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# “Our Affection Contrived to Detain You”: Royal Love Scripts, Favours and Romanness in Cassiodorus’s *Variae*

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**Abstract:** This article explores the role and meaning of love-related emotions in the relationship between the Ostrogothic king and his officials represented by Cassiodorus (ca. 485-580), an Ostrogothic official and a member of the late-Roman elite, in his work *Variae*. First, after contextualising the work, the text outlines the authorial agenda on positive depiction for those kings, who preserved the Roman traditions, the Ostrogothic bureaucratic apparatus and interpersonal ties of love between the ruler and the officials. Second, the paper constructs and identifies five different scenarios of love, which had a social functionality aimed to maintain the continuity of a late-imperial stratified system of favours and court patronage. The article also shows that these scenarios expressed a normative behavioural ideal for an Ostrogothic ruler embedded in the sixth-century intellectual culture and the understanding of Romanness of the Italo-Roman elite. As a result, Cassiodorus departed from the late-imperial codes of emotive expression, but engendered an explicitly affectionate royal persona. And finally, the paper examines how it was possible to represent the ruler’s divergence from the emotional norms of love based on Roman ideal of self-restraint.

**Keywords:** Cassiodorus, the *Variae*, emotive script, love, post-Roman polities, royal favour.

**Rezumat:** Acest articol explorează rolul și semnificația emoțiilor din cadrul relației de iubire dintre regele ostrogot și oficialii săi, reprezentați de Cassiodorus (ca. 485-580), un oficial ostrogot și membru al elitei romane târzii, în opera sa *Variae*. În primul rând, după contextualizarea operei, textul evidențiază interesul autorului privind descrierea pozitivă a acelor regi care au păstrat tradițiile romane, aparatul birocratic ostrogot și legăturile interpersonale de iubire dintre conducător și oficiali.

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În al doilea rând, articolul construiește și identifică cinci scenarii diferite de iubire, care aveau o funcționalitate socială menită să mențină continuitatea unui sistem stratificat de favoruri și patronaj curtenesc din perioada imperială târzie. Articolul arată, de asemenea, că aceste scenarii exprimau un ideal comportamental normativ pentru un conducător ostrogot încorporat în cultura intelectuală a secolului al VI-lea și în înțelegerea romanității elitei italo-romane. Drept urmare, Cassiodorus s-a îndepărtat de codurile de exprimare emoțională din perioada târzie a Imperiului Roman, dar a creat o personalitate regală explicit afectuoasă. În final, articolul examinează modul în care a fost posibilă reprezentarea divergenței conducătorului față de normele emoționale ale iubirii bazate pe idealul roman al stăpânirii de sine.

**Cuvinte cheie:** Casiodor, *Variae*, narațiune emoțională, iubire, politici post-romane, favor regal.

## Introduction

In the landscape of the post-Roman Italian narratives, *Variae*, a collection of the official letters compiled by Cassiodorus (ca. 485-580 CE), offers a variety of emotional displays involving the themes of love and affection and bestowing, expressing, and performing favour by the Ostrogothic ruler. Although the Ostrogothic palatine court and its public rhetoric have been studied from different perspectives, the mentioned emotive dimension has remained virtually unexplored.<sup>1</sup> As the current epistemology of emotions opened the way of understanding emotions as both a biological and, even more importantly, a cultural phenomenon, it also enabled scholars to conceptualise them accordingly as culturally embedded and as capable of assuming different manifestations in different historical and social contexts. Naturally, these depictions of emotions are informed by the “norms of emotional expression

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<sup>1</sup> As far as I am concerned, there are no studies on Cassiodorus’s emotive expression in the *Variae*, but there is a plethora of research that helps to contextualise him in the contemporary discourse about emotions. For a discussion on classical philosophical and early Christian emotive discourse, see Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Damien Boquet – Piroska Nagy, *Medieval Sensibilities: A History of Emotions in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge; Medford: Polity, 2018); Rob Boddice, *A History of Feelings* (London: Reaktion Books, 2019). For a discussion on classical and early Christian rhetoric and emotions, see Rita Copeland, *Emotion and the History of Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

and value" (in Barbara Rosenwein's words)<sup>2</sup> shared by an identifiable social group or so-called emotional community.<sup>3</sup>

