronistic ideas with the intent of transferring them into the mainstream historical research while also infusing the cultural atmosphere already prone to the effects of ideology<sup>17</sup>. Protochronism was promoted especially by non-specialists and served to justify the tendencies of isolation from external influence both western and eastern, as well to uphold the illusion of 2000 years of national independence. Historical characters and events, most notably Burebista and Decebal were frequently called upon to legitimize the political regime. Among others the absurd theory arguing for the Dacian origin of the Latin and thus the Romanian language was also resuscitated. Highly relevant here are the activities and publications carried out and promoted by I. C. Drăgan who notwithstanding his murky past, was drafted more or less officially into the service of the regime.

Inescapably the autochthonic ideas based on a Dacian past reconstructed in an irrational manner have left deep marks in the collective imaginary especially given the effects of the narrative aggressively promoted by the media centred on a heroic past and the association of Dacians with Romanians. These ideas are today resurfaced by the pseudo-archaeological and dacianist literature which in the general atmosphere marked by the 'post-truth' phenomenon has embarked on meeting the needs of a public hungry for the sensational, while also structuring the collective imaginary.

In spite of all this the mainstream historical and archaeological discourse has remained untouched by these concepts and remains to this day embedded in the framework defined by scientific methodology.

### **A certain ethnological literature**

A part of the ethnographic/ethnologic literature of the 1980s became a channel for the dissemination of more or less scientifically valid facts which were transformed into clichés of the so-called 'common knowledge'. The media, especially the television channels reiterate today

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<sup>16</sup> Dana, 2008, 337-340.

<sup>17</sup> Boia, 1997, 109-114.

such theories especially in the context of certain celebrations rooted in popular culture, such as Christmas, New Year's Day, as well as specifically Romanian holidays like Mărțișor, Dragobete and Sânzieni. Thus ethnography, ethnology and anthropology sometimes contribute to the consolidation of an artificially created bridge between Dacian antiquity and the present.

Fascinated by the past unravelled but insufficiently explained by archaeology, some authors have employed and re-contextualized certain historical and archaeological facts and hypothesis thus putting forward a contentious phylogenesis for popular customs. Most often religion and mythology are highlighted here. The Dacians, who along with the Romans represent the foundation of Romanian civilization, are seen as the ideal candidates to account for some ethnographic facts devoid of historical verifiability. The fragile premise underlying this approach is represented by the supposed perennial nature of rural culture, perceived as a simplified and homogenous stratigraphy stretching between the distant past and our times. In part the ethnological discourse is based on the reproduction of some false theories ('theocratic state') or arguable concepts, to say the least ('the aniconism of Dacian mythology', the 'ritual geometrism', totemism, etc<sup>18</sup>). In other instances ethnology has tried to fill the gaps in the Dacian pantheon (in reality almost completely unknown) by invoking certain characters of popular mythology (e.g. Dochia) fictively projected back into antiquity<sup>19</sup>. Occasionally the failed mythologizing discourse has relied on ethnological, archaeological, and linguistic arguments, conveying the illusion of erudition<sup>20</sup>. This approach clearly falls short of the standards imposed by scientific methodology engaged in the reconstruction of any ancient spiritual world.

Unfortunately, such enterprises, situated at the boundary of pseudo-science continue to fascinate the public and feed the collective imaginary with fiction.

### **Cinema and the Dacians**

The highly accessible nature of cinema in the period between the 1960s and 80s has had a decisive role in shaping the collective imaginary regarding the historical past. During the Romanian communist period, a main focus of the regime's cultural politics was its obsession with a

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<sup>18</sup> E.g. Vulcănescu, 1987, 108-121.

<sup>19</sup> E.g. Ghinoiu, 1988, 200-203.

<sup>20</sup> E.g. Mușu 1982.

cinematic epopee that would convey a national historical narrative aligned with the party's propaganda discourse. The result was a series of motion pictures unique in the world at the time and watched by millions of spectators. The films brought to life the essential moments in Romanian history<sup>21</sup>. Naturally, the Dacians found their place in this series, being the protagonists of two massive and extremely popular productions which appeal to the public even today: *Dacii (The Dacians)* 1966, director: S. Nicolaescu and *Columna (The Column)*, 1968, director: M. Drăgan. The storylines proved to be quite appealing to the general public, employing romantic stories, complex scenography, extravagant costumes, battle scenes and spectacular rituals reflecting a heroic historical narrative in an oversimplified and stylized fashion. Emphasis was placed on the conquest of the Dacian kingdom and the beginning of Romanian ethnogenesis – both important subjects for the state propaganda. *Dacii (The Dacians)* was a Romanian-French project bearing the hallmarks of an international super production typical for the 1960s. This of course only served to increase its public appeal...

The motion picture entitled *Burebista* (1980, directed by Gh. Vitanidis) was the creation of a later stage of the regime. Accordingly, the result was a visibly more rigid and propagandistic production, as shown by the rhetorical nature of the dialogues. This is understandable as the main character was the focus of attention during the celebrations of '2050 years from the foundation of the centralized and independent Dacian state'. The film was based on overplaying the political and military successes of the protagonist, as well as his diplomatic skills, which contributed decisively to the rise of Dacia as a regional power, the analogy with the ambitions of the Romanian communist regime being evident. Due to the somewhat lower standards of production, resulting in a less spectacular scenography and costumes compared to the examples cited above, its impact with the public was clearly inferior. Furthermore, it is evident that the script lacked or distorted any professional counsel from a competent specialist as it was required to fully meet the demands of the propaganda machine.

The films display a wide array of visual clichés such as the Dacian costume centred on the *pileus* (a specific hat) and the specific weapons, coupled with other, more complex stereotypes (a rather rudimentary rendering of the Dacian martial ethos, the schematic reinterpretation of the Dacian religion based on the literary record, anachronistic concessions regarding certain famous artefacts highlighted

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<sup>21</sup> Saulea 2011.

in the film), that found their way into the collective consciousness. The moral emphasis is placed on the heroic nature of the anti-Roman struggle for independence portraying an obsessive and idealized image of a mythical past populated by schematic characters, which also legitimized the present.

The impact of the historical films, very popular with the general public, was significant and their influence on the collective consciousness, including the structure of the historical imaginary, was substantial. The motion pictures convey the distorted image of a spectacle-like historical past which is highly schematic and thus easily assimilated. They contributed to the creation of a simplistic and very resilient vulgate that proves to be especially hard to dismiss.

### **Dacianism today**

This phenomenon, highly visible today, is rooted in the realities of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and especially the Interwar period. For the most part, the main ensemble of dacomaniac ideas and theories has its origins in the abovementioned work of N. Densușianu, *Dacia preistorică*. Subsequently it was boosted by the protochronistic theory and also by the direct intervention of the state propaganda machine (see the papers published in the periodical *Anale de istorie*). Following its timid resurgence during the early 1990s, this movement currently displays an aggressive surge in the favourable climate of the 'post truth' period. Dacianism is mostly promoted by the amateurs who abusively appropriate a scientific expertise and while doing so, challenge the competency of the specialists. Their activity is based in various associations and NGO's both home and in the heterogeneous environment of the Diaspora. Very few professional archaeologists and historians have adhered to the dacianist movement<sup>22</sup>.

The fundamental 'theories' of N. Densușianu were resuscitated and nuanced. The main concepts involve the prevalence of the Dacian language in lexical terms over the influence of Latin (in fact Latin itself is derived from the Dacian language as are many other European languages!), the dismissal of Romanization, the singularity of Dacian civilization – clearly rooted in protochronism, etc. A wide array of data and theories from multiple disciplines such as archaeology, linguistics (etymology), ethnography/ethnology, are mustered in and reinterpreted, alongside evident forgeries ('the Sinaia lead plates' – together with their entire contemporary mythology). These ideas and

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<sup>22</sup> Grancea, 2007, 105-106.

concepts are combined without the understanding of elementary scientific methodology. The result is the promotion of a fictive, counterfactual narrative that claims to '(re)discover' arguments and sources in its quest to uncover the 'real history'. Often conspiracy theories are invoked which claim the deliberate cover up of past realities<sup>23</sup>.

A current tendency belonging to the same phenomenon is represented by the pseudo-scientific approaches that simulate the methodology and appearance of scholarly publications, putting forward footnotes with complicated bibliographical references. They overwhelmingly take inspiration from the scientific literature adopting data from the archaeological reports, studies, monographs and synthesis works, and deliberately rearrange the main information in accordance with their own thesis, thereby ignoring the elementary principles and methodological standards of scientific research. Published by amateurs (usually specialised in other domains), these works deal with spectacular subjects such as religion, the language and culture of the Dacians, alongside other aspects regularly studied by archaeology. Usually the result is a seemingly convincing alternative discourse which in reality is simplistic and devoid of nuances and thus totally incompatible with scientific enterprises.

Their relatively active presence in the public sphere (through foundations and associations sometimes with considerable founding) creates confusion within the general public sensible to the identitarian explorations inherent to globalization and highly vulnerable in the 'post truth' atmosphere.

The dacomaniac discourse, proliferated especially online, contributes to the formation of a malign historical imaginary generating along the way toxic effects within the collective consciousness. It is the expression of an autochthonic ideology that touches on fundamental aspects of identity promoted as an alternative to European values.

### **Ancient stereotypes and the modern imaginary of origins**

The last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the emergence of a new approach in the interpretation of ancient literary texts based on critical analysis and the contextualization of the information that they convey. This shift in method resulted in the reappraisal of numerous facts previously considered unquestionable and generally lead to a more circumspect attitude towards the ancient literary record. The work by Fr.

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<sup>23</sup> Nemeti, 2019, cap. IV.

Hartog on the texts of Herodotus<sup>24</sup> was a cornerstone with regard to the lucid approach to ancient texts, especially those belonging to the Halicarnasian author.

The face value of the ancient texts was questioned following the identification of recurring stereotypes, subjective assessments, agendas on behalf of the author, or just simply the lack of knowledge. Oftentimes these sources reveal more about their authors than they do about the subjects they deal with.

The dominant collective portrait of peoples was inscribed into the ancient imaginary based on the accounts of certain Greek and Latin authors shaped by specific cultural models as well as by the limitations of information gathering inherent to the period (see the accounts of Herodotus concerning the Scythians and Thracians). Frequently these texts were packed with subjectivism and preconceptions. The works of the ancient authors are marked by a high degree of pragmatism and are subjected to ideology of the respective times. Accordingly, the 'invention' of Gaul by Caesar in his famous book depicts an image envisaged by the soldier and politician driven by his personal agenda<sup>25</sup>.

A part of these informations were transformed into stereotypes and integrated into the historiographical traditions<sup>26</sup>. They were subsequently perpetuated through the often selective and altering post-classical transcriptions, influencing our perception in a considerable manner. On occasion the intermediaries would interpolate or omit information, as shown by the high-profile tradition of identifying the Getae and Goths, with all its implications (see the post-classical reception of Zalmoxis).

The 'public image' of the Dacians, constructed by modernity and based exclusively on the ancient literary record is distorted by the successive changes in perspective. As remarked by a French historian with regard to the traditional historic discourse on the Gauls (the ancestors of the French), modernity consecrated a corpus of texts which is very difficult to disentangle without the assistance of an incisive critical spirit, moreover historians have traditionally tended to overstate the accounts of the ancient authors<sup>27</sup>.

The critique of ancient literary texts does not fit the scope of reshaping the collective imaginary, which is characterized by a

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<sup>24</sup> Hartog, 1980.

<sup>25</sup> Thollard, 2005, 19.

<sup>26</sup> Petre, 2004, Dana, 2008, 426-7.

<sup>27</sup> Lewuillon, 2005, 176.

considerable degree of inertia. Commonly, this type of imaginary is sustained by the corpus of scientific data, however it does not take into account the periodic shifts of paradigms.

### **Stereotypes in the contemporary imaginary**

Book IV of Herodotus' *Histories* is the oldest consistent account of the Getae, written in the context of the expedition lead by king Darius I against the north-pontic Scythians. During its march, the Persian army came across the Getae, who 'driven by recklessness were readily subdued, though they were the bravest and most just among the Thracians'. It is important to note that the episode involving the Getae has a marginal significance on the whole. In the absence of more consistent accounts, the excerpt at hand has become a suitable founding document for the history of the Getae. The abovementioned phrase referring to the qualities of the aforementioned ethnic group was repeatedly isolated and reproduced in the context of state propaganda during the 1970s and 80s, inundating the history schoolbooks as well as the press and media, becoming a sort of glorious label automatically attached to the said community<sup>28</sup>. Furthermore, it introduced into the collective imaginary the stereotype of bravery and warrior nature also attributed to the Getae. A few decades ago the Iron Age exhibitions within the Romanian museums obsessively displayed the quote as a sort of an inaugural line of 'history'. In 1986 the communist regime, in a perpetual quest for historical legitimacy celebrated with great pomp 'the first struggles of the Geto-Dacian people in the defence of liberty and independence'<sup>29</sup>. The phrase gradually infiltrated the collective consciousness and came to define the identity of the national ancestors.

The same text of Herodotus also mentions Zalmoxis. In both the scientific and popularising literature referring to the 'Geto-Dacians' and their religion, the story of Zalmoxis is omnipresent, accounting for the most visible component of their spirituality. This aspect was continuously analysed and reinterpreted over time with various methodological approaches, and implicitly with different results. The myth conveyed by Herodotus is one of the most well-known elements referring to the Dacians within the general public, dominating the collective imaginary with regard to the ancestors.

The Halicarnasian historian recorded the story considering it as an exotic fact that best characterizes the Getae from the perspective of the

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<sup>28</sup> Petre, 2004, 69-72.

<sup>29</sup> Grancea, 2007, 99-100.

contemporary Greeks. The account is only loosely upheld by the author, Herodotus mentioning that the information comes from the Greeks living on the Black Sea coast and along the straits, and can be viewed as an instance of 'colonial folklore', as Zoe Petre put it. This led to the emergence of a long reception history of Zalmoxis that can be traced throughout the centuries up until the Middle Ages. Recent research has proven that this considerable record is solely based on the account of Herodotus, supplemented by later interpolations<sup>30</sup>.

In Romania perhaps the most influential view on this matter is the one expressed by Mircea Eliade, translated and widely accessible to historians and archaeologists since 1980. Perceived as a valid methodological model and legitimised by the international notoriety of the author, his texts have inspired (and continue to do so) a large number of specialists who have studied the difficult subject that is Dacian religion<sup>31</sup>. The mystical and spiritualist nuances of this discourse were absorbed by the collective imaginary contributing along the way to the dacianist neo-mythology.

The stereotype of the 'warrior Dacians' is based on an alleged martial ethos attributed to them. It is closely related to the phrase recorded by Herodotus ('...the bravest and most just among the Thracians'). The sources of this cliché can be identified in a historiographical reality: many of the ancient sources refer to their involvement in military conflicts (Herodotus, Strabo, Dio Chrysostomos, Cassius Dio), however this does not mean that they were permanently engaged in acts of war, but rather that the attention of the ancient authors was drawn exactly by the instances of armed conflict. The reliefs of Trajan's Column, as well as those of the Adamclisi monument, both considered to be emblematic for the Romanian ethnogenesis seem to enforce this superficial impression, however one must bear in mind that their creation was directly linked to military events, i.e. the conquest of the Dacian kingdom (101-102, 105-106 AD). Some recent scientific works fascinated by heroic history are still receptive to these stereotypes and continue to provide the collective imaginary with theories concerning the warrior aristocracy considered to be highly representative for the Dacian civilization.

It is evident that the Dacians and Getae were involved in armed conflicts both internal and external just as many other peoples of the time, however a closer look at their civilisation reveals many other

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<sup>30</sup> Dana, 2008, chapt. III and 436.

<sup>31</sup> Dana, 2008, 265-287.

relevant aspects which are less violent and thus less appealing to our contemporaries<sup>32</sup>. The peaceful components are often obscured in the collective consciousness by a vulgate that has gradually built up during the last century. The overstatement of the heroic warrior side of Dacian culture is more in tune with a flattering image of the ancestors. Today's standard representations which have become defining visual elements associates the figure of the Dacians with the *draco* standard and the curved sword, both based on the representations of Trajan's Column. This martial imagery is present in the motion pictures of the 1960s, 70s and 80s, but it is also conveyed by urban monuments (see the public statues erected in the towns of Deva and Orăștie) alongside the performances of the self-proclaimed 're-enactment' groups featuring imaginary skirmishes between the Dacians and their Roman enemies.

The 'Dacian gold' or 'Decebalus's treasure' is also a notable component of the Dacian neo-mythology present in the collective historical imaginary and is connected to the idea of their tragic destiny. The account of the riches stolen by the victorious Romans following the treason that lead to the Dacians' downfall (Cassius Dio), seems to be included by our contemporaries into the long line of historical injustices suffered by Romanians. The subject of the legendary 'Dacian gold' was brought back into public attention during the 1990s and 2000s when the looting of archaeological artefacts and the repatriation of certain spectacular pieces (e.g. the *Koson* type coins and spiral bracelets discovered in the Orăștiei Mountains) have ignited the public's fantasy. The collective imaginary (together with its inherent moral component) has interpreted the conquest of Dacia (seen as the archetype of today's Romania) as a result of Roman greed, even though it is highly likely that the main argument was indeed of political and military nature.

Sarmizegetusa Regia (Grădiștea de Munte, Hunedoara County) alongside the Dacian forts have a distinct place within the public imaginary concerning the Dacians. They are closely associated with the history of the ancestors and have become places of memory with a high symbolical value.

The representative monuments of Sarmizegetusa Regia are viewed as tangible results of the elevated nature of Dacian civilization. The exceptionalist dimension of the imaginary centred on the Dacians is further based on their technological achievements. The 'solar calendar' (i.e. the great circular temple/the andesitic altar) are classical examples

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<sup>32</sup> See the similar debate on the traditional stereotypes concerning the Celts from Gaul, Buchsensschutz, 2007, 262.

of the assimilation of outdated interpretations and pseudo-scientific theories by the collective consciousness. These are often preferred over the current interpretations which are less spectacular. Scores of impressive but phantasmagorical virtual reconstructions are propagated on the internet, which totally ignore the archaeological realities.

At a general level the aforementioned archaeological site represents the prestigious and palpable materialization of the founding myth of Romanian ethnogenesis and also the scenography of certain historical events which have entered into the contemporary mythology.

### **Iconographical stereotype - the Dacian costume, the bearded Dacian and the Dacian *draco***

Such clichés have already emerged during Antiquity in the collective consciousness of the old Greeks and Romans and thus are known to us through certain iconographic and literary works that have survived.

Generally, the cultural mechanism of the identity/alterity phenomenon has led to the emergence of certain typical images of the barbarians, which associates particular character traits, traditions, depictions, costumes, specific weapons, fighting styles, etc., with groups of peoples with whom they came into contact at one point in history. Thus, in the eyes of the ancient Greeks the Scythians were always on horseback, wore a specific bonnet, trousers, and the ever-present quiver which contained both the bow and the arrows (see the images depicted on the red-figured Attican pottery vessels). In the Greco-Roman world the image of the Celt/Gaul was often modelled on the statues of the famous triumphal monument from Pergamon ('the dying Gaul', etc.): hirsute, with a prominent moustache, and wearing nothing else than a torque on the neck (heroic nudity)<sup>33</sup>. The characteristic weapons (the large oval shield with a median spine and the long sword with two edges) were viewed as visual 'ethnic indicators' for the Gauls present on all sorts of figural representations. Evidently there are significant discrepancies between the iconographical stereotypes formed on the outside of these cultures and the way these communities actually viewed and represented themselves.

The Dacians seem to have met the same faith: the fall of Decebalus's kingdom brought into the visual consciousness of the Mediterranean world the typical image of the Dacian based especially on the public monuments erected by the victors (e.g. the triumphal statuary from Rome). The *pileus* (a bonnet specific to other ancient peoples as

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<sup>33</sup> Thollard, 2006, 20-21.

well), the beard and the characteristic costumes, alongside the military equipment abundantly depicted on Trajan's Column are still perceived as being the 'national costume' of the Dacians. In reality we are dealing with an ancient iconographic stereotype with both symbolical and practical implications, one of the obvious roles of the costumes illustrated on the reliefs of the column is the need to distinguish the combatant factions.

In similar fashion the critical appraisal of the images depicted on various indigenous archaeological finds dated to late-Iron Age contexts, shows a much more diverse situation, as not all male figures wear beards and the well-known bonnet is almost absent.

The wolf *draco*, the standard represented on the reliefs of the Column is today intensely used by the nationalist ideology, and is frequently associated with a particular type of identitarian expression (e.g. the bronze monument in Orăștie, the element on the crest of the city of Cluj, or even the logo conceived for Romania's presidency of the Council of the European Union). This standard is very rarely featured in the archaeological reality referring to the Dacians, appearing on Trajan's Column and incised (in my opinion in a doubtful manner) on a ceramic vessel discovered in a late-Iron Age settlement (?). Even if a fantastic beast with a similar morphology had populated the ancient imaginary<sup>34</sup>, the respective standard has practically no history prior to the Dacian Wars. Conversely, it gained notoriety with regard to certain ethnic groups with whom the Romans clashed at a later date. Moreover, the Roman army adopted certain variants of this *draco* (see the find with a dragon head from the Roman fort at Niederbieber in Germany), either from the Dacians or the Sarmatians and used it until the late-Antiquity<sup>35</sup>.

Trajan's Column with its reliefs full of iconographical conventions, often misinterpreted by historians as a factual war account has consecrated the respective standard in public consciousness as being genuinely Dacian. A further contributor to this conception was Mircea Eliade's paper entitled 'The Dacians and the wolves'. This emblematic semantic association, which is more literary than historical and tainted by mystical nuances is highly appreciated by the general public. In fact it acquired surprisingly high degrees of popularity and was integrated into the collective imaginary populated by Dacians. The online environment is packed with visual and written content suitable to the genre of *heroic*

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<sup>34</sup> Florea, 2001.

<sup>35</sup> Feugère, 1993, 57-58, Fischer, 2012, 23.

*fantasy* rather than to historic reality and often tainted with mystical and occult nuances.

### **The Dacian neo-mythology**

Such stereotypes are structured into a new mythology, which has very little to do with historical reality as far as this can be reconstructed by scholarship. They promote a highly idealized image of the Dacian ancestors characterised by courage, richness, and mystical religiousness, but who tragically succumbed to an unavoidable destiny. We are dealing in fact with nostalgic adulation of the atemporal utopia centred on a prosperous and glorious Dacia... This is the nucleus of the reinvented founding myth.

A certain imaginary 'Dacian' past is visible in different shapes and forms throughout the Romanian quotidian. Many such representations convey an autochthonic, ancient idea, which is by itself is regarded as valuable. Persons named Dacian, Daciana or Meda are quite frequent, and the national car of Romania is still called *Dacia* even though it is produced by an international company. Furthermore, there are countless logos and publicity slogans which make use of such references, probably relying on the popularity of the autochthonic ethos.

Situated on the state frontier at the Iron Gates of the Danube, a monumental portrait of the last Dacian king was sculpted on a prominent rock. The work was initiated and financed by I. C. Drăgan, promoter of the movement 'We, the Thracians' and active in Romania both before and after the regime change of 1989. This 'megalithic' monument of a questionable taste can be viewed as a materialization of a hyperbolized Dacian past similar to the scenography of a Hollywood film.

### **The 'Dacians', absolute ancestors...**

The Dacians have acquired a distinct place within the Romanian historical imaginary as they are considered to be the ancestors of modern Romanians and alongside the Romans, protagonists of a national founding myth. In historical and archaeological terms there are discrepancies between the scientific data and their representation within the collective imaginary which has selectively put together a schematised and simplified collection of stereotypes.

The 'public image' associated with the 'Dacians' is composed exclusively of positive considerations being also marked by a high degree of affectivity which replaces the critical and otherwise necessary attitude of detachment towards a community from the distant and

confuse past of the Iron Age. Apparently the attitudes towards the other ancestors, the 'Romans' seem to be more neutral, in contrast with the privileged position in which they were placed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

We observe an affinity towards the image of the true ancestor characterised by a series of traits (courage, resoluteness, heroism, faith, endurance, etc.) which are found on the opposite spectrum of today's realities. Ancient idealized Dacia, is in fact nothing less than the ideological substraction of modern-day Romania and the ancient past is perceived as being way more glorious than the present. From this point of view not much has changed since the specific representations put forward during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

We witness today a growing presence in the public sphere of certain symbols associated in the collective imaginary with the Dacians. The wolf-headed *draco* standard sometimes associated with the Romanian national colours has lately achieved prevalence suggesting the identification of Dacians and modern Romanians. This contemporary construct indicates autochthonic identitarian sentiments. This phenomenon is explicable in the context of globalisation which exerts its effects even at the level of micro-communities and individuals. The dominant cultural and ideological atmosphere today encourages the rediscovery of different forms of nationalism. The distant past, i.e. prehistory, protohistory and Antiquity has once again become appealing and expressive. Apparently in a world exposed to rapid cultural change perceived in real time, the general public seeks stabile landmarks embedded in an archaic, archetypical chronology.

Archaeological research today is defined by a methodological approach which has an opposite direction, whereby the reconstruction of the past starts at the level of the micro-communities, of particular facts and regional features instead of levelling generalization. This seems to represent the essence of the divergence between the scientific approach characterized by a critical disposition and moderate scepticism on the one hand, and profoundly subjective traditionalist representations of the collective imaginary on the other.

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# The Idealized Rome in the Romanian Historical Imaginary before 1918\*

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**Abstract:** *The Idealized Rome in the Romanian Historical Imaginary before 1918.* By the time when Transylvania became part of Romania in 1918, the idealized image of ancient Rome became a defining element of the Romanian historical imaginary. An important factor in this evolution was the gradual emergence of the modern national identity constructs in the context of several internal and external social-political and cultural transformations which shaped the ways in which various social groups integrated the past into their collective memory. As a consequence, the idealized ancient Rome was gradually transformed from an intellectual ideal to an ideal ancestor to a driving force in the nation's quest for modernization.

**Keywords:** heritage of the Classical world, founding myths, national identity, ideal ancestor, modernization

**Rezumat:** *Roma ideală în imaginarul istoric românesc înainte de 1918.* La data la care Transilvania a ajuns să facă parte din România, în 1918, imaginea idealizată a Romei antice a devenit un element definitoriu al imaginarului istoric românesc. Un factor important al acestei evoluții a constat în emergența graduală a constructelor identității naționale moderne, în contextul transformărilor social-politice și culturale interne și externe, care au conturat modalitățile în care diferite grupuri sociale au integrat trecutul în memoria lor colectivă. Ca urmare, imaginea Romei antice a fost transformată treptat, dintr-un ideal intelectual al strămoșului exemplar într-o forță conducătoare a procesului de modernizare națională.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** moștenirea antichității clasice, mituri fondatoare, identitate națională, strămoș exemplar, modernizare

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### **Classical heritage and the European identity constructs**

The heritage of the Classical world has always played an important role in the European society and culture, contributing to the construction of different individual and collective identities, and also to the appearance of a range of political, ideological or cultural movements. Throughout history, elements of this heritage have been deliberately selected and often transformed to suit the interests of various social-political or cultural actors. An idealized image of ancient Rome has gradually become a defining element of the modern European identity, and even more so in the case of nations speaking Latin-derived languages. At the same time, the presumed superiority of the Roman culture and civilization has fuelled, at conceptual level, ideologies like the imperialism or the colonialism, or cultural movements like the Renaissance or the Neoclassicism.

In this context, an important issue has been the longstanding perception of ancient Rome as a rather monolithic social-political entity, whose overwhelming military, economic and cultural superiority had supposedly allowed it to civilize a large part of the known ancient world. This perception has only been challenged from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onward, mainly in the academic environment, due to an increasing interest in the history of indigenous populations and other social groups which were previously neglected by a historiography focused mainly on political and military events. In archaeology, first significant theoretical changes only appeared in the 1970s following the critique of previous culture-historical approaches, which aimed to identify past societies by classifying their material culture according to distinct ethnic and historical criteria which were often the result of projecting modern social-political concerns into the past<sup>1</sup>. Subsequent processual and post-processual approaches have been influenced by a series of post-modern concepts borrowed from sociology and cultural anthropology, and also by the process of decolonization and social emancipation that have contributed to a rising interest in the networks of interaction between individuals, groups and communities having very different origins, interests and means of actions as a way of understanding the evolution of any society. From this point of view, many recent studies of Roman imperialism and its effects have abandoned the concept of Romanization as a unidirectional process of acculturation, focusing instead on the ethnic, social, economic and cultural complexity and diversity of the Roman Empire, and on the

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<sup>1</sup> Renfrew, Bahn 2012, 21-48.

influence of the conquered populations and the “Barbarian” periphery on its development through time<sup>2</sup>.

However, the longstanding glorifying reception of the Classical heritage has contributed to the perpetuation of an idealized image of Republican and Imperial Rome as the source of many structures, practices and concepts defining the European culture and civilization in the modern collective imaginary. Nevertheless, this heritage has not been “rediscovered” by modern scholars, and not even by those of the Renaissance, as it is often postulated in coursebooks, since several centres from medieval Europe and the Near East have contributed to the preservation and transmission of certain texts, structures, practices and ideas originating from ancient Greek or Roman civilization. Accordingly, the Renaissance can be considered more as a period in which the interest in the philosophical, literary or aesthetical concepts of ancient Athens and Rome has intensified within a wider array of major social-political, cultural and economic transformations experienced by many European societies. This has contributed to the appearance of a diversity of new cultural and ideological models inspired by the Classical world, each of them serving particular individual or collective interests<sup>3</sup>.

Still, the European Enlightenment of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is the intellectual movement which contributed greatly to the much wider circulation of many models and ideas inspired by the Classical antiquity, and especially by Pericles’ Athens or the Republican and Augustan Rome. During this period, the interest in ancient literature, philosophy and aesthetics started to spread beyond the social and political elites, even if many concepts were still interpreted from the dominant ideological perspective of the period<sup>4</sup>. This gradual process of “democratization” of the access to Classical culture, which continued in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, took advantage of the establishing of many public museums and academic societies, public schools, universities and libraries, as well as the development of the press and printing houses, and the wider circulation of educative literature. At the same time, many European educational systems continued to glorify the ancient heritage, emphasizing the supposed moral, cultural and civic superiority of Classical Athens or Imperial Rome.

For example, the British society of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has considered the Roman

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<sup>2</sup> Mattingly 2011, 3-42; Egri 2017, with further bibliography on this subject.

<sup>3</sup> See a detailed discussion in Kallendorf 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Kaminski 2007.

Empire as a perfect example of governance aiming to bring the progress and civilization among the Barbarians of temperate Europe temperate, though without diminishing their presumed native qualities. This model of Romanization, which was initially proposed by certain historians and then taken over by the archaeologists, became relevant for the construction of modern British identity due to an educational system which incorporated the study of Classical literature, major metropolitan art and political history in the education of British Empire's elites. In this way, Tacitus' extolling work describing the deeds of Agricola became the standard textbook used in schools and universities to teach about the beneficial effects of Romanization in Britain<sup>5</sup>.

In France, the Gallo-Roman identity construct, which is still dominating the contemporary collective imaginary, was also an ideological creation of the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This identity construct took shape in the context of the first major archaeological programs targeting, on one hand, the Celtic sites considered to be representative for the nation's individuality, and on the other hand, ancient Rome and Athens as predecessors and models of the French culture which was dominating the European intellectual life of the time<sup>6</sup>. Just like in England, the interest in Classical antiquity as the origin of modern European culture and civilization has been interlinked with an imperialist policy, though the Latin origin of the French language has also provided a presumed organic connection between ancient Rome and modern France.

Still, from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, ancient Rome has gradually ceased to be used as a means of legitimizing rulers and dynasties<sup>7</sup>, even if a series of modern European empires still aimed to be considered legitimate heirs of the Roman Empire by incorporating various symbols of ancient origin into their own ideology of authority. Instead, an idealized Rome became an important element in the founding myths of some modern European nations, offering a connection with a prestigious past and, in the case of those speaking Latin-derived languages, the justification of an organic evolution in an ancestral space. These myths of origin gained an increasing social and political relevance, while the feudal structures of social affiliation and the associated identity constructs became obsolete. Their wider acceptance contributed

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<sup>5</sup> Hingley 2000; Bradley 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Dietler 1998; Demoule 1999.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, the use of the so-called Trojan myth of origins by different medieval rulers in Kivilcim 2018.

significantly to the consolidation of new forms of social cohesion and to the appearance of new collective identity constructs that tended to transcend rigid social barriers. From the conceptual perspective, these myths of origin tended to use selectively certain linguistic, historical, ethnographic or archaeological information, which were frequently combined with real or invented traditions; the resulting narrative was then validated by a system of values mainly governed by social-political factors. At the same time, from the structural perspective, these myths are characterized by a series of distinctive features, real or imaginary, which are widely recognized and accepted in the collective mindset. Among them are mythical genealogies starting with real or legendary founding heroes, or an ancestral space defined by clear historical, ethnographic and linguistic features, which allowed an uninterrupted evolution of the nation, including a presumed “golden age” located deep into the national past and used as a motivation for the necessary “rebirth” of the national consciousness<sup>8</sup>.