In the *Variae*, love and affection are frequently tied to the public persona of the Ostrogothic rulers and the ideal of the relationship between them and their subordinates.<sup>4</sup> The letters penned by Cassiodorus commonly present these affectionate sentiments as different types of feelings which the king or the queen declared to have felt towards their officials and people and which had to be distinguishable for a receiving audience of the Italo-Roman elite. As Nicole Demarchi points out, for understanding such expressions of emotions they should be properly contextualised, which implies "reconstructing the emotional universe of the characters who experience [them] in a given situation and examining their social group, their gender, the characteristics attributed to them by the author and, finally, their brief biographies in the text (past actions, temperament, relationships with other characters)."<sup>5</sup> However, it is worth noting that, due to the absence of alternative sources, the vast majority of the letters appear as a decontextualized, self-contained narratives in which most of available contextual information could be self-referentially gleaned from the text itself. The analysis of such a source as the *Variae* requires the additional methodological approach centred on the concept of emotive scripts, which conveniently differentiate between experienced emotions and the discursive and literary representations of emotional behaviour.<sup>6</sup> Ríkharðsdóttir defines emotive script as a set of rules which dictate "emotional behaviour within any given text, utilising narrative structures, verbal and behavioural cues and context to convey those rules to the reader." In literary texts, these scripts can include "emotional words, [...] narrative arrangement, scene construction,

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<sup>2</sup> Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> The concept of emotional community is coined by Rosenwein by which she implies "groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value – or devalue – the same or related emotions." Ibid. However, its applicability has its obvious limitations, as it works best for textual or relatively closed communities, such as monastic, which is not my case.

<sup>4</sup> Applying Rosenwein's quantitative analysis of emotionally charged words, I concluded that more than one fifth of the love words mentioned in ruler's letters address this aspect (65 out of 250).

<sup>5</sup> I am very grateful to her for these personal insightful methodological remarks, which I found most valuable for my research.

<sup>6</sup> Sif Ríkharðsdóttir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature: Translations, Voices, Contexts* (Woodsbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017), p. 28.



gestures, somatic indicia, [...] narrative silences, [...] verbal coding and a repertoire of actions associated with emotional responses.”<sup>7</sup> By transcending the limitations of the sheer lexicographic analysis, emotive script as an analytical tool additionally allows to read silences of not explicitly mentioned emotions and access them, relying on both careful formal analysis and the meta-textual framework: societal expectations and historical, socio-cultural, and literary contexts through which scripts could dictate how the audience receives and interprets the representations of emotions. Those scripts, according to Ríkharðsdóttir, can be both descriptive, reflecting communally held values and conventionalised emotional behaviours, or prescriptive, when they aim to institute new behavioural patterns into their respective audience.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to Ríkharðsdóttir’s literary-focused conceptualisation, another constitutive component of emotive scripts should be emphasised. Robert Kaster, who was among the first scholars to effectively introduce the concept of emotive scripts into his analysis of restraint in Roman culture, conceived of these scripts as first and foremost “the little scenarios that we play out, as sequences of cause and effect, of perception, evaluation, and response – when we experience any emotion.”<sup>9</sup> Building on Kaster’s definition and Ed Sanders’ script approach, according to which a single emotional concept can be manifested through multiple scenarios, Martin Hinterberger articulated the theory that assumes some emotions as requiring a more elaborate intellectual input from their actors since they are “based on various judgements and on a thorough evaluation of social constellations.”<sup>10</sup> Although I do not concur with this dichotomy of complex and simple emotions, which has attracted a fair amount of criticism due to its universalistic assumptions,<sup>11</sup> Hinterberger rightly observes that emotions heavily depend on the social and intellectual

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.28.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Kaster, *Emotion, Restraint, and Community in Ancient Rome* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 29.

<sup>10</sup> Martin Hinterberger, ‘The Neighbour’s Unbearable Wellbeing: Phthonos/Envy from the Classical to the Modern Greek World’, in Margaret Mullett – Susan Ashbrook Harvey (eds), *Managing Emotion in Byzantium: Passions, Affects and Imaginings* (New York: Routledge, 2023), pp. 60-89, especially pp. 61–64.

<sup>11</sup> In his distinction between basic and complex emotions, Hinterberger relies on the work of Paul Ekman, a critical assessment of whose concept of basic emotions is provided by Jan Plamper – Keith Tribe, ‘Paul Ekman and Basic Emotions’, in Jan Plamper – Keith Tribe (eds), *The History of Emotions: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 147-162.

structures in which they function, hierarchies of power, and social positioning of their actors. Even more important is that emotions might have several or multiple distinct scenarios differentiated on the basis of social and political preconditions and social identity of the actors involved. Thus, the emotive script of a particular feeling, being the "abstract pattern resulting from the analysis of specific emotional scenarios,"<sup>12</sup> captures a specific social configuration between socially-positioned actors which the author or the audience of the author, even if emotion is not named explicitly, are capable to construe or decipher as containing that emotion.

In what follows, I intend to use the concept of emotive script, as outlined above, to analyse different scripts of love and affection in the textual representations of the relationship between the Ostrogothic rulers and their subjects in Cassiodorus's *Variae*. First of all, we should ask how Cassiodorus, as a member of Italo-Roman elite addressing the Italo-Roman elite, adjusted the existing late-Roman imperial emotive codes to accommodate the new Ostrogothic reality and imbued existing love vocabulary and language with new meanings by using the existing literary and rhetorical discourse. In addition, we should look at the ways in which the rulers negatively appraised by Cassiodorus were presented so that the Italo-Roman audience could perceive divergence from an established emotive script of royal love through the subtle shifts of verbal coding. However, before directly identifying the emotive scripts of love, it is necessary to briefly contextualise Cassiodorus's *Variae* and his discursive representation of love.

### **The *Variae* as a Mirror of Governmental Virtue**

Cassiodorus was a sixth-century Italo-Roman intellectual, a member of the late-Roman elite who served as a high official at the court of several Ostrogothic kings and of queen regent Amalasuntha in a variety of capacities, both officially and beyond his offices, for roughly three decades (from 507 to approximately the late 530s-early 540s). His profile is representative of the Christianised Roman bureaucratic or civil (rather than senatorial) elite who endorsed and reinforced a sense of collaborative social identity predicated

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<sup>12</sup> Hinterberger, 'The Neighbour's Unbearable Wellbeing,' p. 62.

on the institutionalised palatine service, the learned culture acquired through a similar educational experience and intellectual background along with the inculcated deference to the ancient traditions and imperial court ceremonial.

The *Variae*, Cassiodorus's most studied work in modern historiography, is a compilation of 468 official letters, penned by him during his public service, which combine the generic features of learned late-antique epistolography and formalised administrative style.<sup>13</sup> There has been an intense scholarly speculation on the date, place, and the audience for which such a collection might have been arranged. Most researchers come to a consensus that the collection must have been compiled in an interval between 538, i.e., the year of Cassiodorus's latest datable letter composed in Ravenna,<sup>14</sup> and the 540s, which chronologically follow the fall of Ravenna and points to Constantinople as the place of assembling of the work's final edition.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, the main issue that arises out of the uncertainty regarding the collection's publication date concerns the audience and the authorial intentions of the work. It was suggested by Shane Bjornlie that the *Variae* could have been an epistolary "apologetic for the bureaucratic elite of the Ostrogothic regime" in order to "make the governmental elite of Ravenna appear suitable [for Constantinople] for return to office after the conclusion of the Gothic War."<sup>16</sup> However, Andrew Gillett has claimed that the true motives behind the elaboration of the work more likely coincide with Cassiodorus's explicit statements in the preface: the *Variae*, in the manner of other fifth- and sixth-century epistolary collections, was a tool for cultivating of *amicitia* within the Italo-Roman senior bureaucratic elite as well as a testimony to Cassiodorus's literary virtuosity