#### **From the intellectual ideal to the ideal ancestor**

An idealized ancient Rome is also present in the Romanian historical imaginary, but the way in which it is perceived nowadays by the general public differs significantly from its perception in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, or even at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These differences are a result of the gradual emergence of national identity constructs – a process which was shaped by a variety of internal and external social-political and cultural factors – though the ways in which various social groups integrated the past into their collective memory were also relevant. From this point of view, the Romans nearly always played an important symbolic role, starting from the Renaissance, while the Dacians were only discovered during the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanticism, in the quest for individuality in the construction of modern Romanian identity, and also for the much needed “golden age” of the nation, populated by exemplary heroes<sup>9</sup>.

The emergence of modern Romanian identity constructs has been based on many intellectual accumulations combined with an increasing collective social consciousness which tended to transcend traditional social boundaries. While the intellectuals have provided the necessary historical, linguistic or ethnographic arguments and framework, the regular people have offered the psychological points of reference, and

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<sup>8</sup> Smith 1999, 59-71.

<sup>9</sup> See a synthesis of this subject in Popa 2013.

the collective self-awareness and experience in relationship with other ethnic entities. The arguments of the former display an apparent objectivity, being considered the results of scientific enquiry, while the collective self-awareness is subjective and situational, being informed by a diversity of social-political and cultural interactions that are continuously happening at all levels of the society.

In pursuit of the ancestors, the Romans first captured the scholars' attention during the Renaissance due to the similarities between the Romanian and Latin languages. One of the most influential opinions belonged to Enea Silvio Piccolomini who, while discussing these linguistic similarities, also deplored the apparent cultural decline of the descendants of Roman legionaries, a perception which could be related to the stereotypical view of the Romanians' alterity<sup>10</sup>. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Antonio Bonfini identified the Transylvanian Romanians as descendants of the Roman colonists brought in Dacia by Trajan, using not only linguistic arguments, but also the presence of Roman ruins and inscriptions. Still, the main scope of his work was to demonstrate the noble Roman origin of King Matthias Corvinus, his protector, by inventing a prestigious genealogy<sup>11</sup>, a common practice among the European political elites during the Renaissance.

The humanist culture continued to evolve in the intellectual environment from the Principality of Transylvania until the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, the majority of the models and ideas inspired by Classical antiquity which were adopted by the Transylvanian political and intellectual elite came mostly through some major Central European centres, like Krakow, Vienna or Prague, and less through direct contacts with Italy or France. These Central European stylistic and conceptual filters can be observed, for example, in the laic and ecclesiastic architecture of the larger urban centres, like Cluj, Alba Iulia, Oradea or Sibiu, and also in the layout of many aristocratic residences built in the countryside during the same period. In many cases, these residences were also embellished with collections of Roman inscriptions, statues, reliefs and other artefacts, which were meant to underline the intellectual interests of the owners and their familiarization with Classical antiquity<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Almási 2010, 108; see also Mitu, Mitu 1998, 12-14, for the perpetuation of this perception until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>11</sup> Armbruster 1993, 18-19; Almási 2010, 121-123.

<sup>12</sup> For the main features of the Transylvanian Renaissance, see Kovács 2003.

Aside from enabling erudite demonstrations, which allowed them to connect with their European peers, the interest of the Transylvanian humanists for the Roman heritage also gained a political dimension starting from the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in the context of increasing political and military conflicts with the Habsburg Empire. As a consequence, their writings sought to define a distinct identity of the Principality, based on a longstanding, noble history originating from Classical antiquity. These attempts to reconstruct the local Roman past usually combined information extracted from ancient texts with some ethno-linguistic references and compilations of locally-discovered inscriptions; the resulting works were often influenced by the writing style of Latin authors like Titus Livius and Tacitus<sup>13</sup>.

Still, these works, as well as those of the Moldavian chroniclers of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, had a quite limited influence on the Romanian historical imaginary due to their restricted circulation and the underdevelopment of the educational system. Far more influential were the representatives of the Transylvanian School who promoted the so-called "Latinist movement" during the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>14</sup>. Their perception of ancient Rome as an ideal ancestor of the Romanian nation was largely shaped by their education, first in Greek-Catholic schools from Transylvania and then in universities at Rome or Vienna, where they got familiar with the writings of ancient authors and were able to participate in the intellectual debates of the Enlightenment. The core idea of their approach was the Latin origin of the Romanian language and, by extension, of the Romanian nation, which allowed them to reclaim a noble origin, on the par with that of the greatest European nations. They took advantage of the Habsburgs' cultural and educational policies in Transylvania, which allowed the publication of dictionaries, grammars, translations, coursebooks, as well as literary and historical works, and numerous journal articles, all of them having a profound impact on the modern collective identity constructs of the Romanians from Transylvania.

This process continued well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, being supported by the confessional schooling system, the Greek-Catholic Church, the cultural associations and the Romanian press and publishing houses, whose activities have produced an idealized image of Roman Dacia. On one hand, this has led to the longstanding perception of Transylvania as the cradle of the nation. On the other hand, the same

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<sup>13</sup> Russu 1975, 37-47; Bodor 1995; Almási 2010, 115-120.

<sup>14</sup> Hitchins 2013a, 259-263; Verdery 2011, 32-34.

image has contributed to the appearance of a range of specific social and cultural features attesting the widespread adoption of the Romans as exemplary ancestors, whose presumably exceptional moral and martial qualities served as models for generations of Romanian descendants. One example is the systematic use of various names, mottoes and symbols of Roman origin by the Romanian civic and cultural associations from Transylvania. Another example is provided by the manner in which the Romanian military forces were organized during the Revolution of 1848-49, resembling the structure of the Roman legions and even using Latinised names and emblems for various units<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, the Roman origin was frequently used as a political argument by the Romanian revolutionary elites, contributing to the consolidation of a collective political and historical imaginary which was specific to the Transylvanian Romanians of this period.

### **The ideal ancestor as a modernizing driving force**

The idea of using Roman ancestry to educate the masses, stemming from the intellectual debates of the Enlightenment, gained new dimensions during the Romanticism within the process of increasing instrumentalization of the historical writing as way of achieving social progress<sup>16</sup>. From this point of view, the journalistic and literary activity of the Transylvanian intellectuals continued to have an ethno-pedagogical connotation, aiming to stimulate the presumed latent energies of the nation by providing a wider access to literary writings inspired by historical events, popularization articles, translations of ancient authors, or ethnographic studies offering presumed parallels between Roman and Romanian customs and traditions.

It is worth underlining that their educative efforts also had a significant impact across the mountains. Aside from the widespread circulation of Transylvanian publications, some reformers and authors of coursebooks, like Florian Aaron and August Treboniu Laurian, contributed significantly to the modernization of public education systems in Moldavia and Wallachia in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>17</sup>. Their influence can be observed in the structure and contents of the history coursebooks, which were based on a succession of exemplary biographies and heroic events aiming to educate the young generations to emulate the virtues of their ancestors. All of these coursebooks started

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<sup>15</sup> Neamțu 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Mitu 1997, 261-267 and 273-279.

<sup>17</sup> Murgescu 1999, 112-115 and 124-139.

with a brief history of Rome up to the conquest of Dacia, while the list of national heroes always started with Trajan as the founding father of the nation; Decebalus was merely presented as an augmentative character of the emperor's actions, a brave but inevitable victim of the Roman superiority. The Dacian king's status in this narrative only changed during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as a consequence of an increasing interest in the pre-Roman element of the national identity.

This simplistic but glorifying approach cemented in the collective mindset the idea that the superiority of Roman origin is an intrinsic component of the Romanian nation's exceptional identity, demonstrating its inherent capacity to progress in spite of adverse external factors. This idea persisted even later, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the Dacian-Roman model of ethnogenesis was embraced by the large majority of the Romanian intellectuals. This interpretative model emerged initially from the earlier linguistic and historiographic debates regarding the nation's origins, but it was later turned into an ideological and historiographic axiom not only in the academic environment, but also in the historical imaginary of the general population, in spite of the appearance of other models, like the protochronism, which gained popularity in the interwar period and then during the national-communism<sup>18</sup>. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century social-political context, the cultural and ideological heritage of ancient Rome became part of the wider debate concerning the need to modernize the Romanian society and the means to achieve this. From this point of view, the Liberals were promoting the idea of reconnecting with modern Europe on the basis of a shared Roman heritage as a way towards a meaningful social and economic progress.

Among other things, this has led to an increasing interest in uncovering and documenting the material remains of Roman Dacia, which in turn contributed to the professionalization of historical and archaeological research<sup>19</sup>. First professional archaeological investigations targeted major sites from Dobrogea and Oltenia which were considered relevant for the Roman origins of the nation. An illustrative example is provided by the research history of the Roman triumphal monument at Adamclisi. The perceived ideological value of its reliefs depicting scenes from the Roman military campaigns against Dacia made the authorities of the time to propose their integration, together with a copy of Trajan's Column, into a planned monumental Neoclassical assemblage which

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<sup>18</sup> Verdery 1991, 34-36; Hitchins 2013b, 69-74.

<sup>19</sup> Babeş 2005.

was meant to also host a new National Museum of Antiquities, the National Library and the Academy<sup>20</sup>, much like the famous *Forum Traiani* built at Rome on the order of the nation's founding father. These plans failed to take shape though they are illustrative for the importance of the Roman origins in the national identity construct, and the perceived role of Classical history and culture in the process of modernization.

This programmatic appeal to the Classical tradition can also be observed in the architecture of many public buildings having administrative, educational or cultural functions, which appeared in Bucharest and other major Romanian cities during the same period. Their highly visual message was powerful enough to convince many representatives of the political and economic elites to order the construction of new residences which followed the same architectural principles<sup>21</sup>. The incorporation of Classical elements – porticoes with Doric or composite columns, caryatids and atlantes, frontons decorated with mythological scenes, and allegorical statues – became a visual indicator of modernity, function and authority, while also aiming to illustrate an organic intellectual connection with the culture of Western Europe. One consequence was the appearance of several buildings in the province which incorporated similar architectural details with more or less success, from the beautiful National Theatre in Iași or the former Prefecture of Argeș County, now the County Museum, to the stereotypical stucco medallions, masks, frontons or atlantes decorating nearly every middle-class urban house of the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Concluding remarks**

By the time when Transylvania became part of Romania in 1918, the idealized image of ancient Rome already became a defining element of the Romanian historical imaginary. However, the perception of Roman heritage has changed significantly from the late Renaissance to the Enlightenment and then in 19<sup>th</sup> century, and even at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. An important factor in this evolution was the gradual emergence of the modern national identity constructs in the context of several internal and external social-political and cultural transformations which shaped the ways in which various social groups integrated the past into their collective memory.

As a consequence, the idealized ancient Rome was gradually transformed from an intellectual ideal to an ideal ancestor to a driving

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<sup>20</sup> Țeposu-Marinescu 2002, 109.

<sup>21</sup> Ionescu 1965, 422-449.

force in the nation's quest for modernization. This transformative process was significantly influenced by the activity of many intellectuals from Transylvania starting with the Enlightenment and throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

One specific product of these efforts was the emergence of an idealized image of Roman Dacia, which persisted almost unchanged throughout most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, having a longstanding impact not only on the Romanian historical imaginary, but also on the Romanian historical and archaeological research, becoming today a stumbling block in the much needed process of theoretical and methodological self-reflection.

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# Ethnogenical Myths and Historical Imaginary Regarding the Genesis of the Romanians and Vlachs\*

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**Abstract:** *Ethnogenical Myths and Historical Imaginary Regarding the Genesis of the Romanians and Vlachs.* The study offers a presentation of the ethnogenical myths and historical imaginary regarding the genesis of the Romanians and Vlachs by successive micro-analyses dedicated to the topic. Thus, we analyse: 1. the specific terminology used in this approach (*ethnogeny, ethnogenesis, eponym heroes, ethnonyms, endonym and exonym, mythonym*); 2. the historical and mythical sources of the Romanian "dismounting" (*descălecat*) and the evolution of the scholars' preoccupations dedicated to the genesis of the Romanians; 3. the study case of the ethnogenical myth of the eponym heroes Roman and Vlahata, compared to further medieval legends about people founding brothers, based on the foreign written testimonies and on pan-Romanian ethnogenical ballads and legends; 4. the mythical significance attributed to Romanian ethnogeny, comprising the utilitarian function, the spiritual meaning, the moral responsibility and the transcendental sense connected with the foundation of the people, as well as the historical imaginary of the Romanian ethnogenesis, insisting on: the ontological value of the name by which people found their existence, the politicization of geography and the nationalization of geographical differences, the teleological interpretation with regard to the Romanian ethnogenesis and the Vlach "colonization".

**Keywords:** ethnogenical foundation myths, historical imaginary, Roman and Vlahata, Romanian ethnogenesis, Vlach "colonization"

**Rezumat:** *Mituri etnogenice și imaginar istoric privind geneza românilor și vlahilor.* Studiul ce înfățișează miturile etnogenice și imaginarul istoric privind geneza românilor și vlahilor conține o succesiune de microanalize dedicate subiectului. Sunt analizate: 1. terminologia specifică utilizată în

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demersul de față (*etnogenie, etnogeneză, eroi eponimi, etnonime, endonim și exonim, mitonim*); 2. izvoarele istorice și mitice ale *descălecatului* românesc și evoluția preocupărilor savante dedicate genezei românilor; 3. studiul de caz al mitului etnogonic despre eroii eponimi Roman și Vlahata, prin comparație cu alte legende medievale despre frații întemeietori de popoare, în baza atât a mărturiilor scrise străine, cât și a baladelor și legendelor etnogonice panromânești; 4. semnificațiile mitice ale etnogeniei românești, incluzând funcția utilitară, rostul spiritual, responsabilitatea morală și sensul transcendent atribuite întemeierii neamului, precum și imaginarul istoric al etnogenezei românești, cu referire la: valoarea ontologică a numelui cu care popoarele își întemeiază existența, politizarea geografiei și naționalizarea diferențelor geografice, interpretarea teleologică a etnogenezei românești și a "colonizării" vlahe.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** mituri etnogonice, imaginar istoric, Roman și Vlahata, etnogeneza românească, "colonizarea" vlahă

### Terminology

*Ethnogeny*, a compound word derived from the Greek terms *ἔθνος* (nation) and *γονία* (from the word family: *γονεῖς* = parents, *γόνος* = offspring, descendant, seed), is the creation or making of a people. The concept of ethnogony applies to mythology, unlike its synonym, *ethnogenesis* (< *ἔθνος* + *γέννησις*, genesis), preferred by historians.<sup>1</sup> If the ethnogenesis represents a unique, nonrepetitive phenomenon, the ethnogony is a continuous process of enrichment with new myths, due to the permanent mythogenesis. Between the "real historical ethnogenesis" and the "mythical ethnogenesis there is no explicit parallel evolution" (între *etnogeneza istorică reală* și *etnogeneza mitică nu există o evoluție paralelă și explicită*), explained Romulus Vulcănescu.<sup>2</sup> He went on: "Ethnogeny thus becomes a mythical version of the Romanians' ethnogenesis" (*Etnogonia românilor devine astfel o replică mitică a etnogenezei românilor*).<sup>3</sup> The ethnogenical legends, which concern the ethnical genesis of the Romanians, were denominated in many ways by the Romanian historians; as a matter of fact, Dimitrie Onciul called them

<sup>1</sup> Explanation of the Greek terms in: *Νέοελληνικό-Ρομμανικό Λέξικο / Dicționar neogrec-român*, δεύτερη έκδοση αναθεωρημένη και επαυξημένη / ediția a doua adăugită și revizuită, γενική επιμέλεια και τελική αναμόρφωση / coordonare și redactare finală Lia Brad-Chisacof, συντάκτες / autori Margarita Kondoghiorghi, Eugen Dobroiu, Ștefan Stupca, Anița Augustopoulou-Jucan, București, Εκδόσεις / Editura Demiurg, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Romulus Vulcănescu, *Mitologie română*, București, Editura Academiei, 1985, p. 267.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 270.

"historiographical myths" (*mituri istoriografice*), while Gheorghe Brătianu dedicated a book to the "historical tradition about the foundation of the Romanian states" (*tradiția istorică despre întemeierea statelor românești*).<sup>4</sup>

The *eponym* heroes (< *επονομασία* = surname) - that is one, two, three or more heroes, in which case they are all blood brothers - give the name of the founded citadel, city and country, becoming the kin forefathers (*moșii de neam*), respectively the founding heroes.

As regards the *ethnonyms*, the Romanians - like other people - have two ethnical names, that coexisted throughout history in all their territories of dwelling and habitation: "Romanians" (*români*), "Aromanians" (*armâni*) etc., as a self-denomination, an inner name or *endonym* (< *ἐνδον* = in, inner, inside + *ὄνομα* = name), and "Wallachians", "Vlachs", "Vlochs", "Vlash" (*v(a)lahi*, *volohi*, *vlași*) etc., as a name given to them by foreigners, that is an external name or *exonym* (< *ἐξω* = out, outer, outside + *ὄνομα* = name). Unlike some of the big people (Ruthenians or Rusyns) considered to have come "from nowhere" as they were devoured by history together with their name<sup>5</sup>, but just like other victorious nations (Germans, Poles, Hungarians, Jews), the Romanians refuted the exonym, that was perceived increasingly with a pejorative connotation over time, and succeeded to impose their endonym. This issue was definitively settled by the formation of the modern national state (1859), and with the official proclamation of the endonym as a state name, Romania (*România*, 1866). If the ethnonyms of the Romanians and Vlachs were better studied (by Gustav Weigand<sup>6</sup>, Toli Hagi-Gogu<sup>7</sup>, Ioan-Aurel Pop<sup>8</sup>, Thede Kahl<sup>9</sup>), a detailed analysis of all

<sup>4</sup> Dimitrie Onciul, *Scieri istorice*, București, Editura Științifică, 1968; Gheorghe Brătianu, *Tradiția istorică despre întemeierea statelor românești*, edited by Valeriu Râpeanu, București, Editura Eminescu, 1980.

<sup>5</sup> Pavlo Robert Magocsi, *Poporul de niciunde. Istoria în imagini a rutenilor carpatici*, site of the Cultural Union of the Ruthenians in Romania, <http://www.rutenii.ro/>.

<sup>6</sup> Gustav Weigand, *Die Sprache der Olympto-Walachen nebst einer Einleitung über Land und Leute*, Leipzig, 1888; idem, *Vlacho-Meglen. Eine ethnographisch-philologische Untersuchung*, Leipzig, 1892; idem, *Die Aromunen. Ethnographisch-philologisch-historische Untersuchungen über das Volk der sogenannten Makedo-Romanen oder Zinzaren*, Leipzig, 1894-1895; idem, *Ethnographie von Makedonien. Geschichtlich-nationaler, sprachlich-statistischer Teil*, Leipzig, 1924.

<sup>7</sup> Toli Hagi-Gogu, *Romanus și Valahus sau ce este romanus, roman, român, aromân, valah și vlah*, București, 1939.

<sup>8</sup> Ioan-Aurel Pop, *The History and Significance of the Names "Romanian" / "Vlach" and "Romania" / "Wallachia"*, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2014; Ioan-Aurel Pop, Alexandru Simon, *Re de Dacia. Un proiect de la sfârșitul Evului Mediu*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Școala Ardeleană, 2018.

the Romanian Lands' ethnonyms is still expected. The importance of imposing the endonym "Romanian" (*român*) and the intrinsic connection between the endonym and the foundation of the Romanian Lands are also emphasized by the *mythonyms* (mythical names), which are a constant presence of our ethnogenical legends.

### Sources

The Romanian sources use a specific notion, *descălecat* ("dismounting", descending)<sup>10</sup>, to designate both the genesis of the Romanians by Romanization (called "first dismounting", *descălecatul cel dintâiu*), and especially the foundation of the medieval states of Moldavia and Wallachia ("second dismounting", *descălecatul de-al doilea*) by voivode Dragoș, respectively by voivode Negru (the Black).

The term was introduced by the first chronicles in Romanian language, authored by the Moldavian chronicle writers Grigore Ureche (before 1647), Miron Costin (1677-1691) and Nicolae Costin (before 1709)<sup>11</sup>, followed by the Wallachian chronicles (1690-1763)<sup>12</sup>. The word and the field it covers are genuine Romanian. *Descălecatul* (dismounting) was not imported from Old Slavonic, Medio Bulgarian or Russian, as *Cronica moldo-polonă* (Moldo-Polish Chronicle, in the 16th century) talks about the "beginning" of the Land of Moldavia, and *Letopisețul Cantacuzinesc* (Chronicle of the Cantacuzins, 1690) translates by *descălecat* the form *za planinski* = "from the mountains". On the other hand, none of the Romanian chronicles assumes the translation of the German and Hungarian terms *Landnahme* or *honfoglalás*, both of them meaning "conquering (occupation) of a country".

Preoccupations related to the genesis of the Romanians appear since the beginnings of the old Romanian literature and historiography. This topic was discovered in the 17th century by the humanist chronicle

<sup>9</sup> Thede Kahl, *Ethnizität und räumliche Verteilung der Aromunen in Südosteuropa*, Münster, Institut für Geographie der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster, 1999; idem; *Etnonime la aromâni*, in: "Spațiul lingvistic și literar românesc din perspectiva integrării europene", Iași, 2004, p. 264-273.

<sup>10</sup> In Romanian, *a încăleca* = to mount a horse; *a descăleca* = to dismount a horse; *descălecat* = horse dismounting (literal sense), descending from the mountains (figurative sense).

<sup>11</sup> Moldavian chronicles in Romanian are those written by: Grigore Ureche, *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei* (1642-1647); Miron Costin, *Cronica polonă* (1677); idem, *Poema polonă* (1684); idem, *De neamul moldovenilor* (1686-1691); Nicolae Costin, *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei de la zidirea lumii până la 1601* (before 1709).

<sup>12</sup> Wallachian chronicles in Romanian are: *Letopisețul Cantacuzinesc* (1690), *Viața preacuviosului părinte Nicodim sfințitul* (1763), and others.

writers, defended with arguments in the 18th century by representatives of the Enlightenment (Dimitrie Cantemir, 1714-1722<sup>13</sup>), retrieved and enthusiastically embraced by the Romanian romantic revolutionaries of the 19th century, and then it passed to a severe historical register during the positivism at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, which shaped throughout Europe the period of great national history syntheses.

Nevertheless, the proper historicity of the Romanian ethnogenesis is doubled by a rich mythical background of ethnogonical legends, scarcely approached by researchers. The first massive folklore collections date from the last part of the 19th century and the beginning of the following one. They were carried out by Simion Florea Marian, A.R. Budakov, Tudor Pamfile, Dumitru Furtună and republished in late 20th century by Tony Brill, V. Adăscăliței.<sup>14</sup>

The ancient "first dismounting" (*primul descălecat*) is illustrated and explained exclusively by Romanian literary historians (George Călinescu) and ethnologists (Romulus Vulcănescu, Ion Taloș), by revealing the ethnogonical traditions connected to Roman emperor Traian and the ethnogonical legends about Traian and Dochia<sup>15</sup>, whereas the Romanian historians dedicated a greater deal of interest to the medieval "second dismounting" (*cel de-al doilea descălecat*) of Moldavia and Wallachia, and to the genesis of the Romanians according to the eponym myth of Roman and Vlahata, which is to be illustrated hereinafter. Apart from the analyses of the mythonym *Ardeal* (Transylvania), signed by Gheorghe Brătianu, Romulus Vulcănescu<sup>16</sup>, ethno-historical border approaches are still deficient, and Romanian research regarding the pan-Romanian ethnogenesis and ethnogony is

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<sup>13</sup> Dimitrie Cantemir, *Descriptio Moldaviae*, 1714-1716, first published in German, Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1771.

<sup>14</sup> Romanian folklore and ethnogonical legends were collected by: Simion Florea Marian, *Tradiții populare din Bucovina*, București, Imprimeria Statului, 1895; A.R. Budakov, *Legende din istoria românilor cu traducerea în rusește*, Chișinău, Imprimeria Statului, 1920; Tudor Pamfile, *Sărbătorile la români. Sărbătorile de toamnă și postul Crăciunului. Studiu etnografic*, București, 1914; Dumitru Furtună, *Cuvinte scumpe. Taclale, povestiri și legende românești*, București, Socec & Sfetea, 1914; and republished by Tony Brill, *Legende populare românești. Legende istorice*, București, Editura Minerva, 1970; V. Adăscăliței, *De la Dragoș-vodă la Cuza-vodă. Legende populare istorice românești*, București, Editura Minerva, 1988.

<sup>15</sup> Romulus Vulcănescu, *op. cit.*, p. 268-277, 332-335; Ion Taloș, *D'Italica à Sarmizegetusa. Réflexions sur la culture populaire romaine*, București, Editura Academiei Române, 2016.

<sup>16</sup> See footnotes 2 and 4.

missing completely. The latter is substituted by the foreign historiographies from the North-Western Carpathians and from the South of the Danube, which are consensual in their stereotypes concerning the "colonization" of the Northern and Southern Vlachs by their immigration from the North Danubian and intra-Carpathian areas.<sup>17</sup>

### **The ethnological myth of the eponym heroes Roman and Vlahata**

Roman and Vlahata's legend is related to several medieval legends about brothers who founded people. Such legends circulated in cultured, courtly areas, neighbouring the Romanian one. The oldest preserved East Slavic chronicle, *Повѣсть времяньныхъ лѣтъ* (Tale of Bygone Years), written by monk Nestor (around 1113), narrates the history of Kievan Russia between 850-1110. Kiev's founders are three brothers: Kii (Кий), Shtchek (Щек) and Horiv (Хорив), sometimes together with their sister Libidi (Либидь, the "Swan"). The oldest brother gives his name to the city, his smaller brothers give their names to the "mountains" (hills) in Kiev: Shtchekavytsia and Horevytsia, and Libidi gives her name to the river flowing through Kiev, tributary to the Dnieper. Then, the legend of Lech and Czech, other times together with Rus, constitutes the founding myth of the West Slavs, namely of the Poles (Lechites), Czechs and Ruthenians or Rusyns (not of the Russians, as Paisie Ligaridis asserted in his *Hrismologion* of 1656). The legendary brothers, chasing the white eagle (present in Poland's coat of arms), set out in three different directions: northward (the Poles), westward (the Czechs) and eastward (the Rusyns). They were mentioned for the first time in *Chronica Poloniae maioris* or *Kronika wielkopolska* (Chronicle of Greater Poland). This work compiled at the beginning of the 14th century recounts the tradition since the Polish foundation until 1273. The variants of the legend also include two brothers (Lech and Czech) or only one hero (Lech). Finally, there is the eponym legend of the hunter brothers Hunor and Magor, who go in quest of the white doe (horn dear). The ethnological legend of the Hungarians was recorded by Simon de Kéza (around 1282) and illustrated in *Cronicum pictum vindobonensis* (Vienna Pictured Chronicle, after 1358).

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<sup>17</sup> Gheorghe Şiştean, *Români care s-au stins. Valahii din Carpații Nordici și românii din Ungaria*, Cluj-Napoca, Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2012; *Colonizarea valahă în Slovacia și colonizarea slovacă în România / Valašska kolonizácia na Slovensku a slovenská kolonizácia v Rumunsku*, Múzeum Slovenského Národného Povstania, Banská Bystrica, 2014.

Roman and Vlahata, the two eponym brothers of the Romanians and Vlachs, appear in two foreign written sources (Pian di Carpine's record of 1247, and *Cronica moldo-rusă* / Moldo-Russian Chronicle after 1500). If the former source testifies an early chronology, the value of the second derives from its object, purpose and intention, meaning not to define two distinct people, but to conciliate the Romanians' endonym (Roman) with their exonym (Vlahata).

Written 35 years before Simon de Kéza, more than 50 years before *Kronika wielkopolska* and 100 years earlier than the proper foundation of Moldavia and Wallachia, the report of the Italian Franciscan Giovanni del Pian di Carpine (Plano Carpini) - envoy of pope Inocentius IV in Ukraine occupied by Tartars (1245), chief of the mission sent to the great khan's court (1246) - has an impressive age. His *Ystoria Mongalorum* (Mongols' History) contains the oldest European description of the Tartars. Returning from mission (1247), on his way out of Cumania, Pian di Carpine meets both duke Roman, coming from the Tartars accompanied by his entourage, and duke Olaha (mentioned also with the inverted form of his name: Aloha), entering the territory with his convoy: "*Et in exitus Comaniae invenimus duces Romanum qui intrabat ad Tartaros et societatem ipsius, et duces Olaha qui exhibat et societatem ipsios (...); et omnes isti sunt duces rutheni.*"<sup>18</sup> The report asserts that Roman and Olaha are "Ruthenian" dukes, namely from Ruthenia (just like the prince from the Ruthenian city Tchernigov), thus they are Orthodox. Even if they are no blood brothers, they still are ethnically kin related, as suggested by the Romanian double ethnonym, whereby the exonym Olaha shows a Hungarian-Latin form. The duality of the Romanian ethnonyms had already occurred in the 12th century's narrative attributed to Hungarian king Béla's Anonymous Notary (*Blachi ac pastores Romanorum*), and later it recurred in Italian documents of 1314 (*i Rumeni e i Valacchi*), 1345 (*Olachi Romani*), 1499 (*Vlachi, chiamati Rumenj, id est Romanj*) etc.<sup>19</sup>

*Cronica moldo-rusă* (Moldo-Russian Chronicle), belonging to the *Русская летопись съ Воскресенскаго списа* (Russian Chronicle in the Voskresenski Script), was donated by Patriarch Nikon to the monastery Voskresenski (1658) and published by the Imperial Academy in Sankt Petersburg (1793). One of the Russian chronicle's chapters, entitled "Short story about Moldavia's princely rulers, since the Land of

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<sup>18</sup> Victor Spinei, *Moldova în secolele XI-XIV*, Chişinău, Editura Universitas, 1994, p. 230.

<sup>19</sup> Ioan-Aurel Pop, *op. cit.*, 2014, p. 34-36.

Moldavia began, in the year 6867<sup>20</sup> (= 1359)" (*Povestire pe scurt despre domnii Moldovei, de când s-a început Țara Moldovei, în anul 6867*), starts with the legend of Roman and Vlahata, continues with the legend describing the "dismounting" (*descălecat*) of voivode Dragoș across the mountains in Moldavia, and closes with the reign of Steven the Great (*Ștefan cel Mare*)'s son, Bogdan the Blind (*Bogdan cel Orb*, 1504-1517). That is why the beginning of the 16th century is considered to be the moment when *Cronica moldo-rusă* was compiled in Moldavia, and then exported to Russia.<sup>21</sup>

The legend of the eponym brothers Roman and Vlahata narrates how, running from persecution of the "heretics against the Christians" in Venice (*Veneția*), they went to Old Rome (*Roma Veche*), where they founded the citadel Roman, named after one of the two brothers. Here Roman and Vlahata with their kinfolk (the Romanovich or *românenii*) lived together in "Old Latiny" (*lătinia veche*), until the separation of the Christians in two churches: the Western church and the Eastern one, that happened during pope Formosus's time. Then the Latins founded the citadel New Rome (*Roma Nouă*), inviting the descendants of Roman to the "New Latiny" (*lătinia nouă*). But the Romanovich refused and started against the Latins "a great war" (*război mare*), that lasted until Hungarian king Vladislav's time. The legend also says that Vladislav, nephew of Sava, archbishop of the Serbians, was baptized by his uncle, keeping Orthodoxy "under the rose" (*în taină*), although he was Latin by "royal language and regulation" (*limbă și orânduială crăiască*). During his reign, Tartar *knez* (prince, khan) Neimet turned against the Hungarians, storming across the rivers Prut and Moldavia, across the Carpathians, into Transylvania, unto the river Mureș. Vladislav seeks help both from "emperor and pope" (*împăratului și papei*) in New Rome, and from the Romanovich. When the Old and New Romans gathered in Hungary, the latter wrote to Vladislav a secret letter, asking him to send the Old Romans in the first lines of the battle, in order to be decimated, because: "The Old Romans have war with us for faith, they did not want to be with us in the New Roman Law and lived in the Greek faith, in Old Rome. (...) Yet we and you keep the same law (*lege*, faith)." If God would

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<sup>20</sup> Medieval Orthodox monastery chronicles and church inscriptions (*pisanii*) on Romanian soil indicated "the year from the genesis of the world" (*anul de la facerea lumii*), which - according to Orthodox tradition - had happened 5508 years before Christ. So, the year 6867 from the world genesis means 1359 *post Christum natum*. The anachronism refers to the "dismounting" (*descălecat*) of voivode Dragoș in 1359.

<sup>21</sup> Petre P. Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din secolele XV-XVI publicate de Ion Bogdan*, București, Editura Academiei, 1959, p. 154.

still spare them in the battle, the king was asked to "settle" (*așeze*) the Old Romans in Hungary, and to convert their women and children in Old Rome (Roman) to the "Latin law" (*legea latină*). Indeed, a great battle took place against the Tartars, who were beaten first by the Old Romans, then by Hungarians and New Romans. Filled with joy, the king granted many privileges to the Old Romans for their bravery, also showing them the deceitful letter, inviting them to serve him and not to return to Old Rome anymore, so as to escape from the hands of the New Romans. The envoys sent out by the Old Romans learned that the citadel of Old Rome had been destroyed, and their women and children forced to turn Catholics, to "Latin law" (*legea latină*). Then the Romanovich submitted to the king, asking him for land and for the right to preserve their Greek Christian law. Vladislav gave them land in Maramureș and in the place at the Criș, between the rivers Mureș and Tisa. The Old Romans settled down here and got Hungarian wives, who turned from the Latin law to the Greek law.<sup>22</sup>

The circulation of Roman and Vlahata's legend is restrained; there is no evidence of its oral character; its only source is *Cronica moldo-rusă*. Because of the unusual sequence of "dismountings" (*descălecări*, Venice - Old Rome - Transylvania - Maramureș, Crișana), of real characters - both individual (pope Formosus, king Vladislav or Laslău), and collective (the Old Romans / Romanovich / Orthodox Romanians, the New Romans / Roman Catholics), the interpretation of the complex elements of the legend's structure differ from researcher to researcher.<sup>23</sup> The historians look for and find more and more arguments in favour of the legend's veracity and historicity.

The eponym hero Roman is mentioned as the sole founder of Rome (*Râm*) in the folk novel *Alexandria*. The *Nibelungenlied* (around 1200) also makes reference to the Vlachs: "Among *Riuzen*<sup>24</sup> and Greeks many a man there straddled on horseback,/ and Poles and Vlachs could be seen popping up..." (*Von Riuzen und von Kriechen reit man vil manic man,/ den Polânen un Vlâchen den sach man schwinde gân...*) At this point the eponym character shows up: "Duke Ramunc from the Land of Vlachs,/ with seven hundred men, quickly comes to help them." (*Der herzoge Râmunc uzer Vlâchen lant/ mit siben hundert manen, kom er für sie*

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 158 sq.

<sup>23</sup> See most recently: Ioan-Aurel Pop, Alexandru Simon, *op. cit.*, 2018, p. 40-42.

<sup>24</sup> Gheorghe Brătianu, *op. cit.*, p. 160, translated the old German word *Riuzen* by "Russians", yet I consider the real meaning is "Ratzen", that is "Serbians".

*gerant*.)<sup>25</sup> The last examples lead Ovidiu Pecican to the fundamental intuition that the eponym brothers' legend emanated from a previous tradition with a unique hero: Roman.<sup>26</sup>

The correctness of this hypothesis is proven and demonstrated by appeal to folklore. The Romanian ballads and legend, identified on this topic, mention not two, but one single eponym hero, who bears the names Roman, Romănaș (Little Romanian), Roman-Copil (Child Roman), Copil Român (Romanian Child) or, in the Greek folklore recollected by Tache Papahagi, Vlahul cel Mic (Little Vlach).<sup>27</sup>

The ballad of Roman-Copil (Child Roman) has numerous pan-Romanian variants north and south of the Danube that follow the same pattern. Dan, Constantin and Roman, three brothers or "three Romanian valiants" (*trei voinici români*, in the variant from Banat collected by Gheorghe Cătană), defy a foreign army (Turkish in the Danubian variants and Tartarian in the Moldavian ones). After the victorious confrontation with the enemies, Roman has a strange behavior. Not recognizing his brothers, he kills them. "But who sat there in the tent?/ It was Din, and Constantin,/ and the little child Roman." (*Dar în cort cine sedea?/ Era Din și Constantin/ Și cel mic copil Roman.*) The latter "drank and made good cheer" (*bea și gostea*) with the emperor's girls, kidnapped and taken away by sword (*luate cu sabia*) from Constantinople (*Țarigrad*, Tsar City). The hero warns his brothers to keep clear of him, as, after chopping Turks for three days, his "dun horse raged and dreaded" (*murgul a turbat, s-a-nspăimântat*) and he is afraid not to defile (*să nu spurce*) his sword against them. The fratricide caused by the *furore* (mad anger) of the warrior, in Mircea Eliade's well-known phrase, leads to the resolution of a hegemonic crisis, and in the end Roman remains the only victor.<sup>28</sup> The nearly 20 variants recorded at the beginning of the 20th century in the Danubian Plain (*Câmpia Dunării*), from Wallachia to Oltenia and Banat, also explain the Balkan dissemination of the motif, especially among Greeks and Albanians, where the hero always bears the name Vlahul cel Mic (Little Vlach).

There is another Wallachian folk legend, collected and possibly revised by Constantin Rădulescu-Codin under the title *Copil român*

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>26</sup> Ovidiu Pecican, *Troia, Veneția, Roma. Studii de istoria civilizației europene*, Cluj, EFES, 1998, p. 95.

<sup>27</sup> Tache Papahagi, *Paralele folklorice (greco-române)*, București, Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului, 1944, p. 62-64.

<sup>28</sup> Ela Cosma, *Ideea de întemeiere în cultura populară românească*, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2000, p. 360.

(Romanian child, about 1925), later republished as *Romănaș* (Little Romanian).<sup>29</sup> It is said that Romănaș fought with Turks and Tartars, then killed his bigger brothers, Din and Constantin (like in the most famous Romanian ballad, *Miorița*, unlike in the ballad of Roman-Copil), to whom the little brother addresses with *neică* (big brother or uncle). The bravery of the eponym hero is praised by artistic means specific to fairy tales: Romănaș "fought against the whole horde, so he also killed the terrible son of Ciupăgeț, with a steel hand and a wooden foot" (*s-a luptat cu urdia-ntreagă, de a răpus și pe grozavul feciorul lui Ciupăgeț, cu o mână de oțel și un picior de lemn*). The cause of crime is envy (as in *Miorița*, not in Roman's ballad). Din and Constantin "in a fit of pique against Romănaș, seized the right time, cut him to pieces, but still feared he would return from the dead" (*au prins ciudă pe Romănaș și, când le-a venit bine, l-au tăiat, făcându-l ciopârți-ciopârți; tot le mai era teamă că o mai învia*). The big brothers compete for the love of the three emperor's girls fetched by Romănaș from Țarigrad (Constantinople). They have good time together, but the girls have an inkling of the weird death of the hero. The smallest of them brings "dead water" (*apă moartă*) and "live water" (*apă vie*) from the River Jordan. The girls "gather the bones together" (*au strâns ciolanele la un loc*), pouring above dead water, then live water. Suddenly Romănaș "recovers again in flesh and bones, starts to move and rub his eyes: - Alas, what a deep sleep I've slept! - You'd have slept for good and all, unless we were around here, say the girls and take him with them to Țarigrad" (*s-a înfiripat iar în carne și oase, a început să se miște și să se șteargă la ochi: - Măi, da' greu somn mai dormii! - Ai fi dormit tu mult și bine, dacă nu eram noi p-aci, zic fetele și-l iau cu ele la Țarigrad*). Jordan is the water of the Christic baptism and the primary spring, too, while "Țarigrad is for the people a whole world, the citadel of citadels, the emperor's seat, the wonder of wonders, the heaven's gate" (Nicolae Iorga).

As we have seen, the foundation of the Romanian people is mythologically portrayed by creating the eponym founding hero. The endonym in ballads and legends is a diminutive and an endearing name, for the use of the Romanians (Roman-Copil, Romănaș). Its translation for the use of the Greeks and Albanians comprises the Romanians' exonym (Vlahul cel Mic). The conversion of the name Roman into Vlahul cel Mic proves its value as an ethnic symbol, otherwise the interest had been directed towards the hero's deeds and no importance had been attached to his name.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the epithet always refers to the smallest brother,

<sup>29</sup> Tony Brill, *op. cit.*, p. 19-20; V. Adăscăliței, *op. cit.*, p. 33-34.

<sup>30</sup> Ela Cosma, *op. cit.*, p. 367.

who is *par excellence* the main and positive hero in most traditional folk cultures.

So, depending on the inner or outer dissemination of the ethnogonical pattern, in fact two different legends exist: one about Roman alone, the other about the eponym brothers. The inner Romanian folk traditions, of a multiseular age, with echoes lasting until today, recall only Roman / Romănaș, characterized by opposition to both his brothers, Din and Constantin, who are irrelevant in ethnogonical context. The eponym hero's main feature is his peerless heroism in the fights against Turkish-Tartar hordes. But then, the legend of Roman and Vlahata, spread outside the Romanian area, is shaped after the example of the Slavic and Hungarian eponym brothers. The explanatory key of the motif of Roman together with his brother Vlahata is "the ingenious interweaving (...) of the two appellations of the Romanians, the inner: *român* (Romanian) and the outer one: *vlah*, *valahus* (Vlach)" (*ingenioasa îmbinare (...) a celor două denumiri ale românilor, cea internă: român și cea externă: vlah, valahus*), as Adolf Armbruster appreciated.<sup>31</sup> The two eponym brothers are medieval heroes emerged at the beginnings of the Romanian state foundations, out of the need to champion a fabulous ethnic origin, in consensus with the myths of the age. Roman and Vlahata, but chiefly the former, do not stand out in relief by their qualities as warriors, yet they represent perfect symbols of founding heroes and kin forefathers (*moși de neam*).

### **Mythical significance of ethnogony and historical imaginary of the Romanian ethnogenesis**

The analysis of the mythical ethnogony in parallel with the historical ethnogenesis reflects a special significance attributed to both concepts in the Romanian area.

The ethnogonical myths evince an obvious pragmatism. They have a utilitarian function: of building a proper foundation and of establishing a domestic or ecclesiastical edifice, a human settlement, even a country. But the sense of architecture is not limited to the utilitarian function, as it includes a variety of further symbolic and aesthetic levels, too.<sup>32</sup> From a long-term perspective, the folk traditions

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<sup>31</sup> Adolf Armbruster, *Romanitatea românilor. Istoria unei idei*, ediția a II-a, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 1993, p. 80.

<sup>32</sup> Umberto Eco, *Function and Sign: The Semiotics of Architecture*, in: "Rethinking Architecture. A Reader in Cultural Theory", edited by N. Leach, London, 2001, p. 187-189.

regarding the genesis of the Romanians also reflect the spiritual meaning and the moral responsibility implied by the "good beginning" of all foundations. The mythical vision reveals the deep roots and the transcendental significance of the Romanian ethnogony. By laying a solid basis, both the prosperity of the land and country, and the persistence over centuries of the descendant folk generations are ensured.

Thus, the significance of the Romanian ethnogony comprises the utilitarian function, the spiritual meaning, the moral responsibility and the transcendental sense connected with the foundation of the people and country.

As regards the significance of the historical ethnogenesis, we have to add the ontological value of the name by which people, just like human beings, found their existence. Even the name of the nation and state - an apparently ineffable, immaterial category - has a huge importance, because the name is "sometimes almost as important as the existence itself of the respective people and state" (*uneori aproape la fel de important ca însăși existența poporului și statului respectiv*), becoming "part of the ethnical, national and state identity, often shaping silently or openly the very destiny of its holders" (*parte a identității etnice, naționale și statale, adesea modelând tacit ori fățiș însuși destinul purtătorilor săi*).<sup>33</sup> The indissoluble link between the endonym and the national state results from the name of Romania (*România*), too, "a kind of Rome transferred in the area bordered by the River Danube, by the Carpathian Mountains and by the Black Sea" (*un soi de Romă transferată în spațiul mărginit de Fluviul Dunăre, de Munții Carpați și de Marea Neagră*), a "strong and durable identity mark, naturally created" (*marcă identitară puternică și durabilă, zămislită natural*) during the middle ages and "historically-ideologically forged" (*forjată istorico-ideologic*) by the Romanian intellectuals, "artisans of the modern nationalism and of the national ideology" (*artizanii naționalismului modern și ai ideologiei naționale*).<sup>34</sup> The Romanians' ethnonyms are charged with ontological value, as shown by the dual use of the endonym and exonym in texts from the 13th-15th centuries. Such testimonies are precious, all the more as the medieval ages were dominated by the name of Vlachs, used by the foreigners to nominate the Romanians. The fight for obliteration of the undesirable name of Vlachs was won in modern times, when the Romanians imposed their selfname.

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<sup>33</sup> Ioan-Aurel Pop, *op. cit.*, 2014, p. 9-10.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 73-74.

The historical imaginary of the Romanian ethnogenesis involves the existence of a given territory and the formation of a local identity (*spiritus loci*). Historical imaginary intersects not merely *symbolical geographies* (synthesized by Sorin Mitu<sup>35</sup>, Carmen Andraș<sup>36</sup>, Sorin Antohi and Corin Braga<sup>37</sup>), but also the actual political geography. It is known that medieval sources used "to confer to the name of a population a rather geographical than ethnical understanding" (*să dea numelui unei populații un înțeles mai degrabă geografic decât etnic*), as Gheorghe Brătianu observed.<sup>38</sup> The habit is prevalent in modern sources, as well, which is revealed both by the conjoint exonym designating Moldavia and Wallachia (that were called together *Donaufürstenthümer*, *Дунайские Княжества*, *Principatele Dunărene*, Danubian Principalities instead of Romanian Principalities), and by the geographical subdivisions of the Romanians' endonym. In past and present, the Romanians (as an ethnic and national identity) often differentiated among themselves by criteria of geographical membership and provincial identity, in: Transylvanians (*ardeleni*), Banatians (*bănățeni*), inhabitants from Bukovina (*bucovineni*), Maramureș (*moroșeni*), Oaș (*oșeni*), Romanian Transylvanians settled in Moldavia or Wallachia and called *ungureni* (those coming from the Hungarian Land) - described by Dimitrie Cantemir in *Descriptio Moldaviae* (1716) as "Transylvanians or, as they are usually called among us, *ungureni*" (*transilvăneni sau, cum se numesc de obicei la noi, ungueni*), Moldavians (*moldoveni*) and Bessarabians (*basarabeni*), Wallachians (*munteni*, *regățeni*), Oltenians (*olteni*), Aromanians who came from Makedonia to Dobruđa (*machedoni*) etc. A few geographical groups of Romanians and Aromanians had an occupation different from agriculture, namely they are or were sheperds (*oieri*, sheep breeders) and had special non-geographical selfnames: *moți*, *țopi*, *mocani*, *colibași*, *gugulani*, *momârlani*, *fârșeroți* etc.

But as soon as geography turns to politics and geographical differences are nationalized, artificial nations and states appear (Republic of Moldova), and absurd answers respond to senseless questions: "Why are the Moldavians no Romanians (?) - Because they didn't and don't want to be!" (*De ce moldovenii nu sînt români (?) - Pentru*

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<sup>35</sup> Sorin Mitu, *Europa Centrală, Răsăritul, Balcanii. Geografii simbolice comparate*, ediția I, Cluj-Napoca, International Book Access, 2007, ediția a doua, 2008.

<sup>36</sup> Carmen Andraș, *Geografiile simbolice*, Iași, Editura Institutul European, 2008.

<sup>37</sup> *Geografii simbolice*, coordinated by Sorin Antohi and Corin Braga, in "Caietele Echinox", vol. 5, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Dacia, 2003.

<sup>38</sup> Gheorghe Brătianu, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

că n-au vrut și nu vor!)<sup>39</sup> Or questions arise with a tragical answer: Why are the speakers of the same Romanian language divided in Eastern Serbia (after 1970) in Romanians and Vlachs, and in Ukraine (nowadays) in Romanians and Moldavians? Because, by identity defragmentation and obliteration of the historical memory, the "Valachization" (*valahizarea*) and "Moldavization" (*moldovenizarea*) of the Romanians represent the shortest way to ethnical and national abolition.

As any beginning carries the end in itself, the eschatological vision belongs to the foundation topic, and the pan-Romanian ethnogenesis receives a teleological interpretation. The guarantors of the Romanian character of the people living inside the state borders are exactly the founded country and the state-nation, whereas the perpetuation and durability of the Romanians outside the state borders is extremely problematic. The Southern Vlachs (from Greece, Albania, Montenegro, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria) and the Northern Vlachs (from Moravia, Slovakia, Poland, Ukraine) are known due to their exonym. As long as their ethnogonical myths and ethnical identity are ignored, the foreign historiographies solve the Vlach ethnogenesis by one and the same stereotype: the "colonization", insisting that the Vlachs came to the territories where they live(d) in as a demographic minority either from the North of the Danube, or from Transylvania and Maramureș.<sup>40</sup> This *déjà vu* reminds us of the two "dismountings" (*descălecaturi*) of the extra-Carpathian Romanian Lands, Moldavia and Wallachia. But not totally. We must take into account that the immigrationist theories form today, as always, the preamble of the Vlachs' ethnical eradication and denationalization. Who did not begin and "dismount" (*descălecat*) a country, who does not have heroic origins and roots, will neither have a future.

The visionary pan-Romanian poet Mihai Eminescu knew that the opposite is also true, and magic. This made him, in his beautiful poem *Ce-ți doresc eu ție, dulce Românie* (What do I wish you, sweet Romania),

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<sup>39</sup> Vasile Stati, *De ce moldovenii nu sînt români*, Odesa, 2013, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> A recent example illustrating the extension of the Romanian "colonization" on the territory of the medieval Polish Kingdom is offered by Grzegorz Jawor, *Așezările de drept valah și locuitorii lor din Rutenia Roșie în Evul Mediu târziu*, Iași, Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2012. Also see the Slovakian papers published in *Colonizarea valahă în Slovacia și colonizarea slovacă în România. Lucrările celei de-a X-a reuniuni a comisiei mixte de istorie româno-slovace (Banská Bystrica, 25-27 septembrie 2012)*, Banská Bystrica, Muzeum Slovenského Národného Povstania, 2014.

give voice to his ardent desire: "for your past so great, great a future", too (*la trecutu-ți mare, mare viitor*).<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Mihai Eminescu, *Ce-ți doresc eu ție, dulce Românie*, in "Familia", Oradea, 2/14 April 1867.

# Church, State and Nation. Historical Images and Historiography\*

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**Abstract:** *Church, State and Nation. Historical Images and Historiography.* This study aims to present the images of the church in relation to the state and to the concept of nation, as they were rooted in the Romanian historical consciousness following the historiographical debate, but also the propagation of the identity discourse of the churches and the contribution of the ideas formulated by philosophers of culture. The beginnings of the relations between church and state coincide with the birth of the state itself, and nationalism of modern and contemporary epochs has decisively marked the dynamics of this relationship, influencing both the self-image of the church and the general view on its role in politics and society.

**Keywords:** Orthodoxy, Greek-Catholicism, nationalism, Byzantine tradition, communism, religiosity

**Rezumat:** *Biserică, stat și națiune. Imagini istorice și istoriografice.* Acest studiu își propune prezentarea imaginii bisericii în raport cu statul și cu conceptul de națiune, așa cum s-au înrădăcinat ele în conștiința istorică românească în urma dezbaterii istoriografice, dar și a propagării discursului identitar al bisericilor și a contribuției ideilor formulate de filosofi ai culturii. Începuturile raporturilor dintre biserică și stat coincid cu nașterea statului însuși, iar naționalismul epocii moderne și contemporane a marcat în mod decisiv dinamica acestei relații, influențând atât imaginea de sine a bisericii, cât și viziunea generală asupra rolului ei în politică și societate.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** ortodoxie, greco-catolicism, naționalism, tradiție bizantină, comunism, religiozitate

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The belief in a transcendent force that governs the people's lives is one of the essential archetypal structures of human existence, its various implications representing the object of study for many socio-humanistic sciences. History places religiosity in time and space, recording and interpreting its material traces, its written and emblematic vestiges, in an attempt to decipher their meanings within the development of human society.

Within the large spectrum of historical subjects, the imaginary has long gained an important place. However, apart from its role in scrutinising mental constructions (be them political ideologies, or even the myth of longevity), historical writing is fated to elaborate its own images of the past. Nonetheless, such records seek to be based on tangible, critically interpreted sources in order to paint a picture of the past as close to reality as possible, in spite of it being inevitably subjected to the author's lenses.

In the present article, a series of images regarding religion and church, identifiable in historical writings and consciousness, will be presented in the manner they are understood in the Romanian culture. The subject has been at the forefront of Romanian historiography since its beginnings, the religious life and the institution built to shelter it being perceived as basic elements of social life. Any synthesis of Romanian history includes references to church history, without which the genesis reconstruction of the Romanian people and its political-cultural evolution would remain incomplete.

Like many other aspects of history, religious life has often been passed through the mystifying filter of *nationalist ideology*.<sup>1</sup> The Latin origins of Christianity, the prestige of the apostolic symbols, the continuity, the note of originality born from the blend of Latin beginnings and Byzantine ritual – all these turned into the founding stones of the national identity edifice. The “Romanian rule” of medieval documents became a “national” religion, orthodoxy claiming its place among the basic features of the Romanian character. However, historical records underline the role of the Greek-Catholic clergy in the sedimentation of national consciousness, their participation in the construction of discourses on identity being considered, in the beginning, more active than that of the Orthodox clergy. The Romanian Orthodox Church has fully embraced the historically focused discourse, contributing to the completion of the pantheon of national heroes by glorifying personalities whose outstanding political deeds have been

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<sup>1</sup> Lucian Boia, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească* (București: Humanitas, 2011).

complemented by important acts of charity in the benefit of the church.<sup>2</sup> By embracing the issue of nationality, the churches have adapted to the new form of social cohesion that, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, exceeded in strength and intensity the old practices of religious solidarity.<sup>3</sup> In the European space, national solidarity remains strong even to this date, in spite of it being challenged by transnational values.

The interplay of religious and national identity has found its most eloquent expression in *the relationship between church and state*. The history of these two institutions' interaction dates back to the formation of medieval states. The collaboration between noblemen and clergymen (the legitimisation of political power through the approval of the church, in response to which the ecclesiastical institution received protection, material support and the right to be present in the decision-making bodies of the state) denotes the adaptation of the Byzantine model within the Romanian space. What defines this model is the close cooperation between the two authorities in order to govern the destinies of the same community (both as subjects of the state and believers of the church). The dynamics of the state-church relationship changed with the triumph of nationalism and the focus of political efforts being shifted towards the creation of the modern national state. The political factor gained the tendency of increasingly subordinating the church and transforming it into an instrument in the achievement of its specific goals.<sup>4</sup> This tendency peaked with the establishment of the communist regime and it had disastrous consequences for the ecclesiastical institution. The traditional "cooperation" was turned into absolute "subordination" for the church, as price for its very right to existence.<sup>5</sup>

### **Church and nation**

The relationship between the religious and national identities has been supported through historical writing from the first cultivated records of the modern era, the idea of an organic connection between ethnicity and

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<sup>2</sup> Lucian N. Leuștean (ed.), *Orthodox Christianity and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Southeastern Europe* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), pp. 101-163.

<sup>3</sup> Sorin Mitu, *Geneza identității naționale la românii ardeleni* (București: Humanitas, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Leuștean, *Orthodox Christianity*.

<sup>5</sup> Ioan-Marius Bucur, *Din istoria Bisericii Greco-Catolice Române (1918-1953)* (Cluj-Napoca: Accent, 2003); Olivier Gillet, *Religie și naționalism. Ideologia Bisericii Ortodoxe Române sub regimul comunist* (București: Compania, 2001); Cristian Vasile, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română în primul deceniu comunist* (București: Curtea Veche, 2005).

religion being developed in the identity discourse of the Orthodox Church. The formula of orthodoxy as “Romanian rule” appears in the medieval texts referring to the Romanians in Transylvania. It represents the result of the empirical observation that religion was a characteristic differentiating the Romanian elements from the other ethnic groups present in the region. Thus, this trait became a specific element identifying this ethnic group. With the triumph of nationalist ideologies, this attribute changed its valences, religion being deemed the saviour and protector of the national spirit, while religious identity represented an integrant part of the national element and the Orthodox Church assumed the mission of serving the nation and the Romanian culture – thus becoming itself a “national” Church. Evolving from these concepts, ideas such as challenging the Romanian character of other confessions embraced by Romanian nationals, or rejecting the cultural models and products coming from Catholic environments due to their incompatibility with the Orthodox dogmas, gave way to a significant public debate.

The *national identity discourse* is owed to the Greek-catholic Transylvanian clergy that initiated the creation of a national consciousness, later on also assumed by laic exponents. In its part, the intellectual elite also contributed to consolidating the role of religion in the definition of the national character. The culminant point of this tendency was reached in the interwar period when a number of autochthonous local currents placed orthodoxy at the epicentre of ethnic identity.

Modernist theory places the beginnings of nationalism in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Enlightenment had the power to sway the supremacy of religion and bring about major changes in political thinking and societal ideals. In many parts of Europe, it birthed a broad spectrum of reform programs that aimed at transforming the continent in accordance to the spirit of modernity. The cult of reason and the emphasis placed on education have prepared the ground for Romantic philosophers to define the concept of the ethnic nation based on the unity of language, history, traditions and customs. In the modern era, the national identity has succeeded in rendering the religious identity as a merely one of its fundamental components.<sup>6</sup>

Although formally the pretence of universality of the Christian faith was maintained, once the political centralisation and birth of medieval states occurred, the ‘local’ churches became involved in the

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<sup>6</sup> Mitu, *Geneza*.

political life, often placing the wellbeing of their own states above the interests of Vatican or Constantinople. When nationalism evolved from a literary and cultural current into a dominant political ideology, the church became involved in the struggle for fulfilling national ambitions, thus playing a political role perceived by clerical and secular elites alike as being 'predestines'.

The Greek-Catholic theologians from Transylvania sought historical arguments in support of religious unity; hence, the *Latin origin and continuity* claims became fundamental pillars of religious and national identity. The two concepts endorsed the idea of unity of the Romanian people, on the basis of common origins and the perseveration of cultural identity throughout centuries of migration and foreign domination. The first intellectual to use the continuity argument in order to claim political and economic rights for the united clergy, as well as for the laity, was Bishop Inochentie Micu Klein. His concept of nation was still ambiguous, as he used the term in both the medieval sense of privileged group and the modern one, thus referring in some of his petitions to the Romanian nationals as an ethnic community united through language and history. The ideological universe displayed by Micu Klein strongly reflects "the evolution of confessional into national"<sup>7</sup>. His concept was developed by the authors of books seeking to contribute to the consolidation of Greek-Catholic identity. Petru Pavel Aron, Gherontie Cotore and other theologians educated in Rome or Vienna and familiarised with the European ideological currents drew connections between the Latinity of the Romanian people and that of the Church of Rome. However, the Byzantine culture was not abandoned, the attachment to it being evident in the intransigence with which the united clergy opposed any tendencies of Latinising their church's rite, particular emphasis being placed on the preservation of the oriental traditions of religious rituals.<sup>8</sup>

In the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the high clergy of the Unified Church, in their role as exponents of the Romanian Enlightenment, gave the first modern definition of national identity. Samuil Micu, Petru Maior, Gheorghe Șincai, and Ioan Budai-Deleanu were the authors of the first scientific histories on the subject. In their writings, continuing on ideas conveyed in the chronicles

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<sup>7</sup>Mihai Bărbulescu, Dennis Deletant, Keith Hitchins, Șerban Papacostea, Pompiliu Teodor, *Istoria României* (București: Ed. Enciclopedică, 1998), p. 307.

<sup>8</sup> Keith Hitchins, *Conștiință națională și acțiune politică la românii din Transilvania. 1700-1868*, vol. I (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1987), pp. 54-61.

of the previous century, they placed an emphasis on the Latin origin of the Romanian people and language, as well as on its Christianity and the fact that the ancestors of this people were baptised in Rome, directly by the Apostles. The continued existence of the descendants of Roman colonists in the space between the Danube and the Carpathian Mountains, the privilege of having been the first to settle here unlike the other peoples living in Transylvania, became an important argument in the fight for political rights. The nationalist discourse spread in all regions inhabited by Romanians, the awareness of belonging to the same nation generating a unionist political program in the Principalities.

However, this change of mentality left little traces in the daily life of the population, particularly in relations to the way they managed religious life. Under the influence of *Enlightenment*, a greater emphasis was placed on the proper training of priests due to preach in the lands inhabited by Romanians. In Transylvania, schools were established in Blaj for the Greek-Catholic clergy, while in Wallachia and Moldavia the Phanariot regimes became more involved in the ecclesiastical life with the purpose of introducing a series of reforms. Constantine Mavrocordat took a series of measures meant to strengthen the position of the clergy and that of the ecclesiastical institution (ex. exemption from servile obligations and taxes, training for the lower clergy etc.). By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, priesthood began to be conditioned by graduating a special school.<sup>9</sup> These measures, as well as the dissemination of books popularising the idea of religious unity and those defending the orthodox faith, their increased publishing in the Romanian language, have all contributed to the improvement of dogmatic knowledge. However, for the vast majority of the population, the religious rituals and practices continued to occupy a central place. Attending Sunday liturgy, marking through religious rituals the main moments of life (birth, marriage, death), observing the days of fasting, the cult of icons, saints and relics, charms and superstitions etc. are all emblematic elements of "practiced" religion. At the same time, in the discourses of the intellectual elite, religion started being integrated into ethnic solidarity.

*The 1848 generation* embraced the nationalist ideology in its romantic spirit. The revolutionary movements were mainly coordinated by the developing secular elite; however, members of the high clergy also became involved in the struggle for national desiderata. Andrei Șaguna presided over the National Assembly of Blaj alongside the

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<sup>9</sup> Bărbulescu, Deletant, Hitchins, Papacostea, Teodor, *Istoria României*, pp. 314-317.

Greek-Catholic bishop, the two leaders of the Romanian churches from Transylvania taking the role of formal leaders of the political movement – proving the national desiderata took precedence over religious conflicts.

Bishop (later Metropolitan) Andrei Şaguna played a significant role in defining the Orthodox identity, all while completing the internal organisation of the church and securing the recognition of its autonomy in relation to the state. In Şaguna's view, the principal trait of the Romanian people was its strong attachment to the Orthodox confession. This indestructible attachment, his reasoning followed, was the key element in preserving the Romanian ethnic identity over time and its culture of Orthodox inspiration was fully aligned with the Romanian spirit. Therefore, the Romanian Orthodox Church was one national in character. Şaguna was proud of both the Latin origin of the Romanian people and his spiritual formation of Oriental rite, without noticing any inadvertence between the two features that defined the originality of the Romanian nation. In his fight for the restoration of the Orthodox Metropolitan and therefore its independence from the Serbian hierarchy in Karlowitz, Şaguna used not only canon law arguments, but also the idea of national self-determination. The Church was seen as one and national and that was why it could not be indifferent to the greatest aspirations of the nation – among which was the independence from the Serbian religious authority. The Romanian Orthodox from Transylvania lived in “the spirit of the era” and could no longer accept foreign ecclesiastical guidance and the Slavic liturgical language. The great Orthodox Bishop appreciated that the Greek-Catholics also belonged to the Romanian nation, reason why, when arguing in support of the Romanian political claims (1848/9 and 1863/4), he spoke on behalf of the entire nation. He was, however, a declared adversary of the religious unification of the two Romanian Churches and he considered that a great injustice had been done to the Orthodox Church through the signing of the union acts with Rome.<sup>10</sup>

The myth of orthodoxy as a pavement of ethnic identity was shattered in Dumitru Drăghicescu's 1907 work titled “*Din psihologia poporului român*” (*From the Psychology of the Romanian People*). Formulating his ideas on the basis of the social realities in the Old Kingdom, Drăghicescu considered the Romanian people preserved their identity not due to orthodoxy, but in spite of it. In his view, the

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<sup>10</sup> Keith Hitchins, *Identity of Romania* (Bucharest: Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 2009), pp. 119-132.