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<sup>13</sup> Christina Kakridi, *Cassiodorus 'Variae': Literatur und Politik im Ostgotischen Italien* (München: K. G. Saur, 2005), pp. 16-142.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Shane Bjornlie, 'Amicitia and the Epistolary Tradition: The Case of Cassiodorus' *Variae*', in Katariina Mustakallio – Christian Krotzel (eds), *De Amicitia: Friendship and Social Networks in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Acti Instituti Romani Finlandiae, 2010), pp. 135-154, especially p. 148.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Shane Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition between Rome, Ravenna and Constantinople: A Study of Cassiodorus and the Variae 527-554* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 11–33. Michael Shane Bjornlie, 'The Letter Collection of Cassiodorus', in Cristiana Sogno (ed.), *Late Antique Letter Collections: A Critical Introduction and Reference Guide* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), pp. 433-448, especially p. 436.

<sup>16</sup> Bjornlie, 'Amicitia and the Epistolary Tradition', pp. 149-150; Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition*, pp. 331-332. For the Constantinopolitan debates around legitimacy and tradition, see Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition*,.

and talents.<sup>17</sup> Since the debate in these dichotomous categories is rather unproductive for the aim of my research, I consider it more plausible that Cassiodorus addressed a rather broadly-defined Roman educated audience, including members of the Italo-Roman and early Byzantine elite, while aspiring to represent a common virtuous 'persona' of the Ostrogothic officials, an essential generic convention of epistolary collections.<sup>18</sup>

The *Variae* is a rhetorically, thematically and structurally complex work. Within its twelve books, it comprises three distinct voices: the letters written by Cassiodorus on behalf of different Ostrogothic rulers, i.e., the letters written in the name of more successful rulers: Theodoric (first five books), Athalaric and Amalasuntha (8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> books), and the ones written for Theodahad and Witigis (10<sup>th</sup> book); the letters written in Cassiodorus's name as praetorian prefect (11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> books); and the *formulae* offered as stylistic models for official pronouncements and appointments to public office (6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> books). Although the *Variae* is frequently misconstrued as essentially a documentary source given its preoccupation with the diplomatic, administrative, and legal activities of the Ostrogoths, in recent years, its highly rhetorical and literary nature has benefited from increased scholarly attention. As Bjornlie noted, for Cassiodorus, letter collections had the same "moral imperative" as classical historiography in providing ethical *exempla*, and, thus, Cassiodorus's narrative strategy was to depict governmental virtue, both of Amals and of their officials, through the portrayal of Ostrogothic public office and exercise of power.<sup>19</sup> It is this governmental virtue which for Cassiodorus legitimised the Ostrogothic government as a model, one informed by the values of *paideia*, moral discernment (*pura conscientia*), and *reverentia antiquitatis*, i.e., the institutional continuity and upholding of the Roman traditions.<sup>20</sup> Finally, the very rhetorical arrangement of the books reflects the idea of Cassiodorus's discernment between virtuous and inferior government based on such an idea of continuity. The positioning of book 10 between Cassiodorus's appointment

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<sup>17</sup> Andrew Gillett, 'Diplomatic Correspondence in the *Variae* of Cassiodorus', in Andrew Gillett, *Envoys and Political Communication in the Late Antique West, 411-533* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 174-185, especially p. 176.

<sup>18</sup> Bjornlie, 'Amicitia and the Epistolary Tradition', pp. 136-142.

<sup>19</sup> Bjornlie, 'The Letter Collection of Cassiodorus', pp. 440-442.