Orthodox Church was what opened the way for Slavic and Greek influences within the Romanian element. This first ample analysis of Romanian ethnic-psychology offers a series of subjective consideration on the subject of religiosity. The exaggerated respect shown to ritual and the lack of any philosophical depth were seen as the main traits of Romanian religiosity, the people's tolerance in religious matters being owed precisely to their ignorance regarding aspects of doctrine. What truly mattered to Romanians was the strict observance of customs marking the preparation of the soul for the world of beyond, for life after death, in which they strongly believed. It is due to this belief that the numerous monasteries and churches built by princes and noblemen were built and endowed with considerable financial means. The cult of saints was a derivative of the Oriental custom of appealing to intermediaries in order to obtain favours from those in positions of authority. Certain concepts encouraged by orthodoxy, such as the emphasis placed on strong beliefs at the expense of the practical application of moral concepts or the importance placed on fasting, are identified as the causes of a negative trait often attributed to Romanians: "laziness".<sup>11</sup>

In the *interwar period*, the "Romanian way of being" gained more ground of exploration during ideological debates. The achievement of national unification, as well as the trauma of a World War, has caused the acute need for finding political and ideological ways to be followed by the entire nation, as well as the dilemma of identifying the defining traits of the Romanian people. Religiosity was among the aspects that had to be touched upon while attempting to answer the question 'how is the Romanian people'. The theories ranged from challenging the "inherent" religiosity of the nation and rejecting orthodoxy as a hindrance to the cultural and economic development, to its identification with the 'Romanian spirit', as argued by the mystical orthodoxy of the Romanian philosophical current known as *gândirism*. The dispute between traditionalists and modernists, between autochthonists and Europeanists regarding the imitation of occidental values or the exploitation of the native potential in order to allow a natural, organic progress, based on national qualities has animated the political and intellectual debates of the interwar period. The modernists, those supporting the implementation of occidental values within the Romanian society, regarded orthodoxy as an element in dissonance with

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<sup>11</sup> Dumitru Drăghicescu, *Din psihologia poporului român (introducere)* (București, 1907), pp. 357-382.

progress, its passive and contemplative character opposing modernisation. In Eugen Lovinescu's view, for the construction of the modern Romanian civilisation, the spiritual alignment with the occident was necessary.<sup>12</sup> The autochthonists have elaborated several theories regarding the way to be followed in the future, their common point being the emphasis placed on the 'Romanian' values. Constantin Rădulescu-Motru talked about the birth of a new type of nationalism in the aftermath of the world conflagration, one that no longer imitated any 'classical model', but made use of the specific spiritual character of every people. The new nationalism, called *românism*, was however not compatible with the orthodoxy, as it could not reach its ultimate goal – the modernisation of the Romanian society through exploiting its own potential and not imitating any foreign models – if it still identified the Romanian spirituality with the Orthodox dogma. Despite religiosity being a "certain recommendation for an elevate culture", the Orthodox Church had to resign itself exclusively to its spiritual calling and not get involved in the battles carried in the name of the Romanian nationalism.<sup>13</sup>

At the opposite end of the ideological spectrum of the era were Nechifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu, who have identified orthodoxy as the defining element of the Romanian character, practically, overlapping it with the concept of ethnicity. In the magazine *Gândirea*, Crainic and his disciples spoke about orthodoxy as the expression of the rural soul (the only authentic beholder of the national spirit) and stressed on the need for art to express this orthodox national specificity.<sup>14</sup>

Theologian Dumitru Stăniloae underlined as well the close relationship between the "ancestral" religion and the Romanianism. Many lay intellectuals who spoke on the subject treated orthodoxy as an ethnic-cultural phenomenon, detaching it from its dogmatic side. Among them were personalities such as Lucian Blaga, Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran and Mircea Vulcănescu. Although extremist accents did not lack (they being noticeable in Crainic and Ionescu's works), the orthodoxy of

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<sup>12</sup> Eugen Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației române moderne* (București: Minerva, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *Românismul – catehismul unei noi spiritualități* (București: Ed. Științifică, 1992).

<sup>14</sup> Zigu Ornea, *Tradiționalism și modernitate în deceniul al treilea* (București: Ed. Eminescu, 1980).

the interwar period was mainly “a philosophy of culture and a theory of development”.<sup>15</sup>

Beyond the heated scene of intellectual debates, phenomena like “the miracle of Maglavit” became echoes of the masses’ religiosity. However, it also showed the effects excessive publicity had on religious sensitivity, transforming the miraculous into triviality through media dilution.<sup>16</sup>

Orthodoxy remained the religion followed by the great majority of Greater Romania’s population and the 1923 Constitution designated the position of the Orthodox Church as “dominant”. The identity discourse of the ecclesiastical institution highlighted the tight bond between orthodoxy and ethnicity, between church and nation, thus promoting the idea of religious unification as the natural continuation of political unification. Some higher ranked hierarchs have called upon the Greek-Catholic believers and clergymen to return to the ancestral church. The arguments regarding the necessity of religious unity were based on two main points: redressing the injustice done to the Orthodox Church in 1700 due to foreign meddling and linking national progress with the achievement of church unity.<sup>17</sup> The Greek-Catholic clergy joined the debates regarding the unification of the two Romanian Churches. In spite of not being against the thought of it, they imagined its realisation in a completely different form; namely, by following the Florentine council model and uniting with Rome.

The “reunification” of the Romanian Orthodox Church through the homecoming of Greek-Catholic believers and clergymen took place in 1948, when the *Romanian Greek Catholic Church was abolished* through an abusive decree of the communist regime. The decision was one political in nature, but it nonetheless suited the interests of the Orthodox Church, which seconded the process.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, the orthodox clergy’s options regarding the management of the Greek-Catholic churches were limited, as they themselves had to make compromises in order to survive a regime that demanded total obedience. According to

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<sup>15</sup> Alexandru Zub, „Ortodoxia română în disputele din perioada interbelică”, în *Xenopoliana VII* (1999), 3-4, pp. 10-21.

<sup>16</sup> Doru Radosav, *Sentimentul religios la români*, (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1997), pp. 318-319.

<sup>17</sup> Bucur, *Din istoria*, pp. 63-64.

<sup>18</sup> Bucur, *Din istoria*, pp. 266-267.

the communist vision, the church proved itself to be “in the service of the people” only by strictly observing the directives of the state.<sup>19</sup>

The first step was the adaption of ecclesiastical ideology to the new political realities. *Apostolatul social (The Social Apostolate)* – a 10 volumes treatise written by the first orthodox patriarch of the communist period, Iustinian Marina (1948-1977) – urged the clergy to serve the interests of the people, to get involved in the struggle for peace and progress, to support the state in its efforts to build a socialist society as this was in the interests of the majority. The church had to become a “popular” one. *The Social Apostolate* can be considered as a tentative of “socialising” the Church according to the model imposed by the new political regime.<sup>20</sup>

In the final phases of the Romanian communism, as the regime of Ceaușescu promoted an aggressive form of nationalism of protochronist tendencies, the Orthodox Church re-embraced its original idea regarding ethnicity, thus identifying the Romanian spirit with orthodoxy. In the new line of discourse, the “ancestral faith” was portrayed as inseparable from the Romanian people from its very conception, both of them accounting for a bi-millennial existence of the territory of ancient Roman Dacia. It was underlined that the church had always supported the state in its struggle for national unification. The Orthodox Church had always been in the service of the Romanian nation, reason why it earned its status of unique Romanian church.<sup>21</sup>

The national character and the social mission are elements present in the identity discourse of the Orthodox Church for a long period of time, the two being recognisable even in Șaguna’s vision. However, during the communist period, these “traditional” traits were employed to justify the subordination of the church to the state, in an attempt to ideologically adapt to a secular and anticlerical regime, as well as to preserve the illusion of continuity and respect for the orthodox traditions.

During the *post-communist period*, the identity discourse of the Orthodox Church resumed its already established themes: the Romanian people was a Christian people from its inception; the Orthodox faith represents a fundamental element in the consciousness of the nation’s unity alongside Latinity and continuity; the Church served the Romanian people from its establishment and preached the consciousness

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<sup>19</sup> Bucur, *Din istoria*, pp. 152-153.

<sup>20</sup> Gillet, *Religie și naționalism*, pp. 34-84.

<sup>21</sup> Gillet, *Religie și naționalism*, pp. 176-178.

of national unity, thus participating in the struggle for political unity and being present in all crucial moments in Romania's history; the Orthodox Church fought for the achievement of the nation's most ardent desiderata and thereafter for the achievement of its own goals, such as the autocephaly obtained in 1885 and the rising of the rank of patriarchy in 1925, acts that increased the prestige of the Church and of the nation alike. The Romanian Orthodox Church continued to affirm its national character and assume a social mission within a society where the religious factor remained of principal importance.

The Greek-Catholic Church regained its right to existence. However, the decades of clandestine survival have left their marks on the identity profile of this Church. The attachment to the purity of the Oriental rite was no longer as intense, thus allowing the penetration of Latin elements (the prayer of the rosary, the design of new church buildings etc.). Other identity coordinates remained, however, intact – the four points of the union, fidelity to the teachings transmitted by the holy parents of the East, the role played in the spreading of the national consciousness and the opening towards the European culture. Moreover, the martyrdom suffered during the communist regime was now added among these identity elements.<sup>22</sup>

The image of the Romanian Orthodox Church during the communist period registers in the historical consciousness negative accents (its servile submission to the regime, its participation in the abolition of the Greek-Catholic 'sister church', its embracement of nationalist discourse), although a series of nuances are also necessary: the struggle of the church for its own survival, the efforts of anti-communist resistance of some clergymen etc. The study of its recent history progressed and it reveals, in addition to the analysing of how the church adapted to the regime, the mechanism through which the state abolished the freedom of the ecclesiastical institution. However, the historical perspective on the relationship between state and church reveals a permanent interdependence between the two authorities, a "collaboration" in which the two partners have never been equals as the interests of the state were the ones to always prevail.

### **Church and State**

From as early as the formation of the first centralised medieval states, the church has collaborated with the political power, represented by

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<sup>22</sup> Ciprian Ghișa, *Biserica greco-catolică din Transilvania (1700-1850). Elaborarea discursului identitar* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2006), pp. 382-385.

Voivodes (princes), conferring it legitimacy and prestige. Given the primordial importance of the religious factor with traditional societies, within the Orthodox and Catholic worlds alike, the earthly power needed the guarantee of the institution representing the divine authority. The ritual of anointment and coronation symbolised the divine empowerment given to the King or Emperor in order to temporarily govern over the devout. The political leader sometimes received the appellative of "holy", thus his role as mediator between society and divinity being more deeply emphasised.

In the Byzantine world, Christianity has perfected the forms of an imperial cult blending the elements of Roman tradition with those of Oriental despotism. The Emperor needed the Church's sanction in his role as supreme authority, offering in return his protection and special consideration for the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The collaboration between state and church in order to guide the Christian society represented the essence of the "Byzantine symphony". However, it was an imperfect symbiosis, as the Emperor had the right to subordinate the Church in the name of the good functioning of society.<sup>23</sup> Whereas in the Catholic Occident, at least theoretically, the Church did not allow the intrusion of secular power within its internal affairs and the relations between papacy and royalty/empire were ones of perpetual rivalry, in the Byzantine Empire these relations were characterised by the superiority of the political factor.

The *Romanian medieval states* came into being in a period when the Occidental Christian society was subjected to an intense process of fragmentation, through the formation of centralised states supported by church structures involved in the pursuit of local interest.

Concomitantly with the unification of the pre-existing political formation of the region, the founding Voivodes focused on the institutional organisation of the church as a pillar of support for the political power. The choice for orthodoxy can undoubtedly be seen as motivated by political reasons (as a defensive decision against the expansionist efforts of the Hungarian Kings), but it nonetheless aligns with the Byzantine spiritual orientation the population inclined towards. Unlike the Kingdom of Hungary, where the founding father of the state - King Saint Stephen - opted for Catholicism and the forced Christianisation of his subjects, the Romanian Voivodes decided to

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<sup>23</sup> Dan-Alexandru Popescu, *Putere politică și autoritate religioasă în Europa medievală. Reprezentări ale monarhului creștin în Evul Mediu românesc și în regatul Franței: studiu comparativ* (București: Editura Academiei Române, 2008), pp. 33-36.

support a church structure that had evolved through the accumulation of centuries old influences.

The establishment of the Metropolitan of Ungrovlahia in Argeş by Nicolae Alexandru (1352-1364) and later that of Severin (1370) by Vladislav Vlaicu (1364-1377) contributed to the international affirmation of a newly established self-governing state, namely a confirmation of independence from the Kingdom of Hungary. The first Voivodes established the tradition of building monasteries and conferring them large fortunes, as well as the habit of financially supporting some places of worship in Mount Athos and other Holy Places of Orthodoxy. These acts of Christian devotion have become an important feature for the ruling institution of the two Romanian principalities.<sup>24</sup>

The act of coronation, simpler and poorer in symbolism in the Romanian principalities than in the western countries, ultimately conveyed the same message: the ruler was chosen by God and entrusted with earthly powers. However, this privileged came with the obligation of always acting in the spirit of Christianity and the good of the society, respecting certain universal principles. "*Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său Theodosie*" ("*The teachings of Neagoe Basarab for his son Theodosie*") (1519-1521), a sample of Romanian medieval political philosophy, emphasised the Christian values as the basis of governance. The prince had to act in accordance to the maxims of the Church and collaborate with the high clergy in the act of governance.<sup>25</sup>

The collaboration between the two elements of power best translated through the participation of hierarchs in the royal councils and court assemblies, as well as by eparchy prelates overtaking some local judicial attributions. The Metropolitans were appointed by the princes, following the advice of high hierarchs and noblemen, and they subsequently received their confirmation from the Patriarch of Constantinople. The central authority confirmed the appointment of bishops, ecumenists, deans, at the proposal of the Metropolitan. The Voivodes took a series of measures to improve the social status of the lower priesthood, granting them tax exemptions. In 17<sup>th</sup> century Wallachia, the rural priests were gradually released from feudal servitudes. Moreover, in 1714, Metropolitan Antim Ivireanul established that priesthood could be accessible only to free people. The central authorities regulated the clergy's statute in rapport to the devout, the latter having the duty of working without payment for the church

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<sup>24</sup> Popescu, *Putere politică*, pp. 77-83.

<sup>25</sup> Popescu, *Putere politică*, pp. 91-109.

servants. The high clergy was present at diplomatic activities, at the ceremonies of the royal courts and the metropolitan held court when the Voivode was not present, having the mission of aiding the central power in its political actions, especially in those with an increased load of symbolism. The Voivodes and the Church collaborated in their attempt to protect the orthodoxy from foreign influences – be them those of Islamism, Reform or Counter-reform.<sup>26</sup>

In Transylvania, Orthodox ecclesiastical settlements were mentioned even prior to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, as around the year 1400 these were already under the guidance of the Metropolitan of Wallachia. However, the religious and economic status of the Romanian population, mostly formed of “schismatic” peasants, gave a special role to the clergy. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Reformation had a resounding success among the Hungarians and Saxons in Transylvania, thus within the social-political structure of the autonomous principality appeared a system of the three privileged nations (Hungarians, Saxons and Szekely) and four favoured religions (Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist and Unitarian). The Romanians were excluded from this legal system, and had neither rights to political representation, nor privileges for their clergy. The Romanian nobility, reduced in number, either lost their national affiliation by conversion to Catholicism, or lost their status becoming merely wealthy peasantry. Likewise, the Romanian artisans and merchants from *Fundus Regius* (“the land of the Saxons”) could never integrate into the Saxon guild world and they were far too few in number to form middle class. This social-economic and political reality made the creation of a secular elite impossible for a long while, thus the clergy came to represent the only elite structure capable of getting involved in the fight for political rights.

Once Transylvania became part of the Habsburg dominions, a good means for obtaining tangible results seemed to be the conversion to Catholicism while preserving the Oriental rite.<sup>27</sup> Inochentie Micu Klein (1692-1768) was energetically involved in the political struggle. At the beginning, he claimed the rights promised to the Romanian clergy through the diplomas of union with the Empire, but he gradually expanded his demands to the entire Romanian population in Transylvania, invoking the numerical superiority and the uninterrupted existence of this people within the region since ancient times. Micu Klein aimed to see the status of the Romanians being raised to that of

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<sup>26</sup> *Istoria românilor*, vol. V: *O epocă de înnoiri în spirit european (1601-1711/1716)*, coord. Virgil Cândea (București: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2012), pp. 756-765.

<sup>27</sup> Hitchins, *Identity of Romania*, pp. 19-23.

“privileged nation” similarly to the other co-habitant nations. The Greek-Catholic bishop assumed the role of political leader, by virtue of his position and in the light of a deep understanding of the historical moment. He formulated the first coherent political program demanding the right of representation in the central and local political and administrative forums, using the historical argument, as well as that of natural law. Cultural and economic claims aiming to improve the life of the free and dependant peasantry complemented Klein’s political requests. This program would later be expanded on by both the ecclesiastical elite and the secular one that was under development in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>28</sup> Inochentie Micu Klein represents the prototype of the hierarch turned politician, whose ideological legacy had a large resonance in the national movement of the Romanians from Transylvania.

The figure of Andrei Șaguna stands out among the Orthodox hierarchs who became noted on the political scene. He assumed the dual role of spiritual and political leader during a period of intense turmoil and transformations in the Habsburg Empire, thus remaining in the historical records for his great merit in the organisation of the Orthodox Church in Transylvania as well as for his actions as spokesman of the national movement. He dedicated himself to the establishment of an adequate legal framework within which the activity of the church to be conducted. Its independence from the Serbian Metropolitan of Karlowitz, through the *restoration of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolitan*, has greatly increased the prestige of the Orthodox Church in Transylvania. However, Șaguna fully understood the ruling ideology of the era (nationalism and the desiderata of national emancipation, liberalism and the pursuit of progress on all levels) and the need to adapt the discourse of the Church to the new form of solidarity that transcended religion in importance. Moreover, he considered the Church could no remained indifferent to the social situation of its believers. The social aspects intertwined with the national ones towards the formulation of rights for the Romanian people understood as nation. However, the battle towards national self-determination had to be fought respecting the moral principles and the legitimate state authority.<sup>29</sup> Andrei Șaguna followed the paths made available by the existent political and legal systems in order to obtain the recognition of his church. In line with the Byzantine tradition, the hierarch decided that

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<sup>28</sup> Bărbulescu, Deletant, Hitchins, Papacostea, Teodor, *Istoria României*, pp. 305-310.

<sup>29</sup> Hitchins, *Identity of Romania*, pp. 119-132.

the political regime installed through the 1867 Compromise had to be respected and, thus, the Romanians' fight for national rights had to be conducted within the constitutional framework made available by the Hungarian state.

The metropolitans and bishops of the two Romanian churches in Transylvania were lawful members of the Upper House of the parliament of Dualist Hungary. From this position, they took the floor whenever legislative projects concerning the Church were under debate (education laws, the finances of priests, the law on the free religious exercise, the law of civil marriage, etc.) and opposed the liberal policies that tried to restrict the authority of the ecclesiastical institutions strictly to the spiritual sphere.

In the Romanian Principalities, the presence of high hierarchs at all important political assemblies, coupled with their symbolic role at the forefront of decisional forums, their appointment as chairs of the national assemblies established by the Organic Regulations were all elements that highlighted the continual participation in the affairs of the state. However, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Principalities underwent important political transformations. The engravings of the era are all suggestive of the role the Church continued to play in society, a role that the liberals saw more as symbolic than decisional.

Following the unification of the two Principalities – union actively supported by the members of the high clergy, as the Metropolitans were the chairs of the unionist communities – the Romanian political class was committed to the process of building a modern national state. The practice of the ruler's intervention within the internal problems of the Church, which was initiated under the Phanariot regime, continued during the short reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza. Through his *ecclesiastical reforms*, Cuza sought to intensify the control of the state over the church, while also using the ecclesiastical institution to legitimise and support his regime. Among the measures taken were: the unification of the two churches into a single "national" body, the involvement of the central power in the appointment of the high hierarchs, the establishment of a general synod of the church (which declared independence from the ecumenical patriarchy), the appointment of the metropolitans and the bishops as members of the upper parliamentary chamber etc.<sup>30</sup> A series of preparatory measures (the prohibition of religious services being officiated in a language other than Romanian, the use of monastery funds for repairs and maintenance,

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<sup>30</sup> Leuștean, *Orthodox Christianity*, pp. 116-122.

the surveillance of precious objects, the collection of documents from the monasteries, conditioning the status of monks by the approval of the Ministry of Cults etc.) preceded the adoption of the law secularising the monasteries' fortunes, which was passed on December 13/25, 1863. Following its adoption, the estates of the consecrated monasteries, about a quarter of the territory of the country, passed into state ownership. The law did not meet a significant opposition, being interpreted as a measure of defence of the Romanian nation in the face of Greek influences. The image of Cuza in the historical consciousness remained that of the authoritarian prince who recovered the lands of the church from the hands of the Greeks, thus increasing the international prestige of Romania. He transformed the Church into a reliable ally in the implementation of his political vision, the ecclesiastical institution also contributing to the birth of the myth of the "providential ruler", built around the first ruler of the United Principalities.<sup>31</sup>

The 1866 Constitution regulated the relationship between state and church, as well as the position of the church within the new political and legal configuration of the country. The Orthodox Church was seen as the "dominant" ecclesiastical institution as it was followed by the vast majority of the country's inhabitants - according to the 1899 census, 92.5% of the population adhered to orthodoxy. Moreover, the Church was autonomous - administered on the basis of a synod system - and independent of any foreign hierarchy, preserving its unity with the Oriental ecumenical church only in what dogmas were concerned. The ecumenical patriarchy recognised *the autocephaly of the Romanian Orthodox Church* in 1885, this act being an equivalent to the international recognition of the new Romanian national state. Under the reign of Carol I, the state consolidated its control over the church through its involvement in the appointment of high hierarchs. It also got involved at the lower levels of the ecclesiastical institution, through regulating the salaries of the priests in accordance to the funds of the church, which had been drastically reduced following the secularisation of the monastery fortunes. In 1902, through the creation of the House of the Church, the administration of church assets came entirely in the hands of the state.<sup>32</sup>

In the aftermath of the 1918 unification, the Romanian Orthodox Church was faced with the problem of internal reorganisation in order to incorporate the churches from the united provinces within its structures. Moreover, it needed to establish relations with the new confessions. The

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<sup>31</sup> Leuștean, *Orthodox Christianity*, pp. 116-122.

<sup>32</sup> Leuștean, *Orthodox Christianity*, pp. 116-122.

Greek-Catholics represented an issue due to their status as “second Romanian church”, which many Orthodox hierarchs contested.

Following the instauration of the communist regime, the relationship between the churches and the state entered a new phase, that of total subordination. In order to justify its submission to the new regime, the Orthodox Church invoked the tradition of the Byzantine symphony and its mission as “servant of the people”, and later of the nation. The state was nothing but an emanation of the people and, therefore, the Church had the duty to obey it.<sup>33</sup> However, this argument was part of a public discourse the Orthodox Church was forced to elaborate in order to avoid reaching the situation of the Greek-Orthodox Church or other Orthodox Churches in the communist bloc. Among the methods employed in order to subjugate the church were the legislative ones (that turned the church into a state institution), the surveillance of the *Securitate*, the persecution of recalcitrant clergy and the repression of any attempts of opposition, as well as the exploitation of inter-confessional conflicts, discords among hierarchs or other insignificant local conflicts.<sup>34</sup>

In the post-communist era, the churches redefine their rapport with the state in the context of the Romanian society’s democratisation. The Orthodox Church continues to play an important role on the public arena and it enjoys a solid social support, its voice being heard within the political, ecclesiastical and cultural pluralism of the new era.

## Conclusions

The representations of the church and religiousness in the Romanian historical imaginary combine the results of the historical scientific approach with that of confessional identity discourse, political discourse and philosophical theories of culture. The historiography is not the only force able to model the historical consciousness. However, historiography has the duty of seeking an honest path of remembrance, even when this implies the acceptance of the inevitable influence the present has on the interpretations of the past. Today’s “present” is that of promoting the European and democratic values, while the interwar “present” was that of rediscovering the national identity, the Enlightenment “present” was the triumph of reason and the medieval “present” was that of deep religiosity. Thus, the images of religion and churches fall within the limits of these subjective coordinates, while

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<sup>33</sup> Gillet, *Religie și naționalism*.

<sup>34</sup> Vasile, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*.

being contextualised according to the purpose pursued by the one creating the image. Hence, for the Greek-Catholic clergy at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the longevity and Latinity of Christianity were closely linked to the need of identifying illustrious roots of the ethnic community in the awakening of its national consciousness; the interwar elite, struggling with the dilemmas of modernisation, either glorified or repudiated the orthodoxy according to its attitude towards the Occidental mode; for the Romanian Orthodox Church during the communist regime, the illusion of preserving the tradition was a way of adapting to the demands of the repressive regime.

In the light of its communist experience, the image of the Romanian Orthodox Church had much to suffer. Many accused the Church for its collaborationism, as well as for its nationalist discourse, whose exaggerated accents outlined during the interwar period had resurfaced in the final phases of the communist regime. However, the criticism of the Church coincided with a revival in the religious sentiment and its renewed public manifestations in the Romanian society, in the aftermath of a long time in which religion had been condemned to the isolation of the private space.

# The Typology of the Providential Leader in the Modern Romanian Political Imaginary\*

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**Abstract:** *The Typology of the Providential Leader in the Modern Romanian Political Imaginary.* In this paper, we will attempt to provide an overview of the typology of the providential leader in the Romanian political culture. The providential ruler is a political myth which gives meaning to modern societies, divided along the fault lines of diverging economic interests and ideological beliefs. We propose a classification centred on the symbolic functions exercised by the political figures. The *Saviour*, the *Martyr*, the *Vigilante* and the *Constructor* are the four mythical constellations that can adequately structure the specific roles played by the Romanian providential leaders.

**Keywords:** political imaginary, modern Romania, providential leader, semantic pool, propaganda

**Rezumat:** *Tipologia conducătorilor providențiali în imaginarul politic român modern.* În acest studiu vom încerca să schițăm o imagine de ansamblu asupra tipologiei liderilor salvatori din cadrul culturii politice românești. Conducătorul providențial este un mit politic, care dă sens unor societăți moderne, divizate de-a lungul liniilor de falie ale unor interese economice și credințe politice divergente. Vom propune o clasificare centrată pe funcțiile simbolice exercitate de personajele politice. Salvatorul, Martirul, Justițiarul și Constructorul sunt cele patru constelații mitice care pot să structureze în mod adecvat rolurile specifice jucate de conducătorii providențiali români.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** imaginar politic, România modernă, conducător providențial, bazin semantic, propagandă

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In his seminal study on modern political culture, Raoul Girardet defines four great mythological constellations that structure the political imaginary of modernity: Conspiracy, the Saviour, the Golden Age and Unity.<sup>1</sup> In Romanian historiography, analyses dedicated to these subjects have been produced especially by Lucian Boia,<sup>2</sup> in Bucharest, and Simona Nicoară,<sup>3</sup> in Cluj. In this article, we will focus on one of the four major mythical complexes invoked above, namely the figure of the saviour leader. We will highlight how this myth emerged and developed in the Romanian political imaginary of the nineteenth-twenty-first centuries, in an attempt to define it and to propose an appropriate typology for its investigation.

What is a providential ruler as a figure of the historical imaginary? At first glance, any important leader could aspire to this position. However, the collective imaginary does not warrant that all heads of state or government should occupy such a position. Petru Groza cannot be considered a saviour leader. Neither can Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej, although he does have some of the necessary features. The same could be said about Alexandru Marghiloman, Constantin Argetoianu or even Nicolae Iorga. Consequently, although being a significant political leader with notable achievements is an important prerequisite, it does not suffice; moreover, it is not always a necessary condition. In France, Antoine Pinay (prime minister for a few months, in 1952) was considered a saviour leader in his own time, and was studied as such in specialised works,<sup>4</sup> but today he is only a relatively obscure figure in French public memory. Only time will tell how Emmanuel Macron or Klaus Iohannis will be perceived in a few years.<sup>5</sup>

The first condition for the emergence of such a character, a condition that is more specific than the actual importance of the leader or his actions, is the existence of an appropriate horizon of expectation. A providential ruler is, first and foremost, the expression of tremendous

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<sup>1</sup> Raoul Girardet, *Mituri și mitologii politice* (Iași: Institutul European, 1997), pp. 15–138.

<sup>2</sup> Lucian Boia, *Pentru o istorie a imaginarului* (București: Humanitas, 2000), pp. 189–212; *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească* (București: Humanitas, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Simona Nicoară, *Istorie și imaginar: eseuri de antropologie istorică* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2000), pp. 167–191; *Mitologiile revoluției pașoptiste românești: istorie și imaginar* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Girardet, *Mituri și mitologii*, pp. 47–53.

<sup>5</sup> See their works, which serve as genuine autobiographical political manifestos: Emmanuel Macron, *Revoluție* (București: Editura Trei, 2017); Klaus Iohannis, *Pas cu pas* (București: Curtea Veche, 2014).

hope, of a psychological need at the level of the social imaginary, and only secondly is he the product of his own deeds. Bonaparte was expected and, in a way, he was created by a France that was tired of revolution, just like Hitler was created by a Germany that had been humiliated by the war it had lost and that had been brought to its knees by the economic crisis, and Codreanu was birthed by a traditionalist Romanian society that was blighted by a difficult process of modernisation and disappointed by its corrupt leaders. Even though he was an utter disappointment and ultimately proved to be a mediocre and irresolute politician, General Boulanger was also awaited as a messiah in France in 1887, remaining a prototype of the saviour hero, typical of France.<sup>6</sup> Although he failed as an effective leader, at the practical level of history, he remained entrenched in the collective imaginary as a redeemer. It is from this perspective, of the social expectations formulated prior to their emergence, that we must analyse similar Romanian figures, such as General Averescu, King Mihai, Ion Iliescu or even Traian Băsescu.

The second condition for acceding to the position of providential leader is the emergence and development of a *public cult* dedicated to the personality of that leader. A discreet leader who does his job but does not promote his own image and is not praised by others cannot aspire to this quality, regardless of his achievements or even personal charisma. Emil Boc, for example, was a Prime Minister who was forced to manage the effects of the economic crisis that engulfed Romania in 2009. His image as head of government remained, however, negative because he was perceived as an anti-Saviour. Instead of meeting the expectations of the public, who wanted a saviour capable of avoiding pension and salary cuts, Boc did the exact opposite. Similarly, a series of prime ministers from the Conservative Party, the Peasants' Party or other political groups who interrupted – usually in difficult times of political or financial crisis – the long and “glorious” Liberal government of the Romanian Kingdom made a poor impression as heads of government, despite their outstanding personal qualities (P. P. Carp, Gh. Gr. Cantacuzino, Iuliu Maniu and Nicolae Iorga).

As regards its unfolding in time, the cult of a providential leader's personality manifests itself in two ways. On the one hand, it may be ephemeral, fleeting, limited to a particular time, to the governance or, at most, to the life of the character in question, but then comes to a close and ceases to evolve, particularly after the story is over.

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<sup>6</sup> Boia, *Pentru o istorie*, p. 196.

It is the case of General Boulanger, mentioned above, or of General Averescu, in Romania. Although Averescu shone brilliantly for a few years on the political stage (1918-1927) and was adored by peasants and journalists in a way that foreshadowed the Legionnaire movement,<sup>7</sup> and even if his achievements are still mentioned in history books, his figure did not generate a cult that outlasted his time in office or his life.

On the other hand, providential leaders from the second category are interesting because they live several lives, and their cult is propagated and used in several historical contexts, which are sometimes quite different. Ceaușescu, for example, was the idol of a secular religion, created and fuelled by the official Communist propaganda,<sup>8</sup> but a significant cult developed around his figure, especially at the popular level and after his death in 1989. After its anthonymous stage, Antonescu's cult began, in turn, to be reutilised during the years of Ceaușescu's national-communism, and then experienced a second revival, after 1990.<sup>9</sup> The same was true of Carol I, re-mythicised in various ways to this day. As for Cuza, his situation is even more special. Despite his authoritarian tendencies inspired by the Bonapartist model, as well as his remarkable achievements, Cuza was, during his life, a rather common politician, subject to controversy, and – unlike Antonescu, Ceaușescu or Carol I at the Jubilee in 1906 – he was far from being adored. But his cult developed strongly only after the abdication in 1866, especially in posterity, when he truly became a hero of the nation and was perceived as a providential ruler.<sup>10</sup>

What connects the figures mentioned above, defining them as saviour leaders, is the language of the imaginary, a specific rhetoric, the similar symbolic values encapsulated by such characters. Gilbert Durand theorised the concept of *semantic pool*,<sup>11</sup> a term that designates the specific way in which constellations of images and myths characteristic of a certain historical era are configured. The providential leaders of the modern era (i.e. from the end of the eighteenth century to this day) belong to such a common semantic pool which structures the political imaginary of modernity.

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<sup>7</sup> Boia, *Istorie și mit*, pp. 401–403.

<sup>8</sup> Anneli Ute Gabanyi, *Cultul lui Ceaușescu* (Iași: Polirom, 2003); Adam Burakowski, *Dictatura lui Nicolae Ceaușescu. 1965–1989: Geniul Carpaților* (Iași: Polirom, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Boia, *Istorie și mit*, pp. 438–440.

<sup>10</sup> See Constantin C. Giurescu, *Viața și opera lui Cuza Vodă* (București: Curtea Veche, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> Gilbert Durand, *Introducere în mitologie: mituri și societăți* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 2004), pp. 66–110.

In the premodern epochs, political leaders were vested with two essential and closely interrelated symbolic functions: mediating exchanges between gods and mortals and redeeming the people they ruled. The first character in history was a saving hero, Gilgamesh. The Sumerian *énsi* or the Chinese emperors were considered representatives of the gods on earth, while the Egyptian pharaohs or the Roman emperors were deified. The sovereign was the elect one, the one called to save all his people through his redeeming activity, which is why the rulers of the Jews and Arabs, from Moses to Jesus or Muhammad, were considered or called both kings and prophets. For the same reasons, in barbaric Europe we encounter the practice of the king's ritual suicide, in case of defeat on the battlefield, with the role of atoning thus the misfortune that befell his people. The death of Decebalus or the Queen of Britons, Boudicca, can also be interpreted in this way. The murder of Jugurtha or Vercingetorix, in captivity, by the Romans was also a ritual act, signifying the political annihilation of the peoples with whom these leaders identified and who, as a result, could no longer be saved.

The sacralisation of rulers was a customary phenomenon in the imaginary of traditional societies. However, in the modern era, when society began to be secularised and the City of God became the city of men,<sup>12</sup> the saving heroes and thaumaturgic kings of yore<sup>13</sup> turned into the providential leaders of modern political regimes. These leaders' new kind of messianism is closely related to the idea of democracy and the sovereignty of the people. Whether we speak about the representative of a free and potentially democratic society (Washington), a totalising nation made up of equal citizens (Robespierre), the formula of democratic Caesarism (Napoleon), the Nazi ideology condensed in the slogan "ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer" (Hitler) or the versed leaders of the working class (Lenin, Stalin, or Mao), we can notice that the modern providential leaders tend to identify fully with the people they lead. The leaders of traditional societies identified themselves primarily with divinity and, as such, they guided the people. Modern leaders replaced God with the people themselves, who simultaneously became the object of their saving action and the source of power and ultimate ground for legitimising the deeds of any ruler. The people and the nation are the new gods of the modern imaginary.

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<sup>12</sup> Simona Nicoară, *O istorie a secularizării: de la Cetatea lui Dumnezeu la cetatea oamenilor (sec. XIV-XVIII)* (Cluj-Napoca: Accent, 2005).

<sup>13</sup> See Marc Bloch, *Regii taumaturgi: studiu despre caracterul supranatural atribuit puterii regale, în special în Franța și în Anglia* (Iași: Polirom, 1997).

Still, what remains of the archetypal structures that govern the collective imaginary is the *aspiration towards Unity*, the figure of One. The leader has always been and remains a singular transfiguration of all. The authentic saviour, the true one, can only be one, the Chosen one, like Jesus or Neo (anagram of "The One"), the hero of *The Matrix*. Modernity has failed to dislodge the archetype of the unique saving hero from the collective imaginary, and this constant psychological dimension has overlapped the propagandistic need for a discursive legitimisation of power, a need felt by (almost) any leader, except perhaps by those with genuine democratic reflexes.

In modern practice, democracy and the limited number or duration of mandates undermine, to some extent, the position of providential leaders, especially in symbolic terms, because it suggests that everyone can occupy those roles through elections and by rotation. A consequence of this mechanism is the overflowing proliferation of more or less providential contemporary leaders.<sup>14</sup> Such a leader is no longer the unique One, but can be anyone.

However, the logic of the imaginary has always successfully struggled to overcome this handicap of the modern providential ruler. Washington, who retired to Mount Vernon after two terms only because he wanted to, remained immersed thus in a traditional logic of power (like Cincinnatus, who also retired on his own turf, but had to be recalled precisely because he was unique, irreplaceable). The other American presidents whom history remembers as providential leaders, despite their having completed their constitutional mandates on time (or even earlier), such as, for instance, Lincoln, F. D. Roosevelt or Kennedy, were also seen as unique, irreplaceable leaders, saviours of the nation in times of need. In the American imaginary, however democratic the society that gave birth to them may have been, they played, like Hitler or Napoleon, roles that could only belong to them and nobody else.

The providential ruler is a *political myth* which gives meaning to modern societies, divided along the fault lines of diverging economic interests and ideological beliefs.<sup>15</sup> As a result, such a myth unites society and gives it meaning only through its general mechanisms, and not through its particular embodiments. In other words, no particular providential ruler is accepted by everyone, but only by a part of the social body, even if the whole society yearns for a saviour. Some

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<sup>14</sup> Boia, *Pentru o istorie*, p. 193.

<sup>15</sup> See André Reszler, *Mythes politiques modernes* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1981).

discovered this leader in Codreanu, others in Carol II, yet others in Antonescu. Myths are opposed by counter-myths. Leaders have saviour potential for some, but are catastrophic for others. Even Carol I, who at one point enjoyed a quasi-unanimous appreciation, faced severe criticism from the republican, anti-dynastic socialists. Sometimes pairs of competing figures come to the fore, depending on the polarisation of the political spectrum. Carol II is opposed to Codreanu, Horia Sima to Antonescu, Antonescu to King Mihai.

At this point one can observe very well the constructed nature of these political myths, the close connection between a timeless myth and the *propaganda* that answers the ephemeral needs of the moment. Aided by the propaganda associated with them, leaders consciously shape their own representation, using the ingredients and recipes available in the storeroom of the collective imaginary. Napoleon was the first charismatic ruler to forge his own legend, starting with the bulletins of the Great Army and ending with the memoirs from Saint Helena.<sup>16</sup> In the same spirit, Carol I's memoirs, the Captain's "circulars" or Ceaușescu's speeches deliberately propagated an image capable of influencing and manipulating society in order to conquer, preserve and legitimise power. In the first instance, providential rulers are born from the dreams, fears and hopes of the many. At least in equal measure, they also generate themselves, capitalising on the need to believe of a society that seeks, on earth, the meanings once offered by a transcendent authority.

In the plane of historical reality, Romanian providential leaders of the modern era had only a weak and questionable genealogy behind them. The Phanariotes, with whom the local *ancien régime* came to an end, bequeathed to the Romanian society a detestable image of the ruling authority.<sup>17</sup> The local rulers who succeeded them could have represented a saving solution, but their political scope was too small, and the authoritarian conservatism of rulers like Mihail Sturdza or Gh. Bibescu did little to improve the figure of the ideal prince. Moreover, as regards the voivodes of the Middle Ages, the truth is that they left no consistent trace at all in Romanian political practice, and their glorious image was invented and completely rewritten by historians, poets, playwrights, painters and sculptors of the nineteenth century. A historical fiction, and not an actual political tradition, founded the symbolic genealogy of the Romanian rulers of the modern era.

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<sup>16</sup> Pieter Geyl, *Napoleon pro și contra* (București: Editura Științifică, 1968).

<sup>17</sup> See Daniel Barbu, *Bizanț contra Bizanț: explorări în cultura politică românească* (București: Nemira, 2001), pp. 47–88.

From the gallery of leading characters prevailing at the beginnings of modernity, the collective imaginary has selected mainly the figures of some *pelebian leaders*, in keeping with the democratic mentality of the new modern era.<sup>18</sup> For romantic populism, of Herderian extraction, the ideal ruler of the Romanians had to be a peasant, not a boyar or a king. Horea, Tudor Vladimirescu and Avram Iancu perfectly played this role of leaders who totally identified themselves with the lower classes, and their tragic destinies were typical for the condition of redeeming heroes. Decebalus marks the ancestral beginnings of this series: he is represented as a kind of peasant-king (like Dromichaetes or Mircea the Elder from Eminescu's *Third Letter*), bearded and with wavy hair, a leader detached from the ranks of the many, whose vocation is to sacrifice himself for his people.

As a result, when Cuza and then Prince Carol wanted to promote their image as modern sovereigns and statesmen, different from their predecessors with fur caps and sheepskin coats, they took over everything they could both from the voivodal attire reconstructed by Romanian historians and from the external stylistics of a nineteenth-century constitutional prince. Like Emperor Mutsuhito of Japan, Cuza also adopted the appearance of Napoleon III, wearing a uniform and a beard.

In Transylvania under Austrian rule, a province that was more advanced also as regards political symbolism, there were some premodern antecedents of the myth of the providential ruler, namely Habsburg dynasticism and the *myth of the "good emperor"*.<sup>19</sup> Transylvanian Romanians cultivated a rather significant dynastic loyalism towards Maria Theresa and Joseph II to Franz Joseph and Franz Ferdinand (the pro-Romanian archduke in whom the Transylvanian people put great hope, shattered, however, in the summer of 1914 in Sarajevo).<sup>20</sup> After 1918, they simply changed the effigy of the sovereign, and lithographs with the image of Emperor Franz Joseph, which had been exhibited in the houses of the wealthier peasants, were replaced by those representing King Ferdinand of Romania. The speed with which

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<sup>18</sup> Sorin Mitu, „Domni, preoți, dar mai ales țărani: reprezentări ale statutului social la românii ardeleni, la începutul epocii moderne”, *Revista de Istorie Socială*, 7-9 (2003-2004): 174-204.

<sup>19</sup> Doru Radosav, *Arătarea Împăratului: intrările imperiale în Transilvania și Banat (sec. XVIII-XIX): discurs și reprezentare* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană - Dacia, 2002).

<sup>20</sup> Liviu Maior, *Habsburgi și români: de la loialitatea dinastică la identitate națională* (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2006).

this process of dynastic translation occurred showed once again that, especially in a modern society, the Saviour figure can take on any shape. What is often more important is the belief of the masses in the mechanism of salvation, and not who actually embodies it: the Habsburgs, the Hohenzollerns, the Legionnaires, the Communists...

An approximate list of candidates for the condition of providential leaders of the Romanians (champions of the modern political imaginary, different from the voivodal heroes of the Middle Ages), has been compiled and analysed by Lucian Boia and his collaborators.<sup>21</sup> It includes, first of all, the representatives of the dynastic myth, Carol I, King Ferdinand and Queen Marie, Carol II and Mihai, preceded by Cuza; they are joined by the additional "dynasty" of the Brătianus, Ion and Ionel Brătianu; the crownless saviours of the interwar period are Averescu, Codreanu and Antonescu; and in the communist period, of course, Gheorghiu-Dej and Ceaușescu. Nothing prevents us, however, from adding to this redeeming platoon all four post-December presidents, each of whom is more or less strongly associated with the theme of "National Salvation." In addition, these heads of state, government or "movement" may be joined by several charismatic political leaders or activists, such as Horia Sima, Iuliu Maniu, Corneliu Coposu and Doina Cornea. Clearly, there is an inflation of saviour leaders, which is, as we have already seen, a feature of the contemporary political imaginary. However, considering that all of Romania's heads of state from 1866 onwards appear on this list, what the Romanians appear to believe is that the main task of every leader is not so much to manage the current state of affairs, but to save the nation!

Hoping to put a little order in this somewhat too numerous group and to see exactly who can be considered a providential leader and why, we can resort to a typological classification of the above-mentioned figures. Despite its evanescent character, the imaginary still has its categories. Gilbert Durand, for instance, built up an extremely complex taxonomy, in *The Anthropological Structures of the Imaginary*, where the sceptre, the sword, the ascent, the arrow, and the head are the symbols associated with the "Uranian sovereignty", while the regenerating moon-related cyclicities of the "agrarian drama" are related to the figure of the saviour hero.<sup>22</sup> Raoul Girardet, who is more focused

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<sup>21</sup> Boia, *Istorie și mit*, pp. 358–457; Lucian Boia, ed., *Mituri istorice românești* (București: Editura Universității, 1995); *Miturile comunismului românesc* (București: Nemira, 1998).

<sup>22</sup> Gilbert Durand, *Structurile antropologice ale imaginarului: introducere în arhetipologia generală* (București: Univers Enciclopedic, 2000), pp. 125–144, 283–308.

on historical factuality, postulates the existence of four archetypes of the contemporary political Saviour: Cincinnatus, the grave and wise hero, called upon to save the city in his old age; Alexander, the young and brilliant conqueror, a symbol of adventure and immediate action; Solon, the legislator, the founder of the new order of regulatory enactments; Moses, the prophet, the seer, inspired by God, who leads his people onto the path of the future.<sup>23</sup>

Girardet's typology seems to me, however, too general and too culturally informed to be applicable to the Romanian leaders of the nineteenth-twenty-first centuries, so I will propose a simpler classification, able to cover satisfactorily the gallery of local political characters. It is a classification centred on the symbolic functions exercised by these political figures, and not on their archetypal features. The *Saviour*, the *Martyr*, the *Vigilante* and the *Constructor* are the four mythical constellations that can adequately structure the specific roles played by the Romanian providential leaders. The *Founder* could occupy the fifth position, but this archetype is found almost equally in most existing cases; as a result, from a methodological viewpoint, it is not capable of highlighting specific features. By definition, almost all providential leaders have the vocation of being founders, whether they be constructors, like Carol I and Carol II or Ceaușescu, or Legionnaire martyrs, who aimed to build, through sacrifice, a Romania as holy as the sacred sun in the sky, or saviours like General Antonescu, who envisaged themselves as the founders of a new order and reorganisers of the national state. The roles of saviour, martyr, vigilante and constructor also combine or overlap in different dosages in the symbolic configuration of different personalities, but nevertheless usually give a dominant note to each particular profile.

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<sup>23</sup> Girardet, *Mituri și mitologii*, pp. 55–61.

# The Self-Image of the Romanians in the Interwar Period\*

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**Abstract:** *The Self-Image of the Romanians in the Interwar Period.* In the interwar period an important number of authors investigated identity in terms of national character and what define us from this point of view. The first author analyzed in this study is Dumitru Drăghicescu, but the national specificity was also a key concept in the work of Mihail Ralea. Another author interesting in elaborating a Romanian ontological model in the interwar years was Mircea Vulcănescu, and the most representative and best-known author of the national ontology, who encapsulated the nation in the so-called *stylistic matrix*, was Lucian Blaga. The reflections on the national specificity are, in this period, focused on *how Romanians are* and *why they are the way they are*. The inventory of traits, the promotion of certain symbols (*'mioritic space'*), and the allegorical descriptions as parodies of contemporary theories of the national specificity, all these are ways in which the Romanian national character was outlined in the most prolific and productive stage, the interwar years.

**Keywords:** self-image, interwar period, Romania, national identity, *Völkerpsychologie*

**Rezumat:** *Imaginea de sine a românilor în perioada interbelică.* În perioada interbelică, un număr important de autori au investigat identitatea în termenii caracterului național și a ceea ce ne definește din acest punct de vedere. Primul autor analizat este Dumitru Drăghicescu, dar specificul național a fost de asemenea un concept-cheie în opera lui Mihail Ralea. Alt autor din perioada interbelică interesat în elaborarea unui model ontologic românesc a fost Mircea Vulcănescu, iar cel mai reprezentativ și mai bine cunoscut autor al unei ontologii naționale, care definește națiunea în termenii așa-numitei *matrici stilistice*, a fost Lucian Blaga. Reflecțiile cu privire la specificul național au fost orientate, în această perioadă, asupra întrebărilor: *cum sunt românii?* și *de ce sunt ei așa*

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*cum sunt?* Inventarierea trăsăturilor, promovarea anumitor simboluri (de exemplu *spațiul mioritic*) sau descrierile alegorice și parodiile la adresa teoriilor referitoare la specificul național – toate acestea au fost modalități prin care caracterul național al românilor a fost conturat în anii interbelici, cea mai prolifică perioadă din istoria acestui tip de auto-reflecție identitară.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** imagine de sine, perioada interbelică, România, identitate națională, *Völkerpsychologie*

The a-historical turn and the definition of national specificity in atemporal terms become evident once with the establishment of the Romanian national unitary state in December 1918. This is the most prolific period, when a number of authors investigated identity in terms of character (how we are) and what define us from this point of view. The main challenge was to create a major culture in a state where the peasantry formed the majority of the population. *Völkerpsychologie*, one of the influential methods of psychology, has been applied in the Romanian area as well. The most sophisticated application of *Völkerpsychologie* method can be found in Dumitru Drăghicescu's work. In the second chapter of his major work, titled *Din psihologia poporului român* [On the Psychology of the Romanian People]<sup>1</sup>, the author focuses on the factors that influence the psychology of Romanians, concluding that in this case the primordial factors are the historical-social ones which surpass the physical ones. Relations with neighbours, political institutions, social and economic institutions are much more important than race, climate and geographical configuration. As a result, what is acquired matters more than what is given<sup>2</sup>.

In analysing the first category, Drăghicescu argues that the Romanian soul is the result of a mixture of peoples that have contributed to its delineation in various ways. The Scythians, Gaetes, Dacians, Romans, Greeks, Gauls, Illyrians, Huns, Avars, Slavs, Gepids, Marcomans, Pechenegs, Hungarians, Kumanians, Turks, Tatars, modern Greeks, Russians and French, all left their mark<sup>3</sup>. Then, by using a deconstructionist approach, Drăghicescu analyses the character traits of the aforementioned peoples in order to establish precisely which of their traits became ingrained into the Romanian soul. Thus, he argues that

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<sup>1</sup> D. Drăghicescu, *Din psihologia poporului român* (București: Alcalay, 1907).

<sup>2</sup> Idem, *Din psihologia poporului român* (București: Albatros, 2003), p. 98.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 111.

while at the time when the Romanian principalities were established and were breaking free from foreign influence the Romanian soul was characterized by a 'strong and unwavering will that was also violent but prudent at the same time' and by 'a simple yet vigorous and systematic intelligence, and a vivid imagination nourished by a very deep religious sentiment'<sup>4</sup>, when the principalities came under Ottoman influence it was altered and its character changed. Drăghicescu further claims that the psychological consequences of this historical event were: 'the loss of positive traits, the destruction of the will and independence of the Romanian people, the sale of Romanian thrones to the highest bidder, and a quick succession of princes'<sup>5</sup>. Finally, he adds that the impact of modern Greeks on Romanians was also negative: 'the country's impoverishment and plunder, the despoliation and confiscation of Romanian fields, the plunge of Romanians into destitution'<sup>6</sup>.

The portrait outlined by Drăghicescu is essentially positive, although the oriental influence of the peoples in this group and of other peoples with whom they came into contact was negative. In analysing the spiritual traits of the Romanian people in the interwar period, Drăghicescu highlights that they were certainly a work in progress. Apart from this feature, he also mentions its 'peaceful wisdom'.

Other characteristics of Romanians that derive from contact with otherness and are relevant to the overall portrait are: repulsion towards the foreigner (well-known and explained again through historical factors) that can sometimes reach pathological levels, and, conversely, sociability in relation to their compatriots, argued from a historical perspective through the vicissitudes that they underwent together and that were decisive for the unity of all Romanians. The negative traits of Romanians, evident at first glance, are supplemented and essentialised in the expression: 'Western race with Eastern customs'. An overall appraisal of Drăghicescu's work reveals his intention to connect the Romanians' character flaws with their historical traumas. Character, from this perspective, is a historical product: events condition *the psyche*, and history creates social traits<sup>7</sup>.

In outlining the social psychology of the Romanians, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, another important author of the interwar years,

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 206.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 218.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 256.

<sup>7</sup> Balázs Trencsényi, *The Politics of „National Character”: A study in interwar East European thought* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 31.

argues that their traits are conditioned by three main factors: the biological and hereditary background, geographical factors, and institutional character acquired throughout history<sup>8</sup>. In the author's view, the traits of Romanians which 'are evident at first glance' are individualism and lack of perseverance in finishing what they started. Individualism is translated by the solitary character of Romanians who dislike company. Further, Rădulescu-Motru explains that Romanian individualism is only potentially positive in comparison with Western individualism that implies economic initiative as well as political and social independence which firmly place it in the category of positive features.

Lack of education is responsible for the moderation of the traits, for their imperfection and weakness, while indolence is considered the source of many ills of the Romanian nation. Rădulescu-Motru lists the major defects of the Romanians who are undisciplined and sloppy, and have a habit of working 'now and then', with many rest periods, but he evens the balance by listing a number of qualities such as tolerance, hospitality, love of justice, and religiousness<sup>9</sup>. Most of the Romanians' defects are linked to their actions, while most of their qualities, such as love of justice and freedom as well as religiousness, are linked to their character.

Finally, Rădulescu-Motru demonstrates a great deal of lucidity when he argues that in the interwar years, despite the favourable geographical and political circumstances, Romanians were going through a crisis, which constituted, in fact, another mitigating circumstance.

In the interwar years, national specificity was also a key concept in the work of Mihail Ralea. In his book *Fenomenul românesc* [The Romanian Phenomenon], published in 1927, he emphasizes its non-unitary character in the Romanian-inhabited areas due to the different influences: Moldavian Romanians are influenced by Russians and Turks, while Transylvanian Romanians are influenced by Hungarians<sup>10</sup>. He further argues that differences in national specificity can also be detected depending on the landforms they inhabited and on the living environment (urban or rural context). According to Ralea, adaptability is the main attribute of Romanians, essential for survival in difficult historical conditions. He identifies radical scepticism (as inferiority complex), megalomania (as superiority complex expressed through nationalistic and

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<sup>8</sup> Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *Psihologia poporului român* (București: Paideia, 1998), p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 16.

<sup>10</sup> Vezi ediția Constantin Schifirneț, Mihai Ralea, *Fenomenul românesc* (București: Albatros, 1997).

cultural demagogy), lower creative imagination (as surface), clear and common-sense intelligence that excludes naivety. Ralea believes that a change in cultural practices would ultimately improve the Romanian soul, and concludes by advocating for critical thought and empathy<sup>11</sup>. Finally, in his point of view, the nation is conceptualized as a product of modernity, thus being an invention of the French Revolution.

Another author interesting in elaborating a Romanian ontological model in the interwar years is Mircea Vulcănescu (1904-1952) who investigated the Romanian national specificity in two books: *Omul românesc* [The Romanian Man] (1937) and *Dimensiunea românească a existenței* [The Romanian Dimension of Existence] (1943). Vulcănescu theorizes identity mainly in metaphysical terms. To characterize the Romanians, he identifies certain temptations that can be activated at different times in history. Temptations can be defined as challenges, temptations to exist in a certain way<sup>12</sup>. As a fundamental temptation, Vulcănescu identifies opposition, that is the Romanians' ability to stand against almost anything. However, he argues that denial does not refer to existence but to the essence (a mode of existence). He further claims that among Romanians the potential (depth profile) and actuality (surface profile) are perceived as being unitary. What has not yet become actual, according to Vulcănescu, is not lost but remains to be activated as a potentiality at the right moments. From here, Vulcănescu identifies a number of other attributes: there is no non-being (as being and potentiality are not clearly separated), no absolute impossibility, no alternative, no imperative and no irreversibility, life is taken lightly (the mixture of actual and potential defines life) and there is no fear of death (there is no non-being in the Romanians' conception)<sup>13</sup>. In appraising Vulcănescu's work, we can identify at least two defining features: his a-historical understanding of the nation and his profound Romanianism.

The four authors presented above employ classic approaches to the psychology of the Romanian people, such as *Völkerpsychologie*, for instance. Nonetheless, they present a number of limitations, including the *post-factum* justification of stereotypes and clichés, a lack of methodological rigour, and the excessive use of the inductive method. In spite of these

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<sup>11</sup> Daniel David, *Psihologia poporului român. Profilul psihologic al românilor într-o monografie cognitiv-experimentală* (Iași: Polirom, 2015), p. 40-41.

<sup>12</sup> Roberto Merlo, „«Ispita» lui Mircea Vulcănescu sau căutarea de sine între identitate și alteritate”, in Viorel Cernica (ed.), *Studii de istorie a filosofiei românești. VIII: Mircea Vulcănescu* (București: Editura Academiei, 2012), p. 37.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel David, *op. cit.*, p. 41-42.

limitations, their works remain among the most relevant approaches of this kind, written in the interwar years.

The most representative and best-known author of the national ontology, who encapsulated the nation in the so-called *stylistic matrix*, is Lucian Blaga. He became a symbol of defining Romanian identity after coining the expression '*mioritic space*'. Undoubtedly, the main purpose of his work was to create of a 'major culture' whose foundation is the existence of the village<sup>14</sup>. The Romanian cultural space is, in Blaga's view, a '*topos*' defined as a '*mioritic space*': 'Let us call this matrix-space, tall and indefinitely undulated and endowed with the specific accents of a certain feeling of destiny: mioritic space'<sup>15</sup>. Blaga's *topos* includes the '*plai*' that stands for nothing more than the alternation between mountains and hills covered in orchards, and appears especially in the folk ballad *Miorița*. However, the '*plai*' has other stylistic connotations as well. It is a spatial horizon specific to the Romanian culture, an 'infinite indefinite horizon' of valleys and hills that form the spiritual substratum of the anonymous creation of the Romanian folk culture<sup>16</sup>. The '*mioritic space*' is, therefore, the quintessential space of the nation's being, and folklore, on the other hand, is the highest expression of our ethnic substratum. A thorough analysis of Blaga's work from the perspective of national specificity reveals certain paradoxical features: while, at a superficial level, Blaga opposed the normative image that dominated the delimitation of national specificity until his time, at a deeper level he praised national features as cultural roots<sup>17</sup>.

A special approach in the shape of a parable / allegory, with notes of self-irony and sarcasm, belongs to Stefan Zeletin. His book *Din Țara Măgarilor. Însemnări*. [From the Land of Donkeys. Notes.] is a critical radiography of the Romanian society at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The narrative of the allegory suggests that the 'land of donkeys' is no other than the land of Romanians, a distorted country described in detail by a 'narrator' imagined as a missionary sent by the gods to write a report.

The 'Land of Donkeys' is a land of contrasts, of superficial existence with no depth: village donkeys are different from city donkeys, the major difference between them being that city donkeys display their donkeyness ostentatiously, while village donkeys display it in its brute

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<sup>14</sup> Balázs Trencsényi, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

<sup>15</sup> Lucian Blaga, *Spațiul mioritic* (București: Humanitas, 1994), p. 17.

<sup>16</sup> Keith Hitchins, *The identity of Romania* (Bucharest: The Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 2009), p. 212.

<sup>17</sup> Balázs Trencsényi, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

form<sup>18</sup>. Two other antagonistic categories are the *străinofili* (foreigner-worshipping humanists that borrow from the West all the shiny forms without the substance) and the *măgarofili* (the pro-donkey hostile to any change and favourable to the preservation of traditions). The 'Land of the Donkeys' is the land of chaos: the village is the space of suffocating inner and outer misery, of undisguised and grossly-displayed misery, while in the city everything is but a facade, inner misery being defining. The houses of village donkeys remind of stables, or worse<sup>19</sup>, village donkeys being 'hairy, shaggy, fluffy like any behemoth' and feeding on onions and garlic as well as *polenta* (one can note how the image of degraded beings that live in an amorphous space is outlined, which is, however, the image of authentic donkeys that do not attempt to hide their donkeyness in a hypocritical manner). Conversely, the houses of city donkeys are livelier and brighter, and light dominates the life of the city adorned with many entertainment facilities and especially street cars and officers (however, this space is inhabited by donkeys shiny on the outside but rotten on the inside; it is a space of forms without substance, of inauthenticity). Practically, another world where you are hit by *dolce far niente*, where no one knows exactly how the donkeys earn their own livelihood.

In the 'Land of Donkeys', culture is merely a 'superficial gloss that conceals the inner donkeyness'<sup>20</sup>, character is essentialized in the expression *tip for pleasure*, and justice and morals are almost non-existent. A world turned upside-down, where the fundamental principle of existence is the precipice between facts and words. Donkey patriotism has one value, that of counterfeiting, and is meant to provide a superficial gloss to the nation. The text is one of the most insightful reflections on the Romanian national specificity where not metaphysics is central, but everyday reality in its pure misery.

It is clear that the reflections on the national specificity are, in this period, focused on *how Romanians are* and *why they are the way they are*. The inventory of traits, the promotion of certain symbols ('*mioritic space*'), and the allegorical descriptions as parodies of contemporary theories of the national specificity, all these are ways in which the Romanian national character was outlined in the most prolific and productive stage – the interwar years – that remained a true point of reference from this perspective.

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<sup>18</sup> Ștefan Zeletin, *Din țara măgarilor* (București: Nemira, 2006), p. 42.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 34.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 52.

# Death as an Occasion to Celebrate Life. Commemorative Speeches at Funerals of Sibiu Personalities in the Interwar Period\*

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**Abstract:** *Death as an Occasion to Celebrate Life. Commemorative Speeches at Funerals of Sibiu Personalities in the Interwar Period.* The aim of this study is to unveil the emotional topographies stirred by burials of Sibiu personalities as they appear in memorial speeches and articles published in the interwar press of Sibiu. Following the research direction opened by Lucien Febvre we highlight the employed discursive strategies and techniques to trigger public's emotion and sense of loss. The interwar press reports conferred a bigger dimension to leaders' funerals, fuelling the collective emotion. Our case studies focus on the rhetoric of death at the burial of Saxon personalities Adolf Schullerus (1864-1928), Carl Wolff (1849-1929) and Friedrich Teutsch (1852-1933). Referring to some attitudes of public opinion in Transylvania we offer some details on the eulogies of some personalities involved in the emancipation process of Transylvanian Romanians, such as I. G. Duca and Vasile Goldiș.

**Keywords:** commemorative speeches, funerals of personalities, Saxon and Romanian funeral discourses, interwar press of Sibiu, leader's death

**Rezumat:** *Moartea ca ocazie de a celebra viața. Discursuri funebre la înmormân-tările personalităților din Sibiu în perioada interbelică.* În acest studiu ne propunem să evidențiem topografiile emoționale configurate de înmormântările personalităților Sibiului, așa cum apar în discursurile funerare și articolele publicate în presa interbelică din Sibiu. Urmând direcția de cercetare deschisă de Lucien Febvre, subliniem strategiile și tehnicile discursive folosite pentru a avea impact asupra emoțiilor publicului. Relatările din presa vremii confereau o dimensiune semnificativă funeraliilor personalităților, alimentând emoția colectivă. Studiile noastre de caz se focalizează asupra retoricii morții la înmormântarea personalităților săsești Adolf Schullerus (1864-1928), Carl

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Wolff (1849-1929) și Friedrich Teutsch (1852-1933). În subsidiar, ne referim și la atitudini ale opiniei publice românești, așa cum apar în necroloagele și discursurile funebre ocazionate de moartea lui I. G. Duca și Vasile Goldiș, personalități implicate în procesul de emancipare a românilor transilvăneni.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** discursuri comemorative, funeraliile personalităților, discursuri funerare ale sașilor și românilor, presa interbelică din Sibiu, moartea liderului

### **Death and Emotion. The Interwar Press of Sibiu – Perceiving Leader’s Death. General Considerations**

In western historiography, history of feelings and emotions is a consecrated area of research. It was reclaimed by the need of rendering the history of affective life, according to the project launched by Lucien Febvre. From the appeal of the great French historian the studies in this area multiplied the emotional topographies. The most frequent approaches have been related to the feeling of the fear of the “Other”, nostalgia and love as human phenomenon historically determined. It is evident that death as a natural phenomenon has its own history. This study tackles a thematic micro-segment, attempting to analyse the way in which death of the “Other”, the leader, is reflected in the press, generating complex emotions. Death of personalities generates also the phenomenon of reconstructing their image in a positive manner mostly in order to integrate them in the identity pantheon.

Death of the local and national elite was mentioned in the daily press of Sibiu, while their funerals were described. These articles were most of the times long editorials, with thorough descriptions of the burial and collective grief. Usually such articles were the result of editing notes from the central press or local journalists who were present at the funerals of national personalities (we refer especially to the funeral of the King Ferdinand I of Romania and of Ion I. C. Brătianu<sup>1</sup>).

Thus, the newspaper *Telegraful Român* dedicated two issues to the moment of King Ferdinand I’s death and funeral. The issue of 22 July 1927 announced the passing of King Ferdinand. This event was described in the same manner as in national newspapers, presenting biographical notes, the last moments in the king’s life and evaluation of

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<sup>1</sup> Alexandru Nicolaescu, *Funerariile lui Ion. I. C. Brătianu, un model de organizare a funeraliilor naționale*, in Crucița-Loredana Baciu, Anamaria Macavei, Roxana Dorina Pop (eds.), *De la lume adunate*, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2011, pp. 117-128.

his political life etc.<sup>2</sup> Information about this event was introduced in the subsequent issues regarding Ferdinand I's will<sup>3</sup>, the proclamation of the new king<sup>4</sup>, king's letter to Ionel Brătianu<sup>5</sup>, the program of national funerals<sup>6</sup>, Parliament's sessions<sup>7</sup>, proclamation of Regency<sup>8</sup>. Moreover, the local press presented the special service that took place "in the Cathedral of Sibiu where countless people gathered on Sunday, on the day of King Ferdinand I's burial. The divine service and solemn requiem was performed by the Archimandrite Dr. Vasile Stan, assisted by the clergy from the centre. At the event were present: Officer Corps with General Găvănescu and representatives of civil authorities, magistrates, teachers and numerous people. At the end of the solemn requiem, Archimandrite Dr. Vasile Stan held the eulogy of the august Sovereign who embodied royalty in its genuine conception. A canon marked the moment when the royal train departed in Bucharest. The solemn pause of two minutes produced a profound impression. The choir ended with "Memory Eternal" thrice, while the military music and the canons announced the profound honour for the Sovereign's last journey. From 5-6 o'clock the bells of the Cathedral, together with the bells of other churches of Sibiu honoured the Great deceased of the country<sup>9</sup>.

These reports were clearly conferring a bigger dimension to the funerary moment, fuelling the collective emotion. Romanian citizens had to perceive the dimension of the loss and to fortify the new national solidarity. Articles of the Sibiu's press focused on describing the scenario of funerals, presenting obituaries that oscillated between the tradition *oratio funebris* and a succession of acclamatory appreciations that in some cases transformed the deceased's flaws in attitudes that reflected his humanity.

Such writings enriched the commemorative culture, which was powerful in pre-modernity in Transylvania and in the Romanian state of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Especially starting with the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, descriptions of funerals became influential and intensely used in

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<sup>2</sup> *Regele Ferdinand Întâiul*, in *Telegraful Român*, LXXV, no. 53-54, 22 July 1927.

<sup>3</sup> *Testamentul Regelui Ferdinand*, in *Telegraful Român*, LXXV, no. 55-56, 29 July 1927.

<sup>4</sup> *M. S. Regele Mihai I*, in *Telegraful Român*, LXXV, no. 55-56, 29 July 1927.

<sup>5</sup> *Scrisoarea M. S. Regelui Ferdinand către dl Ion I.C. Brătianu*, in *Telegraful Român*, LXXV, no. 55-56, 29 July 1927.