<sup>20</sup> For the importance of demonstration of *paideia* and ideological implications of encyclopaedic knowledge in the *Variae*, see Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition*, pp. 199-207, pp. 269-79.

to the praetorian prefecture (*Var.* 9.24-25) and his acceptance of the office (*Var.* 11.1-3) conveys a subtle rupture in the virtuous government, the reign of Theodahad and Witigis, which is synchronized with the political destabilisation caused by the outburst of the Gothic war.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, in the *Variae*, Cassiodorus silenced any discourse on the actions potentially harmful to Theodoric's positive image, such as the condemnation of some members of the Roman senatorial elite, for obvious reasons, but also because, according to the logic of narrative at least, these acts did not endanger directly the social balance and the institutionalised continuity of Romanness. Alternatively, Theodahad and Witigis were the failed rulers whose flawed kingship Cassiodorus evidently blamed as the reason of the Ostrogothic internal and external instability, unlike the civil elite who managed to preserve the governmental virtue irrespective of two unideal kings, which Cassiodorus made apparent in books 11 and 12.<sup>22</sup>

As for the discursive framing of love, Cassiodorus depicts the kings, the officials, the senators, the Romans, the Goths, as being exhorted or exhorting to maintain reciprocity and ancient virtues in their intersubjective relationship.<sup>23</sup> In this system, the rhetoric of love and affection is omnipresent and pervasive as the sentiment of love plays the role of a vehicle for conveying different personal and interpersonal behavioural codes, such as the ruler's and officials' care for the common good, the generous distribution of favours by the king, peace and concord with other rulers, communal loyalty to and cooperation with the government, love for Christians and God, bonds of *amicitia*, and, finally, conjugal and familial ties. The unifying trait of all this extensive repertoire of love is its exclusively positive conceptualisation. The other intrinsic components of Roman love discourse, that is, erotic passion (irrelevant of gender), illicit desires (adultery, seduction, and others) or misplaced love (excessive desire for ephemeral things), even if mentioned in the text, are not construed and expressly

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<sup>21</sup> Bjornlie, 'The Letter Collection of Cassiodorus', pp. 441–442.

<sup>22</sup> For digressions of natural history in the moral characterisation of Theodahad's reign, see Bjornlie, 'Amicitia and the Epistolary Tradition', pp. 150-154.

<sup>23</sup> For language of reciprocity and idiom of patronage as crucial traits of Roman society with its openly acknowledged hierarchical relation, see David Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); David Konstan, *In the Orbit of Love: Affection in Ancient Greece and Rome* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

labelled as love.<sup>24</sup> Certainly, it is important to stress that expressing love, in Cassiodorus's narrative at least, is an admittedly praiseworthy way of behaviour which is unlikely to receive his negative judgment, however, the specific performance that violates acknowledged Roman sensibilities could be marked as a sign of deviation.<sup>25</sup>

To summarise, Cassiodorus's authorial intentions in the *Variae* were indissolubly tied in with the ideology of the elite of the Ostrogothic kingdom, of representing themselves as legitimate Roman successors. However, I suggest that it was crucial to firmly embed the new reality, including its emotive codes of love, into the intellectual culture of the Italo-Roman elite, who was perceived as a primary audience of this work.

### Royal Love Scripts of the Affectionate Ostrogothic Rulers

As I have mentioned above, love scripts frequently refer to the person of the rulers and specifically focus on their relationship with officials, subordinates, or on abstract concepts such as equity and justice. Logically, in order to understand the royal patterns of behaviour and the corresponding

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<sup>24</sup> Although there are several cases of adultery represented in the collection, the illicit connection is never conceptualised as any form of love. There is the only one mention of the verb "love" and the noun "money" in one context: "It furthermore constituted a penalty for one who attempted to undertake such a crime, not with injury, since when money is not loved (*cum pecunia non amatur*), then it is the merit of the candidate that is truly sought." Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 9, 16, 1, trans. Michael Shane Bjornlie, *The Variae: The Complete Translation* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), p. 374. However, considering the broad applicability of the verbal derivative of *amor*, which in the speech genre of letters, as Williams renders it, should be rather understood as an equivalent of English much less charged English phrase "have a liking for" or "like," it does not really undermine the overall positive connotative penumbra of "love," especially since the phrase is not formulated in a prescriptive manner. Craig Arthur Williams, *Reading Roman Friendship* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 174-258. Starting from here, I will be quoting from Bjornlie's translation like: *Var.* 9, 16, 1 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 374).