<sup>6</sup> *Funeraliile Regelui Ferdinand I*, in *Telegraful Român*, LXXV, no. 55-56, 29 July 1927.

<sup>7</sup> *Ședințele solemne ale Corpurilor legiuitoare*, in *Telegraful Român*, LXXV, no. 55-56, 29 July 1927.

<sup>8</sup> *Proclamația Regenței*, in *Telegraful Român*, LXXV, no. 55-56, 29 July 1927.

<sup>9</sup> *Duminica de jale*, in *Telegraful Român*, LXXV, no. 55-56, 29 July 1927.

public practice, being mostly political. In modernity, there was a shift from private rituals to public ones, as politicians needed political capital given by interaction with the crowds. This culture has been linked in the interwar period with the constitution of the Pantheon of the Great Romania, as well as with building identity mythologies of minorities, linked to elections and affirmation of national feelings. Moreover, the interwar period was the age of confirming and fortifying the local and national collective identity and political legitimacy. At the same time, presenting the funerals of personalities and eulogies evades death. It seems a paradox, but there is a complex mentality mechanism which we are attempting to decipher, with the help of consecrated studies in the area.

Thus, “a hero is buried, but at the same time, the funerals restore loyalty towards him, the value of the deceased being revealed by the number of people who feel vulnerable because of this disappearance.”<sup>10</sup> The funeral procession stages death not to consecrate its triumph, but as a solution to make permanent the relationship with the deceased.<sup>11</sup> Romanian traditional scenography of death is characterized by the open coffin, kissing the coffin or the dead’s hand, priests, boiled wheat, while the civic ceremony is represented by wreaths, black flags, military guard, black clothes, brass band, firing the canon, discourses, portrait of the deceased, commemorative medals<sup>12</sup>. The honoured deceased on the interment day is not a person, but not waste either: he becomes an ideal for community for several hours<sup>13</sup>. That is a representative body (even if it is absent<sup>14</sup> or it is an exhumation and re-interment). It is therefore treated as an artefact. Afterwards, the tomb of the deceased (if he stays in the identity Pantheon) becomes a place of memory<sup>15</sup>.

The pathos and lamentation are inherent to the funeral context, as the passing of a personality is a loss never fully recognized, only transformed<sup>16</sup>. Commemorative articles are therefore focused on stimulating the emotion: adulation, the exaggerated feeling of loss, even

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<sup>10</sup> Andi Mihalache, *Rituri funerare și retorici patrimoniale: înmormântarea lui Alexandru Ioan Cuza*, in *Xenopoliana*, XIV, 1-4, 2006, pp. 76-108.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 90.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 94.

<sup>14</sup> On ceremonies in the absence of human remains, see Andi Mihalache, *Mihai Viteazul și ceremoniile corpului absent*, in *Caiete de antropologie istorică*, January-July 2005, pp. 167-192.

<sup>15</sup> See the Hungarian commemorative culture.

<sup>16</sup> Andi Mihalache, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

the sentiment of collective catastrophe. Death of the personality generates vulnerability of the people and compassion, as well as anxiety concerning the destiny of collectivity. Although many people who were attending a funeral did not share the same religious convictions and political opinions, but they co-participated to a public act of adherence<sup>17</sup>. Besides, the living recompose the past of the dead, appealing to recent memory and finding their own past, reliving events of the common history<sup>18</sup>. Thus, the funeral rite accomplishes a renewal of collectivity, as the dead appears as a protective hero, role model and symbol of cohesion of the group<sup>19</sup>. In fact, rituals of death have one recipient – the living; the function of ceremonies is the one to comfort and revitalize<sup>20</sup> the living. Furthermore, the ritual, political and symbolic dimension ensured by the involvement in funerals of the personality of his colleagues transforms death into a public event. This event has the aim to transmit information and convictions<sup>21</sup>. Thus, death becomes a pretext for achieving balance of the era<sup>22</sup>.

### **“Rhetoric of Death” in the Eulogies of Saxon Personalities. Case Studies**

In our opinion, the most significant element is the commemorative speech in Saxon funerals. This rhetoric exercise has tradition and combines homiletics with eulogy. Such a commemorative speech, traditional in European culture<sup>23</sup>, is representative for the manner in which the Saxon community honoured its leaders. Only cultural and political involvements could ensure the Saxons the preservation of their identity in the institutional frame created by the Great Union of

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 100.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 106.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 76.

<sup>21</sup> Mihai Chiper, *Rolul funeraliilor în construcția panteonului pașoptist*, in *Xenopoliana*, XIV, no. 1-4, Iași, 2006, p. 61.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 65.

<sup>23</sup> *Oratio Funebris: Die Katholische Leichenpredigt der Frühen Neuzeit: Zwölf Studien: Mit Einem Katalog Deutschsprachiger Katholischer Leichenpredigten in Einzeldrucken 1576-1799 aus den Beständen der Stiftsbibliothek Klosterneuburg und der Universitätsbibliothek Eichst*, Rodopi, 1999; Adrianus, *Oratio funebris de laudibus Caroli VI. Augustissimi Romanorum imperatoris, Hispaniae, Hungariae, Bohemiae regis, archiducis Austriae, &c. &c.: cum ... , 1741*; J. P. Correa de Silva, *Director funebre reformado ... Com o proprio Canto ... segundo o Ritual Romano ... Obra ... que compoz Fr. Verissimo dos Martyres ... Sexta impressão ... acrescentada por Fr. F. de J. M. Sarmiento, 1799* (accessed on 10.07.2015).

Romanians<sup>24</sup>. Personalities that illustrated this identity movement have been perceived with deep gratitude by the Saxon community. Such a perception manifested especially in the case of obituaries<sup>25</sup> at public funerary ceremonies of German prominent representatives of Transylvania.

After 1918, Sibiu has become a cultural centre for Germans of Romania. Cultural events supported by German important cultural personalities have characterized the interwar Sibiu. The most important leaders of the German community were also cultural, spiritual and political leaders. Obituary was the way to evaluate the significance of personalities' activity referring to the cultural/spiritual legacy left to his community. We intend to reveal the manner in which were commemorated three personalities of German community of Transylvania: Adolf Schullerus (1864-1928)<sup>26</sup>, Carl Wolff (1849-1929) and Friedrich Teutsch (1852-1933).

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<sup>24</sup> Saxon representatives knew how to use regulations regarding the possibilities for affirming cultural life of Romanian citizens. This issue concerning the rights of ethnic minorities have occupied a central place in discussions of the Saxon leaders of the Governing Council in December 1918. It seems that the high cultural level of the Saxons (compared to other inhabitants of Transylvania and the entire Romania) had a significant role in adopting the adhesion decision to Unification - Vasile Ciobanu, *Contribuții la cunoașterea istoriei sașilor transilvăneni 1918-1944*, Hora, Sibiu, 2001, p. 265.

<sup>25</sup> Obituary is a funeral discourse in which moral qualities and social value of a recently deceased person are pointed out. When the praises to the dead are exaggerated, the discourse is named panegyric, a title taken from discourses held by ancient Greeks and Romans.

<sup>26</sup> Adolf Schullerus was born on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March 1864, in Făgăraș, as son of the priest Gustav Adolf Schullerus. He started his studies in Sibiu and then continued at the Berna and Leipzig universities, where he studied Germanistics, philosophy, theology and pedagogy. Adolf Schullerus followed the career of his father, becoming priest and then bishop's vicar. He became vicar of Sibiu in 1907, being involved intensely in the cultural life of the Saxon community. That is why in 1918, at the end of the First World War, he was considered the leader of the so-called "green" group that supported the defence of the Saxon community and affirmation of political rights of the German minority. He supported this direction as president of the German-Saxon National Council, involved in the integrating process of Saxons in the new political configuration realized in 1918 by Transylvania's unification with Romania. Adolf Schullerus was involved in the meetings of Saxon representatives with the Governing Council, issuing the proclamation *An unser Volk!*, signed by Adolf Schullerus and Hans Otto Roth as representatives of the German-Saxon National Council. Aside from his political activity, Schullerus contributed to the pedagogical, linguistic and historiographical development, along with Andreas Scheiner, Gustav Kisch. He edited new textbooks for his pupils and tried to elucidate Saxons' origins

These obituaries of personalities emphasize the community/national achievements of the dead. Thus, at the funeral of Adolf Schullerus, the speeches of important Saxon cultural representatives insisted on gratitude of the community. Adolf Schullerus, one of the most prominent Saxon personalities of the interwar period was devoted to his community. This attitude was visible in a series of political, scientific and spiritual-cultural actions and working power<sup>27</sup>, contributing to the affirmation of the Saxon community. Even years after his death, newspapers published appreciations for his activity. Journal issues and anthologies with commemorative function were published. Speeches and prayers of Friedrich Teutsch concerning the memory of Adolf Schullerus are remarkable:

“When he felt that the end was near, he said goodbye to his family and gave recommendations for the future. He wrote to a very sick friend earlier: «These are the days when we have to part. It is difficult to separate from life, work, and especially from love. As you see, I leave peacefully.» He died at noon, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January, after long suffering. The people and the church were gravely affected and will weep for a long time, as his passing left a void that will never be filled up again.”<sup>28</sup>

Teutsch considered the deceased vicar a wise and generous man, a blessing, a guide and a role model for the “Saxon people”. With gratitude for the one who guided Transylvanian Saxons in difficult moments, Saxons thanked him and prayed for him. Such pious attitudes and emotions were expressed at the funeral of Adolf Schullerus. The most remarkable were the speeches of Friedrich Teutsch, the Saxon Bishop, and Johannes Reichart, the dean of the region. Teutsch’s discourse<sup>29</sup> was filled with expressions to manifest modern solidarities.

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by studying dialects. A. Schullerus was also the main initiator of the Dictionary of Saxon Dialects. He was also interested in the ethnographic and folklore areas, publishing a compendium of Saxon Transylvanian ethnography in 1926. In 1925, Schullerus also published 85 Romanian fairy tales of Transylvania, together with Franz Obert. Another book was published posthumously, in 1930 – *Cartea poveștilor din Transilvania*, appreciated to this day as the most important book of A. Schullerus (see Carl Göllner, *Adolf Schullerus. Sein Leben und Wirken in Wort und Bild*, București, Kriterion, 1986).

<sup>27</sup> The Romanian eulogy also mentions his “working power”.

<sup>28</sup> Friedrich Teutsch, *Denkrede auf Adolf Schullerus*, Hermannstadt, Druck der Krafft & Drotleff A.G., 1931, p. 80.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 80 sq.

The appeal to Evangelical homiletics and eulogy of personality (traditional in European space since the 16<sup>th</sup> century) helped building the “multiple” personality of Schullerus. The aforementioned text uses traditional collocations, imagery of death. The image of soul’s “abduction” by the “angel of death” is powerful in Teusch’s discourse, an image especially found in cemeteries from the 19<sup>th</sup> century (the Christian version of Thanatos is represented on wooden panels above the crypts). The discourse shifts from the religious/spiritual to the secular by mentioning that the deceased was a gift from heaven, thus being perceived through the lenses of his contribution to community. At that point, Schullerus is pictured as a “child of light”; then narrative sequence follows preoccupied with deceased’s biography. The chronologic criteria structures the discourse, highlighting the main achievements of Schullerus, his role in preserving and defining the essential element of Saxon identity, as well as his political involvement in the difficult Romanian background during the first decade after the 1<sup>st</sup> December 1918. Such a civic dedication recommends Schullerus as an exemplary personality, spiritual role model for the Saxon community. The bishop accomplished the complete portrait of the deceased by emphasizing his qualities.

Carl Wolff’s dynamic and complex personality was also described in eulogistic terms. A commemorative speech stated that “this man was undoubtedly one of the most important of Transylvanian Saxons.”<sup>30</sup> His activity related to modernizing the city of Sibiu was mentioned<sup>31</sup>. His faith in Transylvanian cohabitation based on respecting the civil rights was combined with pan-Germanism, as it was manifested in his editorials in Sibiu’s *Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt*.

Carl Wolff passed away on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 1929, just before his 80 years. Appreciations and gratitude uttered at his funeral prove how members of the Sibiu’s elite valued his public activity. Bishop Teusch

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<sup>30</sup> *Taten und Gestalten. Bilderaus der Vergangenheit der Rumäniendeutschen*, II. Band, besorgt und eingeleitet von Dieter Drotleff, hora Verlag, Hermannstadt, 2002, p. 106.

<sup>31</sup> Born in Sighișoara, Carl Wolff studied chemistry at the University of Vienna, but after several weeks he gave up and followed the Law courses in Vienna. His first contact with the press goes back to that period; then, starting of 1 January 1874 he became the chief editor of the newspaper *Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Tageblatt* of Sibiu, replacing the newspaper *Siebenbürgisch-Deutsches Wochenblatt*. He was an influential personality in political and economic area, being the founder of cooperative Raiffeisen and of the General House of Economies in Sibiu. His name is also linked to railways and Sibiu’s electrification. See A. Ungar, N. Nistor, *Carl Wolff. Sein Leben und Wirken in Wort und Bild*, București, 1981.

expressed the fact that Wolff achieved a lot during his life, stating that the dead “should be decried and not mourned.” Wolff was also considered “a gift, a blessing” for the Saxon identity, an exceptional leader and epitome of the ethos of work, a dynamic, charismatic leader preoccupied with affirmation of German rights in the thorny period in Europe during the First World War. Carl Wolff was a devoted leader, as the commemorative discourses reveal. He stated in the preface of his works: “Since childhood to old age the aim of my thoughts, hopes and my work has belonged to the people where I was born [...].”<sup>32</sup>

We may say that Friedrich Teutsch was one the most noteworthy personalities of the Saxon history<sup>33</sup>. Due to his fundamental contributions concerning the Saxon history, he deserves the name of “Herodotus of Saxons.”<sup>34</sup> Priest, then bishop, F. Teutsch had numerous speeches to burials of Sibiu’s personalities, where he proved his talent as orator. But inevitably, it was the case for other Saxon personalities to talk at his funeral. The new Bishop Dr. Viktor Glondys had an impressive discourse at the Evangelical Church of Sibiu, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 1933, at Friedrich Teutsch’s funeral:

“«Be faithful to death and I shall give you the crown of life!»  
Near you, honoured believers, who came here to say goodbye to a good and faithful father, beloved brother, there is a huge saddened crowd that shares your pain [...]. In all communities of the vast land of our church, bells are singing in this hour; near the Transylvanian Saxons that say goodbye to their ruler, are the Evangelic brothers of Banat, Bucovina and Bessarabia, of Dobrudja and the Old Kingdom [...]. Everyone thanks him. He cared about everyone in his long years of work. But especially our county is surrounded by grief. The name of Friedrich Teutsch is a symbol recognized beyond our people and

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<sup>32</sup> Dr. Karl Wolff, *Aus meinem Leben*, 1. Band, Verlag der Bildungsstätte deutscher Volkheit, Lauban, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> The son of Georg Daniel Teutsch, Friedrich Teutsch graduated from the Academy of Law in Sibiu, then studied in Heidelberg, Leipzig and Berlin. Coming back to Sibiu in 1875, he started his career as teacher of history, then becoming priest, and bishop of Saxons. He also proved his talent as historian, inherited from his father, publishing countless historical studies and articles, books of utmost importance and special value as *Geschichte der evangelische Kirche* (2 volumes), and especially 3 volumes of *Geschichte der Siebenbürger Sachsen*. By this, he continued the tradition established by his father. He was doctor of several universities and member of honour of the Romanian Academy since 1919.

<sup>34</sup> Eduard Eisenburger, *Friedrich Teutsch*, in *Taten und Gestalten. Bilderaus der Vergangenheit der Rumäniendeutschen*, II. Band, hora Verlag, Hermannstadt, 2002, p. 116.

church. He was regarded as a prominent representative of Evangelical Germans and Saxon nation. Starting with his care for the people, he stirred respect and love in many hearts. This is not only due to the spiritual significance of this man and his scientific work, but also due to his rhetoric talent and very important role as a ruler. The motives are far more profound. Friedrich Teutsch has been a representative of the German Protestantism, his star was the brightest of all. The bishop Teutsch was devoted to his duty till his death, till the limit of his capacity [...]. Duty was the one that kept him awake over his working desk in the night. Duty was the one that called him till the latest years of his life in remote towns and villages. The call of duty characterized him and offered him the richness of the sense of biblical words according to which our life is beautiful if there is work. But to whom did he serve with this full of devotion work? A second star would lighten up if we would hear the answer he would give us: to my people! He cannot talk to us, but his life could tell us that: «Be faithful to death and I shall give you the crown of life!» Bishop Friedrich Teutsch had been faithful to his people till death. This love of his was no feeble sentiment, but a feeling that could be expressed with all his power to encourage those whom he loved. [...]. His soul is peaceful, because it belongs to God. He stays confident in the storm of life and accepts fate as a duty that has to be fulfilled toward God. This is valid for every man and for the entire people. It is valid for us, too! «I shall give you the crown of life!» [...]. We, those who gathered here today to stay beside him for the last time, shall not leave until we receive the blessing of the eternal and honourable bishop F. Teutsch, whose life was a calling to faith till death for which God promises the crown of life. Amen.”<sup>35</sup>

Commemorative speeches were also held in the private space. Dr. Arnold Bruckner uttered a discourse at the Teutsch family residence, on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 1933, convincing that Friedrich Teutsch was an exceptional man who accomplished his mission:

“All of us became poorer. One page in the history of our people and history, one page full of glory and success, where your name is on the first place, contains now a black cross. One page is turned now and with you an entire era of which we’ve been proud. But you were not only a faithful pastor for hundreds of fellow countrymen, you were not only feeling, fearing and rejoicing for millions of brothers, but your special spirit and your warm heart

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<sup>35</sup> Glondys, *Redebei der Beerdigung des Bischofs D. Dr. Friedrich Teutsch am 14. Februar 1933 in der evangelischen Stadtpfarrkirche in Hermannstadt*, in *Kirchliche Blätter*, XXV Jahrgang, No. 8, 23 February 1933, pp. 82-84. Translated by Ada Grenner.

overcame these borders so that we would be forever indebted to you."<sup>36</sup>

Indeed, Friedrich Teutsch stood for his people. As historian, he knew very well the history of Saxons with all their privileges and ascension, as well as their imposed limits over time. His conclusion was relevant: "The fight for the civic rights was in fact the entire history of Saxons."<sup>37</sup>

Speeches at a person's funeral are a customary thing and became a tradition. Saxons, known for respecting traditions, kept this one as well regardless of material or status aspects. Everyone benefited of such a "funerary service". The interwar period is no exception. Unlike an average man, for whom the priest uttered a speech before the burial, in the case of an important personality, the event was much more elaborated. In the aforementioned three personalities' funerals, the discourses were held at the Evangelical Church, a privilege only for the Saxon elite. There were several eulogies uttered. Anyone who was close to the deceased could have a speech at the burial either at home, among the members of the family, in the church or before the burial. There were also written discourses and poems, published in the newspapers. The bishop was the first to speak and, if it was the case, the vicar followed, or the priest.

These discourses had a fragment from the Bible as the starting point, something suitable for the deceased. Thus, in the case of the Bishop Friedrich Teutsch it was the verse "Be faithful to death and I shall give you the crown of life!" These religious fragments had to characterize the personality of the deceased and to be representative for his entire life so that the speaker could develop and adapt it to his life and personality. Starting from these verses, the speakers had to demonstrate the value of the deceased, his contribution to Saxon people, his sacrifice for fulfilling this ideal. And indeed, these three personalities played a crucial role for the Transylvanian Saxons. A short biography was also presented at the personalities' funeral, then followed the ideas about coming closer to God through virtues and talent.

The death of an important man from the Saxon community brought pain and grief to the entire community. Praises and thanks are

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<sup>36</sup> Arnold Bruckner, *Abschiedsworte am Sarge des Bischofs D. Dr. Fr. Teutsch, am Morgen des 14. Februar 1933, imengsten Familienkreise*, in *Kirchliche Blätter*, XXV Jahrgang, No. 8, 23 February 1933, p. 84.

<sup>37</sup> Friedrich Teutsch, *Die Siebenbürger Sachsen in den letztenfünfzig Jahren, 1868-1919*, Hermannstadt, Druck und Verlag von W. Krafft, 1926, p. 316.

part of funeral discourses, pointing out these men's effort and passion through their lives. The final point of such a speech was always thanking God for "sending" such a man into the Saxon community. The speaker would also ask for the blessing of God for all those present and for the entire community. These three personalities are regarded as one with nature once they are dead – autumn is compared to death, while spring is mentioned as the symbol of resurrection and life after death.

Optimism is one common trait of these discourses. Despite the sad introduction, uttered with pain, the finale is confident, which is not surprising, given that the orator was usually a priest, vicar or bishop. That is why the faith in life beyond death is always present.

Adolf Schullerus, Carl Wolff and Friedrich Teutsch were exceptional personalities that marked the history of Sibiu and of the Saxon community. Their activity and devotion was dedicated to their people. Friedrich Schiller's words fit perfectly these Saxon men who guided their people in crucial moments of history: *Ein Mann ist vielwert in so teurer Zeit*.

In Transylvania there was customary to dedicate entire issues to commemoration of important personalities. These texts were usually published after the funeral and consisted of eulogies, descriptions of the funeral, biographies. After three days the articles on the subject were scarce, while sometimes even denigration regarding the deceased was published.<sup>38</sup>

Referring to some attitudes of public opinion in Transylvania we offer some details on the eulogies of personalities involved in the emancipation process of Romanians in this region. This is the case of I. G. Duca and Vasile Goldiș. These eulogies were published in a special column *Figuri și fapte pilduitoare din trecut in Transilvania. Buletin de tehnică populară*, publication of ASTRA. The eulogy supposes a starting phrase that sums up the significance of the deceased's cultural and/or political activity, then information on his public life and contribution to the Romanian identity project. The final paragraph underlines the accomplished mission of the honoured man.

Thus, we find the following about Vasile Goldiș<sup>39</sup>: an article with commemorative value<sup>40</sup> and a panegyric<sup>41</sup>. Both texts repeat a motif – the

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<sup>38</sup> See Al. Nicolaescu, *op.cit.*

<sup>39</sup> Vasile Goldiș (1862 - †10 February 1934) was a prestigious pedagogue, member of honour of the Romanian Academy (since 1919), politician (member of the National Romanian Party since 1893; follower of the activist strategy regarding the Austro-Hungarian policy for minorities since 1905). In Alba Iulia, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1918, he had a speech, in front of the Great National Assembly, about the inevitable

ardent patriotism of Vasile Goldiș “in the era before the unification” and in the recovered Romania<sup>42</sup>. Several themes are recurrent in these texts: value of the deceased, honoured during his lifetime, his exceptional culture and work<sup>43</sup>, veneration after his death. Other exceptional men, as Ștefan Cicio-Pop<sup>44</sup> and Teodor Mihali<sup>45</sup> received in their eulogies the title of “old national fighters.” But in their cases, biographical notes are detailed<sup>46</sup>. It is noteworthy that lines about Ștefan Cicio-Pop are more emotional. He is appreciated as a providential man, “man with a mission on earth”, who, after fulfilling his destiny, leaves this world “loved and venerated”.<sup>47</sup> This is a consecrated formula in the eulogies of the Germans in Transylvania as well.

The article dedicated to I. G. Duca<sup>48</sup> is impressive probably because of his violent death. The “great pain and endless fear produced

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character of the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, about the opportunity and necessity of Unification with Romania. After 1918, he is deputy, then minister in the first interwar governments (1918-1926), president of the Romanian National Party. He retires from politics, getting involved in the cultural development as president of ASTRA. National funerals were organized for him and national mourning was declared to honour his memory.

<sup>40</sup> Iuliu Moldovan, † Vasile Goldiș, in *Transilvania. Buletin de tehnică populară*, 65, January-February 1934, no. 1, pp. 6-7.

<sup>41</sup> Gh. Preda, *Panegiric la înmormântarea fostului președinte Vasile Goldiș rostit de vice-președintele Astrei cult., Dr. Gh. Preda*, in *Transilvania...*, pp. 8-10; this author insisted more than Iuliu Moldovan on cultural accomplishments, on the fact that Vasile Goldiș was dedicated to the support of the institutions that generated and cherished the Romanian identity – church and school.

<sup>42</sup> An emphasized theme in the case of Iuliu Moldovan, *op. cit.*

<sup>43</sup> Iuliu Moldovan, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>44</sup> Ștefan Cicio Pop (1865 - †16 February), lawyer, Romanian deputy in the Parliament of Budapest, active participant to the Great Unification of 1918, vice-president of the Great National Assembly of Alba Iulia, president of the Assembly of deputies (23 December 1928 - 30 April 1931; 10 August 1932 - 18 November 1933).

<sup>45</sup> Theodor Mihali (1855 - †17 January 1934), Romanian politician. He was the mayor of Cluj (21 April 1926 - 21 October 1926; 23 June 1927 - 24 July 1931).

<sup>46</sup> Editor, *Teodor Mihali*, in *op. cit.*, p. 11, stating that he was an “important and idealist fighter, memorandist who endured prison”, defender of minorities in the Budapest Parliament and then senator and mayor of Cluj in the unified Romania.

<sup>47</sup> Iulian Moldovan, † Ștefan Cicio-Pop, in *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>48</sup> Ion Gheorghe Duca, known as I. G. Duca (1879 - 29 December 1933), was an exceptional personality among the liberal politicians. He was minister of Education (1914-1918), of Agriculture (1919-1920), of External Affairs (1922-1926), of Internal Affairs (1927-1928), and Prime-minister of Romania (November-December 1933). He was assassinated at the Sinaia railway station by Nicadori, a legionary squad.

by the terrible death of I. G. Duca<sup>49</sup> is mentioned, highlighting the tragic episode of the Prime minister assassination. The Transylvanian people cherished him for his “affinity with Transylvania”, his empathy for peasants and his cultural support for the Romanians of the region<sup>50</sup>.

We appreciate the Sibiu funerals of cultural or political personalities, regardless of their national community, as benefiting of symbolical rituals and coverage in the press<sup>51</sup>. The participation through the press to the events was a form of *repetitio*, non-consecrated *ars moriendi*.

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<sup>49</sup> Editor, † *IG Duca* in *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 13.

<sup>51</sup> M. Chiper, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

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# Race without Racism in the Communist Period\*

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**Abstract:** *Race without Racism in the Communist Period.* The concept of 'race' will continue its destiny in Romanian culture after WWII, even if the communist ideology will be reticent at some moments towards its use. On the one hand in the academia the concept we are talking about is oculted even if it is used without being named. On the other hand it penetrates the constitutional texts. What communist ideology tries to do is to keep and use the national dimension of the interwar concept of race, but at the same time by delimitating it of rasism.

**Keywords:** racism, 20<sup>th</sup> century, communist ideology, national identity, physical anthropology

**Rezumat:** *Rasă fără rasim în perioada comunistă.* Conceptul de „rasă” își va continua destinul în cultura română și după Al Doilea Război Mondial, chiar dacă ideologia comunistă va fi reticentă față de utilizarea lui în anumite momente. Pe de o parte, în mediile academice conceptul despre care vorbim este ocultat, cu toate că este utilizat fără a fi numit. Pe de altă parte însă, el pătrunde în textele constituționale. Ceea ce încearcă ideologia comunistă este să păstreze și să utilizeze dimensiunea națională a conceptului interbelic de rasă, delimitându-se în același timp de rasism.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** rasism, secolul al XX-lea, ideologie comunistă, identitate națională, antropologie fizică

In the present micro-research I will follow the manner in which Romanian communism will receive two of the major concepts that have shaped the cultural and political of interwar Romania: race and its corollary - racism.

Romanian eugenics dies together with the interwar society, the environment that favored its apparition and development, they die

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together, dissolved in the military, social and political tragedies of the WWII. After the war 'race' will become a compromised concept, just because it stood at the bottom of Nazi ideology. Nevertheless especially because of the almost perfect symbiosis between race, ethnicity and state that we have found in the social-political and scientific thought of the interwar period, it would have been hard to reach a total disappearance of the biological component in the mentioned conceptual triad. Indeed, at a closer look, we notice that race does not reach a taboo term in communism, and from some point its scientific validity is no longer denied.

For example, in 1974, from the great dictionary of Romanian language, elaborated by R.S.R. Academy we find that race means 'each of the great human groups, formed since the oldest times of prehistory and characterized by the form of skull, color of the skin and other exterior features' and that only in an improper manner it would mean 'people, kind, descendant'<sup>1</sup>. This is the academic level. If we would lower the level, browsing the most popular dictionary of the communist period – Explicative Dictionary of Romanian Language (DEX) – we find a definition resembling the one offered by the great dictionary of Academia: race gives identity to each of the 'biological groups of populations' characterized by 'the color of hair, of skin and through other exterior features'. Further on it is added a supplementary explanation meant to erase any trace of a possible racist instrumentalization of the term: 'but that not contradicts the biological unity of the entire humanity and it is not a scientific criterion in differentiating it into social groups'<sup>2</sup>. This way we return to the meanings ascribed to the term at the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century! Race is accepted as scientifically classificatory item but is not associated, at least in the quoted definitions, with any form of racism. In communism, race should have been a neutral classificatory term.

Still, the biologization of national identity, so intense during interwar period, finally reached the scientific discourse in the *communist period*, especially in the 1950' and 1960', but even later in the following decade. Everything starts with C. I. Parhon – the last president of the International Federation of Latin Societies of Eugenics – that after 1948, converts to communism and becomes among others, for a long time, the

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<sup>1</sup> *Dicționarul limbii române* [Romanian Language Dictionary], tom. XIII, (București:, Ed. Academiei Române, 2010), p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> *Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române* [Explicative Dictionary of Romanian Language ], (București: Editura Academiei R.S.R., 1975), p. 773.

president of the Great National Assembly<sup>3</sup>. From this powerful position he will support the career of the one that will contribute the most to the 'rebirth' of anthropology during communism, his son in law, Ștefan Milcu.

Under Milcu's coordination (from 1950 director of the Institute of Anthropology of Romanian R.P.R.) in sixth and seventh decades of the past century *physical anthropology* knows a true progress. Broad researches are launched, numerous publications, where we should mention the monograph of Clopotiva village, whose declared aim is that of continuing the anthropological researches of Fr. I. Rainer from the interwar period. Professor Milcu like his famous forerunners, has started searching for the anthropological profile of the natives and hoped that this type of researches would contribute to 'solving the issue of forming the Romanian people'<sup>4</sup>. Clopotiva was not chosen randomly - it was an isolated community, as also situated in the area of Dacian dwelling! Under these circumstances it is not hard to find out what exactly the researchers were looking for in the villages from Hațeg county: the native anthropological type presupposed to have been very well kept in the isolated mountain areas.

The following monograph brings in front Bătrâna village, from Pădureni area, same as isolated and Dacian!<sup>5</sup> What is remarkable in the case of these approaches is the continuity with the interwar period, both at the level of methods of research and of the ideology that legitimates them, the national one. There are also discontinuities, likewise remarkable. The term 'race' is banned. It is talked about 'anthropological type', never about race. Physical anthropology during the communist period evolves in a quasi-aseptical ideological environment where only the national ideology is allowed. It is quite bizarre to notice the impressive display of forces of collective researches in these decades, without the obvious scope to justify such a waste of resources. In fact, the scope was well hidden in the core of researches, in continuity with the interwar ones, even though its explicit disclosure was blocked by the ideological line of the Party.

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<sup>3</sup> Marius Turda, *Eugenism și modernitate. Națiune, rasă și biopolitică în Europa (1870-1950)* [Modernism and Eugenics], (Iași: Polirom, 2014), p. 144.

<sup>4</sup> Ștefan Milcu, Horia Dumitrescu (ed.), *Cercetări antropologice în Țara Hațegului. Clopotiva. Monografie* [Anthropological Researches in Hațeg County. Clopotiva. Monograph ], (București: Editura Academiei R.P.R., 1958), p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Ștefan Milcu, Horia Dumitrescu, *Cercetări antropologice în Ținutul Pădurenilor. Satul Bătrâna* [Anthropological researches in Pădureni County. Bătrâna village], (București: Editura Academiei R.P.R., 1961), p. 10.

Even if 'race' became, in principle, a prohibit term in the anthropological discourse, it was not dislocated from the space of public communication. Professor Milcu, for example, was not shy in asserting in 1967 that 'races exists but we do not have enough elements to identify them correctly'<sup>6</sup>.

Moreover, the notion of race enters for the first time in a constitutional text in the communist period. Not even the Constitution during Carol in 1938 uses the respective term. It is true that in the first three constitutional texts previous to communism setting up, even if we do not meet the term 'race', *expresis verbis*, it is present still, in synonym formula, in the paragraphs that aims at preserving the ethnic purity of the state, according to the principle 'one state - one ethnicity - one race'. Thus, Constitution in 1866 stipulated in article 3 that 'Romania's territory can not be colonised with people of foreign origin'. The article will be kept likewise in the Constitution in 1923 and modified in the Constitution in 1938 but briefly, replacing the term 'origin' with 'kind'.

Obviously, in the three communist Constitutions such item does not appear. Nevertheless, the policy of *ethnic homogenization* done through population movements following industrialization and emigration of undesirable minorities (such as jews for example) has done more efficiently the uniformization of the population of the republic<sup>7</sup>. If we go back to the use of the term race in the communist constitutional texts, we see that this is present in all three constitutions and comes out in the context of enumerating the types of discrimination that can affect the rights of a Romanian citizen, obvious with the purpose of forbidding them. Art. 16 in the first communist constitution, in 1948, stipulates that 'all citizens of Romanian Popular Republic, regardless of sex, nationality, class, religion or culture are equal in front of the law', and the next article incriminates any 'advocacy or manifestation of race or nationality hatred'. Articles with simmilar content have the constitutions in 1952 and 1965. Previous constitutions defended the Romanian citizens from different types of discriminations but did not mention the ones with reference to the race. According to Constitution in 1923, Romanians enjoyed the same rights no matter 'the ethnic, language or religious origin', and in 1938 no matter of 'ethnic origin and religious belief'.

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<sup>6</sup> Ștefan Milcu, Constantin Maximilian, *Introducere în antropologie* [Introduction in anthropology], (București: Ed. Științifică, 1967), p. 35.

<sup>7</sup> Lucian Boia, *Cum s-a românizat România* [How Romania was romanized], (București: Humanitas, 2015), pp. 108-117.

After Nazi experience, all states acknowledged the perils of rasism and the interdiction of rasial discrimination finds a justification through this international ideological evolution. On the other hand, this formulation is taken by the socialist Romania constitutions from the famous soviet Stalin Constitution in 1936. Once entered in the constitutional texts, the term 'race' seems not to be overlooked. The present Constitution of Romania since 1991, uses it in the same manner the communist constitutional texts were using it, in the direction of removing a possible discrimination, homogenizing the national corpus by eliminating the lines of frature whatever they might be. Constitution in 1991 is the most scrupulous regarding the naming and incrimination of the fractures that might fragment the national unity. Art. 4 is conclusive in this matter: 'the state has as fundament the unity of Romanian people. Romania is the common and undivided country of all its citizens regardles of race, nationality, ethnic origin, language, religion, sex, opinion, political appartenance, wealth or social origin'. Anyway the Romanian constitutional texts after 1948 use the concept of race this way too and implicitly validate its value of truth.

Despite the neutral connotations of the term race and of dismantling the eugenic movement, the ideas of eugenic utopy made room in the society especially at the moment when the communist leaders became aware at the middle of the 1960' of the *demographic decline* of Romania. The measures they envisaged were inspired by the biological ideology of the interwar period. Moreover, one of the distinguished members of the eugenic movement in Cluj, Petru Râmneanțu, who, despite some restrictions would continue his career during communist period will send memorials to authorities that approach the demographic issues of Romania and proposed solutions in the spirit of the interwar coercitive eugenics measures. He had in view baning the abortion and contraceptive methods as also a more active intervention upon population through educational programmes in the direction of 'genetic' awareness<sup>8</sup>. We cannot know in what measure his proposals have influnced the political decisions of those years. Certain is that the solution chosen by communist authorities was the famous decree no. 770 in 1966, that banned abortion. Ironically and cinically at the same time, contraception remained a legal practice that the same authorities will drain of any content by taking out of the market the contraceptive means. Obviously, the aim of communist authorities was a

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<sup>8</sup> Maria Bucur, *Eugenie și modernizare în România interbelică* [Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania], (Iași: Polirom, 2005), pp. 301-303.

populationist and not a 'classic' eugenics, of improving the quality of race. It was not possible the other way since the communist ideology have reversed the hierarchy of the social classes. If interwar eugenists were aiming at strengthening the biological elite of the nation – that they identify with social and cultural elite –, through measures to favor an increased natality of this walks of life, the communist ideologists reversed the terms of the matter: to them, the nation's elite was represented by the masses of workers, 'men of work from towns and villages', creators of the socialist state, just as the Constitution in 1965 defined them. The communist state had them in view when imposed its pronatalist policies, policies that amalgamated negative measures (banning abortion, limiting acces to contraceptive means) and positive (financial support for the families with many children). Above all, the negative measures did not highlight anything else but the change of the relations between citizens and the state, respectively the complete subordination of the individual in favor of the state ideology, specific to totalitarian regimes. It was the dream of the interwar eugenists, that they could not put into practice!

In conclusion, the concept of 'race' will continue its destiny in Romanian culture also after WWII, even if the communist ideology will be reticent at some moments towards its use. On the one hand in the academia the concept we are talking about is oculted even if it is used without being named. On the other hand it penetrates, and this is extremely important, the constitutional texts. What communist ideology tries to do is to keep and use the national dimension of the interwar concept of race, but at the same time by delimitating it of rasism. Communists want in fact an utopy – race without rasism!

## Book Reviews

**Gabriella Erdélyi, (ed.),** *Érzelmek és mostohák. Mozaik családok a régi Magyarországon (1500-1850) [Emotions and stepparents. Blended families in Old-Hungary]*, Budapest: HAS, Institute of History of the Research Centre for the Humanities, 2019.

The history of family has been discussed over and over from different perspectives by social and cultural historians, who seemed to be much preoccupied, especially regarding the late medieval and early modern times, with aspects such as continuity and change in family life. Emotions were of course present in this debate, and discussed mostly in the same terms, being perceived either as learned or innate. What was not, however, often discussed, is the importance of these feelings in much complicated (although quite common) family structures, such as stepfamilies. Remarriage or living in a blended family are aspects which received little attention. Therefore, this volume addresses a significant gap in the history of the early modern family. Since some chapters focus more heavily on emotions, the edited collection is not just a contribution to the history of the Hungarian family, but also to the study of emotional behavior, too. The book is the fourth volume of the Momentum "Integrating Families" Research Group lead by Gabriella Erdélyi.

The studies are arranged in three sections preceded by an introductory chapter, in which Gabriella Erdélyi tries to find links between the diverse articles and effectively fits them into the broader pattern of the volume. This first entry summarizes some early works for the study of Hungarian stepfamilies and outlines the theoretical approach to emotions history. This is probably the most theoretically engaged study of the volume, covering a wide range of methodological questions and subject matters addressed in the forthcoming studies.

The first section of articles gathers around family practices and material culture. The article of the art historian Orsolya Bubryák familiarizes the reader with the Hungarian inheritance law. The author studies the way valuables and goods (jewelries, silverware, furniture and textiles) were transmitted in Hungarian noble's testaments, trying to find out if emotions played any role in the way last wills deal with the personality of the testator. One might consider that testaments are a perfect source for studying emotions, but feelings are rarely present in these narratives. Instead of emotions we can read about expectations, Bubryák concluding that love in early modern times emerged from obedience: caring, obedient spouses and children were always more desirable than independent ones. The best

example to support her case are the 14 testaments written by Pál Esterházy. Besides the logical reasoning behind this constant rewriting (remarriages, deceased and new children), one can also depict the vulnerable emotional balance among the testator and his close-kin.

Dóra Mérai deals in her article with death, emotions and family in 16-17<sup>th</sup>-century Transylvania. The art historian and archeologist Mérai analyzes funeral monuments from the perspective of emotions, and although her inquiry is one of the most exciting studies from this volume, it is only loosely connected to the main topic of the book. She bases her analysis on Judith Butler's and Sarah Tarlow's theories, but makes no forced interpretation regarding funeral habits and their affective meaning, suggesting that we must be aware of how culturally determined feelings were in past centuries. Mérai suggests that the study of funeral culture reveals first of all collective attitudes towards death, responding to some already existing norms – be it religious or social.

PhD student Dalma Bódai signs a case study about a 16<sup>th</sup>-century female aristocrat, Erzsébet Czobor, the second wife of György Thurzó, presenting her as a mother and stepmother. The article processes a few hundred letters written to or by Erzsébet Czobor. Her correspondence concerns family and domestic matters; the author introduces her readers in this way not only into the private world of Czobor, but talks in general about the roles and obligations of females from this era. Czobor and Thurzó raised together seven daughters and one of the goals of this article is to reconstruct the emotional bonds between these family members, suggesting that correspondence became important after the marriage of the girls, written words replacing the role of oral communication. Bódai is very confident with the interpretation of her data, and therefore we have mixed feelings, since we would probably expect to read some about the theoretical dilemmas a researcher faces when analyzing the emotional content of early modern correspondence.

Gabriella Erdélyi's article explores even more the possibilities arising from the above-mentioned ego-documents. She analyzes the private correspondence and family life of the Esterházy family in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. She wants to find out in what measure feelings and expectations, or gender roles could be expressed through correspondence. She states from the beginning that she is interested in the performative perception of family and that she considers feelings as a form of action and communication, not necessarily as something abstract. Her theoretical presumptions are very easily supported by the archival material she selected for her article. The family history of the Esterházy family is a very good terrain to verify these hypotheses. The protagonists of the article, Krisztina Nyáry and Miklós Esterházy, are playing several family-roles during their lifetime, such as stepparents, then in-laws, since they married their stepchildren, fastening in this way the already existing vertical kinship ties with horizontal ties of marriage. After the marriage of their

children, the existing hierarchical relations among the family had different dynamics and this is one of the major topics discussed by Erdélyi. These kin-relations are mostly discussed through the correspondence of the Esterházy. The frequency of the letters, the formulas used, the handwriting, all these gain extraordinary meaning in Erdélyi's interpretation. The article suggests that in early modern families the roles assumed by each member were of utmost importance, and the affection among its members could change as many times as their status inside the family altered.

The entries in the second section examine family conflicts. The historian Eleonóra Géra offers the reader a fascinating micro-analysis about the three marriages of Eva Elisabetha Wittmann. This young girl from Vienna, at the suggestion of her family, made a very successful first alliance with an aggressive and much older widower from Buda. The extremely tensioned (and very well-documented) marriage was ended by the death of the husband, Johann Georg Unger. Wittmann, still in her thirties, married after a year of widowhood an influential German engineer called Johann Adam Dietz, who also died after a few years. Eva Elisabetha was still young by the time of her second widowhood, but most importantly, had a considerable financial background, so she made a third, and even more advantageous alliance with a noble, Johann Adam von Lichtenauer. By that time, she gained some reputation among the bourgeoisie elite from Buda, being perceived as *imperiosa mulier*, a female of her own will, powerful and persistent, who did not conform to the expectations society had toward widows. We consider that this 18<sup>th</sup>-century story offers much more than a simple case study, posing also as a good methodological reference. Géra repeatedly emphasizes that the history of family or emotions implies almost always more than one source category, from ego-documents to legal or ecclesiastical records. All these narrative traces must be taken in consideration, and even so the historian will not be able to find evidence about emotions in the household, since early modern documents suggest that romantic feelings were not that determining in the making of the family. Love could be a consequence of the marriage, but at the end what made a marriage successful was the harmony (social, economical, religious) of the couple.

The second article from this section deals with heartless mothers and evil stepmothers. The ethnologist PhD student Petra Bálint writes about emotions and their expressions in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Court Records. After presenting the difficulties one encounters while studying legal documents, the author also indicates the methodological framework used to decode her narratives. As many authors of this book, she also relies on Barbara Rosenwein, and tries to identify in the studied testimonies first the emotions young committers of infanticide felt after they were summoned before the Court, and then, in the second part of the article, how stepfamily members relate to each other. The author offers the reader several contradictory examples from the life of orphan

children. We can read about aggressive biological kin, about supportive communities and even murderer stepparents. Bálint concludes that for us, coming from a society that cherishes every aspect of childhood, it is hard to offer an objective analysis of the child-murderer females or evil parents. The author suggests that instead of making false assumptions about the emotional behavior our ancestors had, we should interpret our data in its own context.

The subject of the forthcoming study gathers around the legal conflicts of a certain bourgeois family. The historian Mónika Mátay offers us an exhaustive analysis on the trial records concerning the verbal and written testaments of a pig-slaughterer, Lajos Balázs. In the center of the article is the romantic friendship between Gábor Mester and Lajos Balázs, presented in contrast with the lack of emotions within the biological family. Balázs had no siblings, his father died, his mother could not fulfill her maternal obligations, his paternal aunt, Sára Balázs, was also distant to him. The main female character of the article is Zsuzsanna Tot, the mother of Balázs, who first disrespected the will of her son, leaving the lifelong friend Mester without the promised money, and second, sold the house of her dead husband, thus entering into conflict with her sister-in-law, Sára Balázs. In presenting the conflicts, Mátay unfolds the history of three generations, and the marriages of two, that of the grandparents and parents of Balázs, in order to introduce the reader into the core of the problem. We learn about decent widows, unfaithful wives and heartless mothers, about the shame and humiliation Balázs as a child experienced in the household of his notorious mother. At the end of this exciting investigation, which reveals the hard detective work the historian underwent, we get a better understanding of the problematic emotional background of this trial.

The last section of the volume contains two articles related to family spaces, identities and roles. Emese Gyimesi examines stepfamilies from the children's perspective. The female protagonist of the article is Júlia Szendrey, the widow of the national poet of Hungary, Sándor Petőfi. The article describes the relationship between Szendrey's children from her two marriages. The bond between the half-siblings is reconstructed with the help of their correspondence and their intellectual undertaking: a handwritten family newspaper. The letters are interpreted in a less conventional way, since Gyimesi is interested not in the emotional content of the narratives but in the description of the private and public spheres. The letter-writing and "publishing" children took great interest in the visualization of their experience. From their drawings the historian is able to reconstruct the interior of their home, the function of the spaces. The article is thus a very good attempt at "space-reading", and a good future reference for those interested in this field of historical study.

The literary historian Zsófia Kucserka writes about the perception of marriage and family models in the private and public writings of a 19<sup>th</sup>-

century female author, Etelka Slachta. The private diaries of Slachta had already been the subject of some interesting analyses, but Kucserka wanted to extend her research and to examine together the personal and public writings of this young female. Slachta started her writing career with translations, and mostly from French pamphlet literature. The young and by that time still unmarried girl liked to discuss topics regarding marriage, sometimes even arguing with the male skeptics who simply saw a husband-hunter in every female. Slachta is concerned about these ideas in her private writing too, but in contrast with the bohemian and ironic marriage-plays she translated or wrote, her diary suggests that she was more preoccupied with the duties she had to fulfill for her nation. According to the diary, Slachta had felt romantic love, but in both cases her sentiments were overwritten by her national feeling. She believed that the moral duty of a Hungarian intellectual female was to give birth to children and to educate them in a national spirit. In an era when historical works suggest that love invaded all spheres of life, a romantic young girl's private writing claims quite different things.

As a whole, this collection is a very important contribution to the field of family history. However, it is not always clear how representative these studies are for the emotions early modern Hungarian stepfamilies experienced; or if some of the authors integrated all of their sources in their articles and not just those which support their interests. Therefore, for a classical historian, the volume is in many aspects more than challenging. But despite their shortcomings, all of these articles offer a new and fresh perspective on the possibilities of historical research.

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**Sándor Nagy**, *“Engesztelhetetlen gyűlölet”. Válás Budapesten (1850-1914). [Unappeasable hatred, appeasable law. The role of lawmaking in the growth of divorce numbers in Budapest (1850-1914)]*, Budapest: Budapest Főváros Levéltára, 2018.

The process of modernization brought many social changes with itself, one of these being the rapid increase in the number of divorces in society. This phenomenon is usually explained through social and economic factors. The book that is the subject of this review does not call into question the importance of these factors, but wants to add a new one: a judicial factor, asking how legal regulation can prevent or increase the number of divorces in a certain society. The author of the book is Sándor Nagy, a historian and archivist, employee of the Budapest City Archives.

The volume focuses on Pest-Buda, later Budapest, between the years 1850-1914. The first chapter of the book starts by presenting and reviewing the statistics made by Tivadar Szél concerning the divorce rates in Budapest between 1873 and 1895. Tivadar Szél wants to prove that the rise of divorce rates can be brought in relation with the damaging effects of modernization, and with the too liberal civil law of 1895. The core of Szél's argument is that, according to his statistics, divorce was almost unknown in the early dualist Budapest, yet with the adoption of the civil law and the intense economic development of the Hungarian capital the number of divorces started growing rapidly. However, Szél based his statistics solely on church registers, which exclude Roman Catholics, since they were not allowed to divorce, but also excludes, or makes it hard to track those Catholics who converted to other religions, or were inherently part of other confessions. Their divorce cases were handled by state courts, or, as in the case of Unitarians, by the parish court in Cluj. Furthermore, Szél did not take into account the number of those who did not get married but divorced in Budapest, since their divorce was registered in the place where they were married.

Pointing out and taking into consideration these things, Nagy creates his own statistics based largely on all the documents that were amassed during divorce trials conducted by state and church courts. These statistics show that divorce was not unknown to the inhabitants of Budapest during the first decades of the dualist period, since there was a gradual, mostly uninterrupted growth of divorce numbers, which, however, compared to the other Hungarian towns or cities, was not that exceptional. Moreover, the divorce rate was much more significant in smaller urban settlements than in Budapest. The author categorizes divorce numbers by confessions and social classes. The rate of divorce was the lowest amongst Catholics, but it was also the one that grew the most significantly after 1895. As regarding social classes, the middle class scored the highest among the number of divorces; however, lower-class divorces also started increasing in number by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The increase in the number of divorces is almost constant, with slight abruptions. In order to explain why the number of broken marriages rose, Sándor Nagy relies on the theories of Philipp Roderick, Stephanie Coontz and William J. Goode. Roderick suggests that the increase in number of divorces had to be understood through the phenomenon of the working female, since many women, once they gained financial independence, chose to live alone, rather than in an unsuccessful marriage. On the other hand, Coontz attributes divorces to the spreading of the idea of romantic love and partnership, while Goode thinks that divorce is influenced by deterministic factors such as early marriage and remarriage. According to Nagy, none of these theories offer a reasonable explanation to the situation in Budapest.

In the second chapter, the author of the book presents the judicial changes that have taken place in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Hungary concerning marriage and divorce, thus hoping to find an explanation to the questions brought by the statistics of the first chapter. The first important law concerning divorce was decreed by Joseph II in 1786 in the so-called *Ehepatent*. This document allowed people of every confession except Roman Catholic to divorce, directing the matter of marital break-up from church courts to state courts. The patent was short-lived, being revoked after the death of Joseph II; however, some of its elements were kept: protestant divorces were handled by state courts, Catholics went back to church courts. The converted Catholics are again hard to trace, since the patent did not refer to them. Catholics who converted to another confession were allowed to divorce, this was formally recognized in a law adopted in 1844, which was revoked for a short time in the neoabsolutist era, but became a common practice in the dualist period.

Another heritage of the *Ehepatent* was the “marriage defender”, a person assigned to every couple in the middle of a divorce who had the duty to investigate if the causes of the divorce were serious. These regulations made the process of divorcing long and costly, thus for a long time, people did not risk to go through the hardships of it. But by the end of the 1880s, the role of the marriage defender became a formal one. The civil law of 1895 introduced the civil divorce, which left the church powerless in this matter, and introduced a new cause for divorce: intentional abandonment (without reasonable cause), which compared to previous accepted legal argumentation, that of unappeasable hatred, required even less formal proving. In addition, the new regulation had specific articles regarding the poor, which significantly increased the number of lower-class people who decided to divorce, since the state paid for a part of the process. In 1907, the judicial process got even faster, since it was no longer required to review the divorce case before its closure.

The next chapter shows the process by which divorce became fashionable among more and more segments of society. The rapid growth in number of these cases created several chaotic and absurd situations, as “state law” and “popular law” clashed, which constitutes the topic of the third and last chapter of the book. According to the author, just because there are no laws allowing people to divorce, or because people do not have access to or knowledge of these laws, it does not mean that they cannot develop informal ways of divorcing. The most commonly used unconventional form of partnership was the cohabitation in a conjugal relationship without being married. When one or both of the parties involved in this type of cohabitation are married to someone else, then we can perceive their life-choice as an informal way of divorcing and remarrying. Their legal situation was complicated by the appearance of children. Until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup>

century, children born from these conjugal relations did not constitute a significant problem, as priests would usually just write in the church register the family name of the biological father next to the surname of the child, conferring in this way the newborn a façade of legitimacy. But in the early period of the dualist era, the state started punishing priests who did not ask for some kind of document that proved that the parents of the child were married, the consequences of this new practice being sometimes absurd. A child born from a mother who was previously married to someone else, and was still not divorced, would receive the family name of the first husband, not of the actual biological father. The only way to save the child from the stigma of bastard was to divorce, and to turn the cohabitation into a legitimate relationship in the eyes of the state. This is a good example of how law can influence social behavior, because the increasing number of “bastards” led more and more people to choose a formal way of ending their marriage. As a consequence of the high demand, the state also had to make the process of divorce easier.

The critical attitude with which the author treats his sources has to be noted, as it is exemplary. Sándor Nagy always tries to explain how the sources were created and which were the criteria by which state and church authorities gathered the information, thus the reader gets a clear idea of what that certain source can be used for. At the end of the volume, among the very rich bibliography, we can find a short documentary database too, which allows the reader to get a clearer picture on how the statistics were created. Therefore, we consider that this book is extremely helpful to researchers of the topic, as it offers a lot of new and useful information about divorce in modernity, but also provides a methodological basis for those who wish to do dive further into this subject.

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**Alin Fumurescu**, *Compromisul: o istorie politică și filozofică*, București: Humanitas, 2019.

Alin Fumurescu, Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science at University of Houston, expressed his research interests in the history of ideas, medieval and modern political theory, political and self-representation, American political thought. He was the recipient of the American Political Science Association Leo Strauss Award for the best doctoral dissertation in political philosophy for 2013. The political scientist's connections with Romania remained strong, the proof is his collaboration

with different Romanian newspapers, but also the launch of his book in Romanian translation with a special preface.

The book we are focusing on is a valuable research regarding conceptual history, history of ideas, philosophy and political theory. Fumurescu wrote the first conceptual history of the notion of compromise, although he prefers the term *genealogy* instead of *history* because, following Michel Foucault, he considers that *genealogy* suggests a more unpredictable development. The author pays attention to the meaning continuities and changes concerning the concept of compromise, trying to place them in the appropriate historical context. Such an approach is supported by the fact that people live with meanings, and meanings are transmitted through words. And, depending on how we use certain words, it changes the way we relate to the world. Even more, we can ask ourselves whether or not reality can be constructed through words. Some thinkers believe there are make-up beliefs, but that does not imply the idea of falsehood. For example, Benedict Anderson considers that the nation is an imagined but not imaginary concept, which means that it becomes a reality.

Methodologically, the paper combines historical analysis of how compromise was used in everyday language and a quantitative study of the use of the term in both French and English between the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century, by analyzing famous texts from the history of political thought. The ignored history of compromise indicates differences in the assumptions we make about individuals and their relationships with the political sphere. Therefore, the author proves the connection between various uses of the term compromise and certain understandings of self-representation, political representation and contractualism. The whole effort of interpretation in the book is made mainly through the medieval dialectic of the individual and through the difference between the descending and ascending representation.

Fumurescu notices a great difference between the classical and the modern acceptance of the compromise. The example of the Aristotelian term *mesotes* shows the possibility that the practice of compromise preceded the appearance of the term. However, Aristotelian middle way corresponds to classical thinking, according to which man can only be understood in relation to others, and public life must be conducted in accordance with justice and must serve the development of virtues. In The Middle Ages, compromise proved to be a useful tool as *arbitratio* in the legal field, and *aselectio* within the structure of Church. Beginning with the second half of the sixteenth century and continuing throughout the seventeenth century, at the same time as the French became increasingly suspicious about compromise, the English embraced it as a virtue. In order to understand this split in the use of compromise, we are informed of the importance of the forgotten medieval dialectic between *forum internum* and *forum externum*.

The medieval man understood himself by virtue of the two forums: *forum internum*, which was considered the forum of freedom and authenticity and where the only judges were consciousness and divinity, and *forum externum*, which defined the individual by belonging to one or more communities, and, therefore, subjected him to the authority of this worldly community. Moreover, Christianity managed to familiarize the medieval man with the game between uniqueness and similarity connecting the two forums. As long as there was a balance between the two forums, he was not afraid of compromise, nor did he embrace it as a virtue.

The cleavage that appeared in the use of the term compromise starting with the second half of the sixteenth century had to do with the different ways of responding to the series of crises that had marked that period. On the French side, the increasing pressure on the *forum externum*, which was the consequence of the absolutist regime about to be born, amplified the distance between the two forums, until it made them detach from each other. The inner self has come to be regarded as the only site of uniqueness and authenticity, while the outer self has been reduced to a simple costume. Thus, one witnesses the development of a centripetal individualism, which helps us to understand why the French often used the term compromise with negative connotations. On the British side, the emphasis switched to *forum externum* and the equality of wills. The distance between the two forums narrowed until they became confused, giving birth to one-dimensional man. Therefore, there was no fear of compromise, and will-based contracts became the foundation of society and governance.

The paper explores the consequences of these different self-apprehensions of the individual in terms of different understandings of political representation. The author claims that, despite today's general consensus, representing 'the people' was not naturally assimilated with an ascending theory of representation. 'The people', understood as a whole, was apprehended in France as still higher than its representatives - kings, Estates, or Parlements. The idea of individuals willingly delegating their rights and authority to a representative remained for more than a century a peculiar British development.

This reading suggests that compromise seems like an appropriate policy approach for a pluralistic society. Nowadays, the man being convinced that there is no assumption of any objective truth or common interest proposes the compromise as a negative solution: to remove the violence caused by misunderstandings between us. Another fundamental problem raised by the concept of compromise in politics is the connection with morality. As John Morley noted at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, transforming compromise from a useful political method, when wisely limited, to a principle of public life risks undermining the general moral sense. Since the issue of political compromise is closely linked to the problem of the relationship between

public and private, the way we understand civil society becomes essential, especially because it functions as a bridge between the two spheres. The Internet age has created opportunities for rethinking civil society and the self. On the one hand, the modern man is individualistic and unique because he can identify with any combination of associations. On the other hand, due to the lack of criteria for the way he chooses to identify himself, the individual no longer has a stable identity.

The book proposed for review stands out through the abundance of information regarding philosophical and political thinking as well as through the qualitative analysis. Alin Fumurescu investigates not only the etymology of the word compromise but the causes of its various shifts in meaning and the intellectual and practical consequences of those changes. His interpretation makes us understand that the availability or lack of disposition to make compromises is related not only to a certain way of understanding the political representation, but also to certain forms of self-representation.

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**Lucian Boia**, *De la Dacia Antică la Marea Unire, de la Maria Unire la România de azi*, Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2018.

As many people know, 2018 was the year that brought in front of us a lot of historical publications dedicated to the Centenary of the Great Union of the Romanians. Some of the written books present the events that happened during the First World War and after it. Others purpose was to expose some new opinions upon these facts, while the last but not the least is the category of books which intend to destroy the myths created about this important moment in the history of the Romanians. This third category also includes the book written by Lucian Boia, entitled *De la Dacia Antică la Marea Unire, de la Maria Unire la România de azi (From the Ancient Dacia to the Great Union, from the Great Union to today's Romania)*, published in 2018, at Humanitas Publishing House. It contains only one hundred pages, being more like an essay which exposes the author's discontent with the instrumentalization of the entire Romanian history, in order to serve for the moment of the Great Union. In the short foreword, Boia shows his disagreement with the anachronisms existing in historiography and with the attempt of the Romanian historians to unify the distant past of the Romanian territories.

The book is structured in seventeen short chapters, bringing in our attention the main problems of the Romanian historiography; among it's

pages, Boia mentions and even criticizes some of the greatest Romanian historians, such as Neagu Djuvara, Vasile Pârvan, or Ioan Bogdan. Even if, when reading the title, the book seems to be one dedicated to a very short presentation of the true Romanian past, devoid of myths, in reality, it's chapters are more like a harsh criticism of historiography and above the myths which are deforming the real history. Boia's pleading begins with a discussion about the ancient Dacia. He considers the idea of continuity between Dacia and Romania like a *dacian trap*, where Pârvan or Densușianu fell. The author considers that these historians made mistakes when they emphasized, in some cases, the exclusive dacic origins of the Romanians. In the end of the first chapter, Boia says that the unification of the territories inhabited by a majority of Romanians happened due to the natural right, not to the historical right which researchers are trying to accentuate.

Boia thinks that the most important problem of the Romanian historiography is the one referring to the continuity and the controversy with the Hungarians about the nation having primacy in Transylvania. He is citing Neagu Djuvara, who affirmed that the relevance of this problem is quite reduced, because today, no matter what, this land would still remain under Romanian administration, due to the majority of Romanians inhabiting it. Although, the author criticises Djuvara on exposing ten arguments in favour of Romanian continuity, after saying this problem has no importance for the current situation. I think that Djuvara only wanted to enumerate some arguments in order to present the historical truth, as he had seen it. Eventually, there are a lot of informations which the historians give details about, having no relevance for the present. In the end, what is the purpose of the historical research? I think it's more related to discovering and presenting the historical truth for those who are interested and less to the changing of the present different situations.

In the following chapters, Boia explains that before 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were not so many inhabitants of the Romanian Principates who had thought of their unification. He mentions, among others, the names of Dimitrie Cantemir, Grigore Ureche or Miron Costin who were, above all, Moldavians, not Romanians. Moreover, after the unification between Valachia and Moldova from 1859, Moldavians had more to lose than the Valachians; as a result, there had been even an anti-unionist movement in Moldova, which seems to have been sustained, among others, by Ion Creangă. Neither the Transylvanians were in perfect agreement with the ideas referring to the unification with Romania; Boia says they initially wanted the improvement of their situation by keeping their allegiances to the Habsburg Monarchy.

The author minimalizes the contribution that the Romanian political elite brought for fulfilling the Romanian national ideals. Rather than that, he affirms that the external context was the one which determined the 1859<sup>th</sup> and 1918<sup>th</sup> unifications. Besides, he thinks that the Ottoman and Czarist

Empires had made the inhabitants from the two principates become closer, in order to group their forces. The individuality and authenticity of the Romanian character and traditions were also kept due to the Turkish domination, because it wasn't interested in the islamization of the Romanian Principates. The 1859th unification was the result of the Crimean War and the support of Napoleon the Third, as the 1918th unification was one of the effects of the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which made Romanians from Transylvania look in Romania's direction. Even if it's true that the context always helped the events to take place, I think it's wrong to underestimate the role of the Romanians the way that Boia does, but also to overestimate it the way that other historians do.

Some other chapters of the book are dedicated to the description of the past and current situation of Bassarabia or Republic of Moldova. Boia takes advantage of this opportunity to express his attachment to Ernst Renan's theory, which says that *the nation is a daily plebiscite*. He brings into discussion the problem regarding the unification between Romania and Moldova, thinking that none of these countries are prepared enough for this act. Boia's opinion is that after the Great Union, Romanians weren't capable of making the most of the potential of their country, neither in the interwar period, whose prosperity he considers being only a myth. The communist era didn't help the country's development, and the years after the 1989th Revolution marked the longest transition from communism to democracy from the entire Central Europe. Moreover, Boia thinks that the totalitarian regime was, in some ways, part of the Romanians character and that's because even today, some of them miss those days. I consider that this judgement is quite groundless; this nostalgia is not a result of the „totalitarian spirit” of the Romanians, but it may be the effect of time passing, growing up and missing the childhood or youth. Moreover, people tend to minimize the negative aspects of the days that they miss.

In the last chapters of the book, Boia presents some negative records reached by Romania; he also criticises the political class and the occidental development of the country, based on the theory of *form without substance*. Boia regrets the advance of the european regionalism over nationalism and considers that it is also present in Transylvania, which is always a little bit different from the rest of the Romanian territories. The last chapter talks about the future, Boia preferring to insert some questions about the most important problems rising to the horizon.

The book written by Lucian Boia brings into discussion a lot of problems regarding the Romanian history and historiography. It also encourages the reader to study more, to look over the discussed subjects with higher attention and to have a different perspective over them. However, I consider that even if it is a quite easily to read book, Boia's essay has to be treated with precaution, because it has the disadvantage of criticizing and talking

about historiographical problems without offering detailed arguments to sustain the exposed opinions. So, after finishing this book, the reader risks to gain some beliefs which he is not able to sustain if he cannot deepen the knowledge over them, by studying some other publications, belonging to other historians.

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**Ioan Bolovan, Luminița Dumănescu (eds.), *Intermarriage in Transylvania, 1895-2010*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2017.**

One cannot deny that globalization is one of the main characteristics of the world, at least beginning with the first Industrial Revolution. One of its consequences is the increasing number of mixed marriages or intermarriages, as the Industrial Revolution(s) facilitated the mobility of objects, ideas and people across the globe. The decision of entering such a marriage involves many difficulties from a psychological, social, linguistic and even from a political-national perspective. *How would I be perceived by my family and social group when deciding to marry a spouse of different ethnicity, religion/denomination or/and socio-economic status? What language will we use to communicate? What will be the identity of our children?* are some of the questions that appear when deciding to live your life along with a person of a different background. Many studies focus on these difficulties as they were felt by different social categories, usually immigrants. But how about the individuals from groups that are different in what concerns ethnicity or religion, but coexisted in the same place for many centuries? The book edited by Ioan Bolovan and Luminița Dumănescu, *Intermarriage in Transylvania, 1895-2010* tries to answer this question comprehensively, focusing on probably one of the best case-studies in Europe (i.e. Transylvania) and approaching the complexity of the intermarriages phenomenon from various angles.