<sup>25</sup> *Var.* 1, 30, 4 (Bjornlie, p. 63) presents a case of public disturbances during the pantomime performances at the chariot races, which were allegedly caused by the members of the senatorial households, who responded in this way to various indignities to which senators were exposed during the games: "Let it therefore be decided between your splendid reputation and more base habits: avoid such servants as would be the bearers of injury, who would strive to ascribe to their love for you (*amoui vestro*) [love to the senators – A. M.] what they commit in crime."

emotive personae meticulously crafted by Cassiodorus, I rely on the so-called royal voice of the *Variae*, that is, the letters written by Cassiodorus on behalf of Ostrogothic rulers, as my main group of sources. Apart from their obvious value as sources for an ideological portrait of the ideal Ostrogothic rulers, these texts also offer a unique opportunity to analyse the rhetoric of love and affection towards the members of the palatine administration in the official pronouncements of the quasi-imperial figure of the Ostrogothic ruler, written, potentially performed, and legally enacted through the self-fashioning royal first-person perspective.

First of all, the main source for the narrative representation of the relationship between the Ostrogothic king and his officials are Cassiodorus's letters of appointment addressed to the candidates themselves and the introductions of the newly-installed candidates to the Senate. These letters, although undoubtedly governed by the generic rhetoric of praise as legitimation of promotion, were also embedded in the conventions of ancient letters of recommendation, which routinely harboured love vocabulary (*amor*) and tropes of friendship (*amicitia*) as a means of positive characterization of the recommended candidate.<sup>26</sup> Based on love vocabulary and Italo-Roman discursive tradition, I managed to identify five different scripts of royal love and affection within these letters: ceremonialised royal affection (1), intimate/friendly love (2), love combined with esteem (3), love credited in recognition of service (4), and love of virtues (5).

The first important point is that the social, hierarchical distinction and the distinction in the level of perceived emotional interiority<sup>27</sup> towards other officials was the most apparent between the scripts of ceremonialised affection and intimate/friendly love. As for ceremonialised affection (1), it was frequently signified with words *affectio/affectus* (later just *affectus*) and in the king's case, marked a disposition or attitude of favouring or holding in

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<sup>26</sup> Kakridi, *Cassiodorus 'Variae'*, p. 62. Roger Rees, 'Letters of Recommendation and the Rhetoric of Praise', in Ruth Morello – A. D. Morrison (eds), *Ancient Letters: Classical and Late Antique Epistolography* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 149–68, especially pp. 156–164.

<sup>27</sup> Here I use the term "emotive interiority" in the meaning introduced by Ríkharrðsdóttir by which she understands a presumed internal experiencing of emotion, which could be enacted through emotive performativity (an action performed), emotive expressivity (an explicit narrative discourse around the emotion), and emotive subtext ("the narrative configuration and the built-in emotional signposts"). Ríkharrðsdóttir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature*, p. 71.

favour someone hierarchically inferior, who allegedly deserves it by nobility of birth, actions, quality of service or virtues.<sup>28</sup> As a feeling, it was intertwined with the idea of not just having affectionate disposition towards a member of the elite, that is, a dispositional value, but actually performing it by enacting as concrete "favour" (*gratia*)<sup>29</sup> or "benefits" (*beneficia*).<sup>30</sup> The very act of its performance was also a social action of allocating not only real material rewards and offices but social status and symbolic public honour. Cassiodorus's use of the Latin term *gratia*, which is firmly embedded in Roman ethics of obligation, also points out to the fact this affection is used to designate relationship that are less than private friendship but more a part of culture of reciprocity and patronage and the late-Roman ceremonial of the court.<sup>31</sup> However, I suggest that the explicit use of affective language, such as the term *affectus*, marked a visible departure in the discursive representation of the asymmetrical relationship of the rulers and their palatine subordinates. Although, as far as the extant texts indicate, insofar as the late-imperial emotive rhetoric harboured some cordial vocabulary, it mainly resorted to their formulaic expressions;<sup>32</sup> therefore, in my opinion, Cassiodorus apparently