In regards to the editors, Ioan Bolovan is a Romanian historian, university professor, vice-rector of Babeş-Bolyai University and correspondent member of the Romanian Academy. His research focus is historical demography and population studies, but also the political and social history of Transylvania during the long nineteenth century. He is also the founder and director of the Center for Population Studies in Cluj-Napoca, with which most of the authors of the works comprised in this book are affiliated. Luminița Dumănescu is senior researcher at the same institution. Her research interest lies with historical demography and population studies, with a focus on

women and children. In respect of the book, it is the result of the research undertaken within the framework of the research project „Mixed Marriages: Between an Exercise in Tolerance and a Modern Expression of Indifference“, supported by the Romanian National Council for Research. In the 210 pages, the book comprises an introduction and eleven studies related to the topic of intermarriage in Transylvania. A Table of Tables used in the studies, a Table of Figures and a general index, all placed at the end, complete the book.

Starting with a presentation of Transylvania's complex history and ethnical structure, the editors emphasize in the "Introduction" the main reasons making this region a worthy case study for intermarriages. Transylvania was and still is a place of coexistence of multiple ethnicities and denominations, which makes it ideal ground for studying the integration of cultural differences. The period taken into consideration adds further value to the study, as it is dominated by nationalism, which usually aggravated the conclusion of marriage contracts between two people with different identities. The "Introduction" also comprises a presentation of the historical literature on the topic, along with its shortcomings, a welcomed initiative, which also underlines the necessity of the research resulting in the present volume. Moreover, the editors made a clear point of view on the studying of mixed marriages phenomenon as a cornerstone for understanding how different cultures can mingle in a non-conflictual way. The summary at the end of the "Introduction" is meant to facilitate the understanding of the book's structure and to emphasize the methodology used overall, as the studies are connected to a great extent, functioning as chapters of a monograph, rather than a collection of papers.

The eleven studies presented in this book are thematically and methodologically grouped into two sections. The first one, titled "Mixed Marriages reflected in Historical Sources", opens with the study signed by Ioan Bolovan and Marius Eppel, which deals with how intermarriages were and are perceived, especially by churches, using the historical method, as well as sources covering the span of over a century (1895-2010). It makes a good start for understanding the context and the mentalities revolving around the idea of mixed marriages, as it emphasizes how the Churches approached this "problem", a fairly important matter, given that Churches had and still have an important influence on shaping the people's identity. Alongside ecclesiastical laws (and the practice) of Orthodox, Greek-Catholic, Roman-Catholic, and Reformed churches, as well as the Mosaic religion too, there are also presented some statistical data for each denomination. The second study is complementary to the first, as Luminița Dumănescu makes an overview of the civil law on marriages, and implicitly intermarriages in Romania for the period between 1890 and 2010.

In the third study, Ioan Bolovan showcases how these legislations and practices of political and ecclesiastical institutions affected the everyday

reality of common people, by providing a quantitative analysis on the phenomenon of intermarriages in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>. The method used is, alongside analysis of the statistics, the comparison between denominations, and Hungary as a whole too. The changes are contextualized by the transformations in politics, economy, and society. The same focus is found in the next study, in which Bogdan Crăciun, Daniela Mârza, Mihaela Hărăguș, and Ioan Bolovan are showcasing the results for the interwar period, with its specific realities. The reason for a separate and quite generous in length study dealing with this period resides in the complex transformation that the Transylvanian society was facing – from the incorporation in Romania, who did not have experience in dealing with so many ethnic and religious groups, to the emergence of radical eugenics, racism, and other authoritarian ideas. The fifth study, by Mihaela Hărăguș, draws the attention of the reader towards the drives of the individuals involved in a mixed marriage during the last decades, as well as on more recent demographical statistics. In the sixth and last study of the first part, Daniela Mârza explains how the mental representations of different groups of individuals influenced the conclusion (or not) of mixed marriages along the time.

The second section, “Mixed Marriages in Contemporary Society”, focuses more on anthropological and sociological approach on the intermarriages nowadays. Using the interview as the main method of data gathering, and focusing on the urban area of Cluj-Napoca, this section comprises five studies that concentrate on specific aspects of the data collected. By using the information of individuals that are still living and presenting it as a “life-story”, this second part of the book makes the reader feel more close and aware to the matter of intermarriage not only of today but of the entire period covered in the first part of the book. The first study, written by Mihaela Hărăguș, showcases the factors that are influencing the option for intermarriage, identifying three main categories: the individual preferences, the social environment in which the individual grew up, and the marriage market. An important finding is that today, education and socioeconomic status are more important than ethnic similarities for the spouses who decide to conclude a mixed marriage. On the importance of the religion/denomination and ethnicity appurtenance in intermixed marriages, Marius Eppel comes with a more in-depth analysis. The main idea that comes out from his research is that even if religion and national sentiment still play a role in the life of individuals in the targeted area, the main goal is to create “a happy family” and to overcome the differences by compromising for the sake of this goal.

In the third study of this second part, Daniela Mârza deals with the problem of the language(s) in a mixed married couple. The other’s language, as the author emphasizes, is usually seen either as a gain for both partners

and the children, a way of being closer to each other, or as a negative outcome – identity loss, national rivalries, etc. In the end, after showcasing some factors in choosing what languages to be used in the life of a mixed family, Daniela Mârza stresses out that intermarriage is usually a success story “integrating and harmonizing cultural differences”. The following study, signed by Luminița Dumănescu, highlights how the lives of the children of a mixed couple are influenced by the differences between the parents. The identity, in all regards (ethnicity, language, and religion), of the children, in comparison to the act of marriage itself, is less influenced by the extended family and religious and ethnic community, being more a matter of parents’ decision, and later of the children themselves. The last study, authored by Viorela Telegdi-Csetri, deals with the practices used by the mixed couples in expressing their identity, stressing out that this display of identity takes place in the daily life of the couple in different ways. Last, but not least, the intensity of displaying identity differences is related to the intensity of the questioning of the couple’s life from the outside.

From an analytical point of view, this book encompasses in a far-reaching manner the complex matter of intermixed marriages, by means of an interdisciplinary approach. Aside from integrating methodologies from different disciplines, another strong point of this work would be the context used for studying this phenomenon – a time of multiple and radical changes and a place of multiculturalism. In what concerns the language used in the studies encompassed in this book, it is accessible even for an unspecialized reader, as it is not difficult to comprehend the points made throughout the pages and as the scientific concepts are usually explained. Moreover, the usage of the “life-story” approach brings the reader closer to the matter discussed, as he/she can see it from a more personal perspective. The presence of a bibliographical list at the end of each chapter is another positive aspect, as it facilitates further reading. Despite no obvious drawbacks, I believe a study with the main focus on the intermixed marriages in the communist period would have been also welcomed.

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**Cristina Jelescu, Radu Crutzescu, Ioan C. Filitti (eds.),** *Amintirile colonelului Lăcusteanu*, București: Humanitas, 2015.

The subsequent years of the 1848 Revolution in Wallachia and Moldavia offered us a series of memoirs and writings containing details about the significance of events during the revolutionary time. Many of them emphasized the positive impact of the Revolution and the main actors of it, but something was missing. The memoirs of Grigore Lăcusteanu emphasized the other part of the statement. In Transylvania we take benefit from John Page's, who brings accusations to the Romanians revolutionaries, however he doesn't convict the Revolution itself, considering he takes part of it next to the Hungarians. In Wallachia, starting with 1865 a manuscript, forbidden for a long time, builds a different atmosphere, from an anti-revolutionary point of view.

The memoirs of Grigore Lăcusteanu, published for the first time in 1934, captures every historian's attention when it comes to meeting an individual contemporary of that epoch with opposite ideals and political orientation. The book, reedited in 2015, reconstructs his genealogy and biography, sketching his military ascension and describes the changes occurred during the Revolution that affected him, the social sphere and the politics. Therefore, let see the strengths of this book, counterbalancing them with its weak points. Although the abundance of subjectivity in Lăcusteanu's work is clear, the notes are veritable sources of reconstructing the life marked by cholera, revolution and arrests. One aspect, nevertheless, is important to be underlined: the author doesn't offer us deformed images of his time, however he describes them from a better angle.

Details about the author are highlighted by Lăcusteanu himself and his reactions throughout the narration. It is obvious that the main reason for writing his memoirs is to perpetuate the virtues and nobility of his ancestors. Therefore, his character is so exceeding. He certainly shows attachment for his family, but he reserves an excessive special one for his son, Mișu. Through him, the Colonel succeeds to satisfy the so craved abilities he never fulfilled. A selfish gesture we might say, which helps him to be rewarded for the work invested in his son: 'I desired that Mișu, my only son and only heir of our family, to be proud bearing my name, so that I could be rewarded for my work and endeavor'. This act may be justified through the lost of the other son. It is interesting to follow Lăcusteanu's character, with choleric temper but sensitized among the loved ones. He takes us in his family circle, subjected to the cruel reality, when parents had to confront the death of their children, confessions we rarely meet in the literature of that time.

Born on March 1813, he is taught Greek, German, Russian, Latin and French at very young ages and at sixteen becomes a translator for a Russian general.

From this path on he remains fascinated by the army. His will to join it was fulfilled only in may 1830 when he obtained the rank of Second Lieutenant, reaching the rank of Colonel in 1853. Not once he appears to be conceited and loses his temper instantly: 'My anger increases (I was agile, violent to excess)'. Throughout his military career, he serves the Russian cause with such devotion, so the year of 1848 finds him against the revolutionary government.

Outside the family sphere, Lăcusteanu inevitably builds the social framework specific for the century: 'I was observing the Romanian aristocratic youth who was coming from abroad with different titles, and from one hundred of them barely one contributed to the society with solid and fundamental instruction and ninety nine were coming back specialized in vices and immorality'. A statement which could seem exaggerated, but consulting other opinion too, we clash into similarities. To sustain this, we will use Charles Lagau report, the French counselor in Wallachia: 'more boyars are sent to boarding schools in Vienne and Paris but they forget the essential they have learned, return to their old habits and end up being worse than those who did not leave the country at all'. And all these ascertainments were made on a background still devoted of meritocratic principles, a background condemned by the author, who sustained that the aristocracy is surrounded by a vicious govern and who eliminated the virtues. He portrays us a scene of the Council of Ministers, charged with preparing the new elections. An atmosphere soaked in competition, in promises about protection and bribe in exchange for some votes.

Tragic scenes left behind by the epidemics were described in other text too, but Lăcusteanu adds another with a terrifying picture of the victims fallen next to him during the 1831 cholera. Regarding the narration of the 1848 events in Wallachia, the Colonel seems to create a narrative thread in which he finds himself to be a hero arresting the revolutionaries, but ending up in the hands of a committee and being judged by it. With the revolutionary Constitution signing by Bibescu and his abdication, the army acknowledge the government and shortly after, when Heliade Rădulescu write a proclamation in which he demands the peasants to stop their land work, Odobescu next to Lăcusteanu turn against them all. The heroic image of our author is amplified because he, in comparison to Odobescu, did not sign a pact with the revolutionaries to become a dictator, act he considered to be a treason. After his arrest, he escape and takes the path to Braşov, leaving behind a chaos, until the entry of the foreign powers in the country. At the Russians arrival, all those who were part of the Revolution, were arrested, a hard task which also belonged to Lăcusteanu.

Mişu's critical state of health determines the father to ask the ruler for his retirement, but not before obtaining the rank of Colonel. He decides to enter the political field after he loses the only son he had, act which will only represent a distraction.

Lăcusteanu's memoirs are meticulously written, moreover, they might seem to be elaborated under a certain control of writing. He avoids details that might place him in a bad light, as he is confessing that some examples are reserved just for his wife because they will appear to be ridiculous, especially when his notes have an educational purpose.

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**Diana Dumitru, *Vecini în vremuri de restrişte: stat, antisemitism și Holocaust în Basarabia și Transnistria*, Iași: Polirom, 2019.**

This valuable book explores the circumstances of Jewish communities in Transnistria and Bessarabia during the tumultuous geopolitical changes that occurred at the beginning of the 20th century. Through her interview-based research, Diana Dumitru has been trying to see what determined Bessarabian civilians to massacre their Jewish neighbours during the Holocaust, while Transnistrian civilians were rather inclined to risk their lives for saving their Jewish counterparts. It is a book that looks critically and comparatively at two different regions: one that carries massacres, and one that shows compassion. The main argument of the book is that the relatively short period of two decades, during which each region had different administrations, policies, and public discourses, had such a great impact upon the civilian population, that it drove one group to gruesomely dehumanise and murder their neighbours, and the other to acknowledge the victim and act with compassion. The first of its six chapters deals with the situation of the Jewish population during the Russian czarist empire, moving on, in the second and third chapter, to how Jews were perceived during the interwar period in Romanian Bessarabia, and in Soviet Transnistria respectively. In the fourth and fifth chapter, the author looks at the attitudes of civilians towards Bessarabian Jews during the Holocaust, and Transnistrian Jews during the Romanian occupation, leaving the sixth chapter for conclusions and remarks. The book also provides illustrations, an index of names, as well as an ample bibliography.

The author, Diana Dumitru, is Associate Professor at the Ion Creangă Pedagogical State University in Chişinău, teaching in the department of History and Social Sciences. As reflected in the book, her professional interest is mainly in the history of the Holocaust and the civilian interethnic relations between Jewish and non-Jewish groups. However, she does not limit her research to civilian interactions, as a large part of the book is, at the same time, an exemplification of complex relationships between the Jewish population and politicians, cultural élites, social élites, members of the military, and many

other actors. It also exemplifies anti-fascist reactions, attempts of social integration, and groups of politicians and civilians who actively fought against anti-Semitism.

The book makes a sort of social radiography of Transnistrian and Bessarabian societies. After the First World War, Romania acquired new territories and, along with that, new minority groups. On the one hand, the book suggests that discrimination against the Jewish population in Greater Romania increased because of a dysfunctional Romanian government that handled poorly the perceived issues with its minority groups. A multitude of factors contributed to the image of the Jew as the greatest enemy of the country, such as politics, nationalism, economy, and eugenics, to name a few. It also suggests that, because of the affiliation of some members of the Jewish community in Bessarabia with the Soviet communist ideology, after the First World War, Greater Romania feared that Jews were spreading revisionist ideas, and that it would lose Bessarabia to the USSR. The ideological fight of fascist Greater Romania with Soviet communism caught the Jewish population in the middle. The Romanian identity in Bessarabia seems to have been forced upon the civilians, during Romanian control over the area, and made the Jew its greatest enemy. She argues that the crimes committed by Bessarabian peasants against the Jewish community may have been "legitimised" by the long tradition of anti-Semitism, that blamed the Jews for all the shortcomings of the governing state. The dehumanisation of the Jews, which was done by their fellow citizens, went to such an extent that killing members of the Jewish community has become a casual act. Interviews with witnesses show a shocking inability of non-Jewish civilians to empathise with the victims, or even to consider them as human beings. It seems to be a fight for power, national supremacy, and identity crisis mixed with social panics that led to the stigmatisation of Bessarabian Jews, which, on the other hand, the author suggests, did not work the same in the Transnistrian territory. As opposed to the massacres voluntarily carried out by Bessarabians, the civilians in Transnistria were willing to risk their lives in order to save, feed, hide or even host Jewish children or adults.

Diana Dumitru argues that, after the October Revolution, the Jewish population in Transnistria was enjoying equal rights with the rest of the population, due to a minority integration program carried out by the Soviet state. Testimonies from both Jewish and non-Jewish groups in Transnistria demonstrate that, during the '20s and '30s, most of the population was not even aware of differences between ethnic groups. The book shows the great impact, whether direct or indirect, that a government can have on the population. Violent acts that were considered natural in the region of Bessarabia, were deemed outrageous in Transnistria. Without being apologetic about the Soviet regime, the author simply remarks the dichotomy between a state led by nationalism, where anti-Semitism is seen as a sign of

patriotism, and a state led by internationalism, where ethnicity and religion lose their traditional value, and stop deepening the cultural rift between different groups of people.

The topic of this ample and original work of social history corrects a great historiographic shortcoming in the Romanian literature about the Second World War, by acknowledging Romania's role in the European genocide of its Jewish population. In a historiography that largely ignores the negative in Romanian history, Diana Dumitru's book, as an honest, original and successful attempt of uncovering the darker parts of Romanian history, is a breath of fresh air. For example, in the fourth chapter, she rewrites a history that was long dominated by nationalistic views, ignorance or even negationism regarding Romania's anti-Semitic and genocidal past. It is a chapter that is meant to be disturbing, as it undeniably illustrates how the civilian population brutally and voluntarily unleashed its hatred towards their lifelong Jewish neighbours, through physical violence, rape, and gruesome murder. She offers a psychological profile of the civilians that participated in the massacre, which she describes as peasants of average social status or "ordinary men", literate, aged around 30, married with children, and sometimes assisted by their spouses. As the present-day Romanian nation is facing a strong revival of nationalistic ideas, and the literature is refusing to be critical about the country's past, this reading is suitable and even necessary for historians and non-historians alike. Perhaps the only weakness of her work is that, when she discusses interwar Romania, she focusses solely on Bessarabia. For someone new to this topic, the book might suggest that the Romanian interwar anti-Semitic legislation was adopted as a direct consequence of the country's relationship with Bessarabian Jews, whereas their case was very similar in many ways to that of Transylvanian Jews, and cannot be "held responsible" for all of the state's anti-Semitic actions.

The Bessarabian involvement in, respectively the Transnistrian resistance to the genocide was a result of different national identity formation processes carried out by either Romanians, or Soviets in the '20s and '30s. Throughout the book, Diana Dumitru diachronically explores these two opposite situations, and, by the end, she manages to demonstrate that the fate of the Jewish population in the two regions, and the interactions of non-Jewish civilians with Jewish civilians in the area during the Holocaust were highly subjected to external factors, such as official ideological policies adopted before and after the First World War, public discourses of Soviet and Romanian intellectuals, and economical consequences of the war.

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**Ulrike Krampfl**, *Les secrets des faux sorciers. Police, magie et escroquerie à Paris au XVIII<sup>e</sup>*, Paris: Éditions de l'EHESS, 2011.

The book of Ulrike Krampfl draws the readers' attention to a subject that is too little investigated by today's historians. French historiography is famous throughout the world also for its historiographic productions that discuss subjects like magic and sorcery. The majority of the French historians and anthropologists who are specialists in researching the phenomenon of magic asserted themselves especially between 1970 and 1980, and they focused particularly on the 17<sup>th</sup> century. With regard to the evolution of magic belief in Paris during the Age of Enlightenment – when it became obsolete, because it did not represent a “social custom” anymore, being replaced with alchemy – there are just a few research works as detailed as that of Ulrike Krampfl. Given the fact that this paper represents her doctoral thesis, the researcher at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales was granted the necessary time for studying and analyzing with remarkable accuracy the documents at Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, the *Archives de la Bastille* Fund, the National Library of France, *Manuscripts Occidentaux* Department, National Archives, the *Parlement de Paris*, *Affaires criminelles*, and the *Papiers des commissaires du Châtelet* Funds as well as a multitude of documentary editions, papers, studies, and articles.

While investigating a research territory marked by the mentality transformations that took place in French society during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with the move from believing to knowing, the author discovered rich archive material issued by Paris Police and the legal authorities of those times. Although she had once started her quest after real sorcerers, while advancing with her research, Ulrike Krampfl realized the fact that she was in an era of fake sorcerers. Instead of encountering fantastic transformations and real magic formulas, she found quackery and a world lacking miracles. Moreover, the image of Paris resulting from the dossiers of the defendants accused of acts of magic and charlatanism has nothing to do with the brilliance promoted by some literary writings. The city is caught in the atmosphere of anxiety caused by crossing the passage from faith to reason; this can be concluded from the superstitions of the population, the appeal to the fantastic world, and the almost inquisitorial treatment of the police applied to the defendants. Thus, Krampfl's work presents a Parisian society at the dawn of the monopoly of Reason and the battle against superstitions, even if this was often made with the abuse exercised by the royal authorities.

The author depicts quite accurately the renewal of the police administration in 1667, when the General Lieutenancy under the leadership of René d'Argenson was established. It introduced an efficient program for combating the various forms of law infringement. The issue of “fake”

sorcerers, which is synonymous with a form of charlatanism, is found in the documents of the Police Archives of Paris until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Other than in these documents, in those issued by the legal authorities, the term is almost missing. In fact, sorcery trials had become rare mainly due to the legal measures taken by Louis XVI (1643-1715) in the second part of his reign. Here, we are referring especially to the Royal Edict of 1682, according to which sortilege and witchcraft were considered quackery.

The detailed and careful investigation of the case files pertaining to defendants accused of “fake magic science” provided the author with the opportunity to extract highly relevant information concerning the relation between genders and this kind of practices. Thus, while women were more inclined towards practicing divination and witchcraft, men preferred agreements and alchemy. Greatly interesting is the author’s cartographic reconstitution of 1700-1713 Paris, with indications concerning the places in which occult sciences were practiced. While magic was performed in the city’s outskirts and in the proximity to the forests (Mitry, Roissy, Sceaux, Anet, Melun, and Provins), alchemy was practiced near religious edifices or next to the main roads, probably also due to the necessity for providing a series of materials needed for the processes performed in the hope of obtaining gold. The author’s research work reveals the fact that towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, alchemy was increasingly preferred to magic, which raised the number of denunciations received by the police. Some alchemists were old sorcerers who speculated the raising interest of the population in obtaining the precious metal and discovering eternal youth.

Ulrike Krampfl’s work has the incontestable merit of introducing into circulation new facts, characters, and details discovered following important archive labor. Readers are attracted into 18<sup>th</sup> century Paris society, on the one hand, among aristocrats, clergy, judges, and policemen, and on the other hand, into the world of sorcerers, magicians, diviners, and alchemists. These two groups attract and exclude each other at the same time; they complete one another through the fascination they manifest for the culture of secret. Structured around a clear methodology, with passages revealing the scholarly aspect of and the enthusiasm for research, Ulrike Krampfl’s work recommends itself as a book that will remain a reference point in published historiography.

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**Ángeles Caso, Sissi. *Biografía împărătesei Elisabeta de Austro-Ungaria*, București: Corint, 2014.**

Ángeles Caso is a Spanish journalist, with a degree in Art History. She is also a translator and a writer. Ángeles Caso's work and cultural background should be taken into account: she worked as a journalist for *Panorama Regional* and for a variety of institutions like *Prince of Asturias Foundation*, or the *Institute Feijoo of 18<sup>th</sup> century studies*. Also, she worked in television at *Televisión Española* and *Cadena SER*. Besides the study dedicated to Sissi, she wrote *El peso de la sombras* (finalist at the Planeta Awards in 1994), *El mundo visto desde el cielo. El resto de la vida. Un largo silencio* (Fernando Lara award in 2000) and much more. In 2009 she won the Planeta award for the novel *Contra el viento*.

Of course, everybody heard about Elisabeth, the wife of emperor Franz-Joseph. You don't have to be a historian or a journalist in order to know who Sissi was. Nowadays, the majority knows her from the movie *Princess Sissi* (1955), starring Romy Schneider, or *Princess Sissi. The Animated Series*, which aired in 1997 on France 3 Channel. And for those of us who are really passionate about the Royal Families of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there are lots of historical studies, biographies and memoirs about the life of Elisabeth. Authors like Brigitte Hamann, Egon Caesar Conte Corti, A. de Burgh, George Upton, Allison Pataki or Jean des Cars dedicated works regarding Sissi, some of them very well documented. Following this statement, a question occurs: where does Ángeles Caso's study stand?

Once we open the book, we see that we have to deal with three main parts. The first part of the study is dedicated to Sissi's life (approximately 80 pages of information). The second part is represented by a photo album and the third part contains a variety of poems written by the empress.

Some of the poems are written in a very liberal spirit whilst others tend to ridicule. Regarding the photo album, I have to say that the pictures did their work, giving you the opportunity to see the personages you've read about; Sissi's beauty was astonishing. There are many pictures and portraits representing the Royal Couple, their children, friends and also the city of Vienna. More than that, every picture has a meaning, being accompanied by text references. From this point of view, the three main parts of Ángeles Caso's study are in perfect harmony: the biography, followed by the photo album and then Sissi's poems, really completes the story, leaving you with a desire to know more about the empress.

In my opinion, the structure of the book and the way it was written can offer a perspective in understanding the complexity of Sissi's evolution through the years. I see this study as one which you can start with, if you want to catch a glimpse of Elisabeth's universe, or one you could take in

consideration if you are looking for material in order to undertake a detailed research about Sissi. However, I don't think that Ángeles Caso's book is a stand-alone one. It is well written, in the form of an intimate journal, but it's not necessarily a book for everyone because you have to know from before about the history and personages that are mentioned. Ángeles Caso's goal was to show us how Sissi felt during her life and that's why the book lacks in explanation and context in some parts. Although, the fact that the paper isn't full of historical details, creates a more relaxed lecture. For a more thorough study, I strongly recommend Brigitte Hamann's book, *Elisabeth. The Reluctant Empress*.

Right from the beginning of the study, Ángeles Caso points out that she is trying to show the *real* Sissi, a human being just like us. It's fascinating how the author presents Elisabeth's tormented soul and complex personality, always far away from Vienna and the Court. Like her father, she wanted to embrace the nature around her. A free spirit like her must have loved travelling. She was too liberal for her times; a true republican. She thought that marriage was a form of slavery. In the end, we see a carrying mother of four and a strong woman who didn't let others influence her decisions.

A. de Burgh, in her memoir about the empress, wrote: "When years hence, the historian will chronicle the events of the nineteenth century; he will have to record many tragedies which have befallen personages [...] and amongst the array of tragedies he will have to record the murder of a woman who, though occupying an exalted position, was essentially a friend of the people, and especially of the poor, the miserable and the suffering". Indeed, Sissi earned the privilege of not being forgotten. Although she was one of the faces of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, she proved to be rather rebellious, stubborn and lonely, misunderstood by the society in which she lived in. Promised at a very young age (only sixteen) to Emperor Franz-Joseph, her cousin, she decided to face her destiny in her own way, but with the cost of being highly criticised, especially amongst the aristocratic class of Wien. Archiduchesse Sofia, the mother in law, wasn't a fan of her. Sissi was born on Christmas Night, year 1837, in München. Her childhood was humble, full of joy. Indeed, she grew up in an atypical family. Castle Possenhofen was her favourite place to be. Even after the marriage with Emperor Franz-Joseph, Sissi was nostalgic about the days when she was free. All of her life, she had to face with an unsuitable and hostile lifestyle.

One of the most important tasks in writing a biography is dosing the amount of subjectivity and also respecting the historical truth by not distort it with fiction. In this case, I think that Ángeles Caso wrote her study with great respect towards Sissi without judging. She made her research by using various studies, including biographies, memoirs, poems and correspondence. Also, she didn't focus only on Sissi, she did research on her family, children and friends too. Knowing Elisabeth's family, and her

connection with her father, especially when she was little, makes it more-easy to understand why the empress had such a controversial personality. The author did her best to point out that Sissi was a complex and profound woman, skeptical and ironical to the bone. But most importantly, she was free. Franz-Joseph and the Habsburg dynasty weren't missed out in this study either. Ángeles Caso did her best in presenting us all the stages of Sissi's life: childhood, marriage, life at court, children, the political dramas and all of her travels.

The beautiful language the author uses makes you feel like the empress is speaking directly to you. The reader becomes a part of the story. Ángeles Caso's achievement is that she created a bridge between two worlds. Reading her book, you can see how passionate the author was about this subject. In a way, I think that Sissi inspired many generations and the fact that people are still looking up to her, makes it impossible not to appreciate the impact she had. Like I said in the beginning, Ángeles Caso's book deserves our truly attention. It's intimate style creates a bond between the reader and Sissi's personality. Although the author maintains, in general, her objectivity, we can't fail to notice that there are some passages in the book where she adopts a very protective attitude towards Sissi, especially the parts where she is trying to demystify all the myths about the empress. In the end, the message is clear: Sissi wasn't a failure neither in life nor in death.

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**Marius Turda, Maria Sophia Quine, *Istorie și rasism: ideea de rasă de la Iluminism la Donald Trump*, Iași: Polirom, 2019.**

Upon hearing the word "race", one might think of biological traits that distinguish between different types of people. However, *Historicizing Race*, by Marius Turda and Maria Sophia Quine, provides an in-depth analysis of how the concept of race passed through history, how it got transformed over the centuries, and what meaning it holds today. Fulfilling such aim was surely not an effortless task. To this day, the meaning of race is still being debated upon, and a large section of the population still believes that the classification of humans by race holds scientific proof. However, the authors have accepted the challenge to critically approach the concept, and they do this in relation to history, culture, nation, genealogy, and science, underlining that race is in fact much more complicated, that it goes beyond biology, and that it has had a central role in the process of European modernisation.

Marius Turda is Director of the Centre for Medical Humanities and Professor in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central and Eastern European Biomedicine at Oxford Brookes University. He is teaching a course on the history of race and racism at Oxford Brookes University, with the purpose of familiarising students with the vast historical, sociological, philosophical, and anthropological background that contributed to the creation of the concept of race in the modern world. Maria Sophie Quine is Senior Fellow in the Centre for Medical Humanities at Oxford Brookes University. She taught a course on the science of evolution and the history of race at the Queen Mary University of London. Her desire was to familiarise students with these topics by using examples and new and captivating historical case studies. She also desired to bring a fresh take on political science, exploring the connections between the construction of race and nationalism.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when modern nations were born, race gave certain ethnic groups a supposed blood right and entitlement to rule certain geographical areas. In Europe, race gave “white superior races” the “noble” mission of colonisation, which was thought to enhance “inferior” cultures and races. This was also a time when ambiguous concepts such as race and culture intertwined, and race took on a cultural dimension. It was the time when the “European race” became a landmark of culture, knowledge, institutions, and laws. Race became a notion of common knowledge, so much so that even critics of racial superiority still adhered to variants of race as superiority or inferiority factors. Theories about the decline of European civilisations emerged at the end of the 1800s and instilled a feeling of urgency in Europe, USA, and Latin America to save the white superior race. This implied a ban on blood mixing between white “superior” people and “inferior” races, followed by the theory and practice of sterilisation and euthanasia, later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In *Historicizing Race*, the authors argue that nowadays we rarely find plain racism, that in time it has taken many forms, and that it acquired cultural and political meaning. This new type of covert racism has become a tool for 21<sup>st</sup> century political organisations when blaming the “Other” for all the problems a nation may face. The authors consider modern Europe to be the main location of the birth and export of racism, despite its existence in other parts of the world, which proves that racism is born not out of biological and physical differences, but out of a feeling of intellectual or national superiority. Thus, to better understand the complicated and multifaceted concept of race, they explore different contexts and traditions in which racism flourished and is still flourishing.

One could say that the book has segmented the concept of race in relation to history, culture, nation, genealogy, and science, using various European countries as case studies, and sometimes USA, Turkey, South

Africa, or Japan. The chronological framework of the book revolves around the 19th century, which was a pivotal moment in history, but is not limited to it. That is when the notion of race entered a new dimension and restricted its focus to nations dwelling within precise geographical frontiers, i.e. countries. When nations started to be seen as living organisms, the idea of race had to adapt to this new paradigm. While the authors state that the origins of racism are tightly related to white modern countries, they acknowledge that it was strongly present in other countries as well, such as Japan or Turkey. This suggests that the most violent form of racism has developed simultaneously with the feeling of national superiority, all over the world.

The book reiterates relatively familiar historical phenomena that led to the formation of nations and national racism, but it greatly contributes to and enriches the literature by explaining subtle mechanisms and identifying key players that led to these phenomena. Furthermore, while the general focus in European history is rather on the Centre or the West of the continent, *Historicizing Race* dedicates a great deal of pages to the history of race in Eastern Europe as well, exploring a new territory, with different political and social dynamics than other European countries. The book follows a logical structure and puts into perspective a long and rich history of ideas and thinkers of race, from five different angles, just as the titles of the chapters suggest.

For someone genuinely interested in this subject, the book's only weakness is that it is perhaps too concise. As stated in the title, the book writes a history of the concept of race from the Age of Enlightenment to the present, and records the changes that the concept has suffered along this period of approximately 300 years. A keen reader on the subject might have hoped for a lengthier book. Fortunately, the critical apparatus provides approximately 700 titles in the bibliography section, and an index of over 500 entries, for further reading. Thus, beyond its highly informative and eye-opening character, the book serves as a study tool for anyone interested in looking at European modernity from a different perspective.

The book concludes with some remarks on what was discussed in its five chapters. It also points at right-wing politicians in our days that are perpetuating the idea of race, are developing racist political programs, and give entitlement to violent racist movements. The resurgence of the idea of race in our societies has brought new changes to the concept, as European countries are reviving old national myths, in trying to reclaim their "lost glory". By looking at the concept of race historically, and at its relationship with philosophy, history, theories of culture and civilisation, science, and politics, the book makes racist concepts today be more easily identified and discredited in the public discourse. Now, when old nationalistic

rhetoric have re-emerged, this book is a necessary reading not only for students but also for professors of history, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, genetics, political sciences and other fields, as it brings a fresh take on matters that are well entrenched into the public discourse, and can be dangerous if not tackled with.

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