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<sup>28</sup> Although these motives are co-present in these letters to some extent, some of them are more emphasised: nobility of birth in *Var.* 2.2-3, 3.11; actions and quality of service in *Var.* 2.2-3, 9.8; virtues in *Var.* 1.42-43, 2.2-3.

<sup>29</sup> *Var.* 1.43.2 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 73).

<sup>30</sup> *Var.* 2.2.2 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 81). The relation between *affectus* and its manifestation in the social reality of the Roman emotional community is even more explicit, if we quote the sentence from the letter of the king Theodoric to Felix in full: "Our affection (*noster affectus*) awaits you; the hand fills with advantages (*beneficiis*) and causes what you sought from our imperium to be vowed."

<sup>31</sup> Konstan, *Friendship*, p. 123.

<sup>32</sup> Although most of the imperial rhetoric towards the court elite is, unfortunately, lost either due to the editorial processes during the preparation of legal compilations such as the Theodosian Code or due to the specifics of the source preservation, the Sirmondian Constitutions, a unique example of the imperial legislation preserved in its initial state, luckily provide an access to some of the phrases, which could be used in such addresses, among which we could find: *parens karissime atque amantissime* (*Constitutiones Sirmonianae*, 1), *parens carissime at(d)que amantissime* (*Constitutiones Sirmonianae*, 2, 7, 9, 12, 14, 16), *carissime ac iucundissime* (*Constitutiones Sirmonianae*, 3, 8), *parens carissime* (*Constitutiones Sirmonianae*, 4). Theodor Mommsen et al (eds), *Code Théodosien. [Livre] I-XV: Code Justinien, Constitutions Sirmondiennes* (Paris: Cerf, 2009), pp. 470-539. Admittedly, all of them share an expressly formulaic nature, considering that they consistently accompany the name of the official and are used throughout the collection exclusively in vocative case. What differentiates Cassiodorus's use of affectionate terminology from such imperial



attempted to introduce the new, more affectionate pattern of expression into the Italo-Roman audience.

The term *affectus* itself had a wide signifying emotional potential conjointly informed by the Latin philosophical emotional tradition, a pool of culturally meaningful Christian and classical texts, and the epistolary codes. They created an intertextually formed horizon of feelings of the Italo-Roman elite attributing *affectus* as a feeling primarily to parental/familial, amorous/marital and friends' relationships. Such normative horizon of *affectus* is attested in the imperial fifth-century legislation, where it covers both marital and parental/filial relationships.<sup>33</sup> *Affectus* also appears as one of the parental sentiments in the texts, which could be used in late-antique classrooms for reading Virgil, especially by the Italo-Roman elite residing in Rome, such as Servius's commentary on the *Aeneid*.<sup>34</sup> Servius acknowledges the emotional sentiment coming from father to son, Aeneas' paternal affection (*adfectus patris*) to Ascanius, when Aeneas quickly sends the messenger to fetch his son to accept Dido's hospitality, which is synonymous with the Virgilian "paternal love" (*patrius amor*) mentioned a couple of lines before.<sup>35</sup> Finally, this vocabulary was apparently pertinent to Italo-Roman epistolary culture

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instances is its relatively non-formulaic positioning within the narrative which does not possess any easily identifiable patterns and usually complements the argumentative or encomiastic parts of the letters.

<sup>33</sup> Marital : CTh.9.13.6; filial : CTh.9.15.1: "If any person should hasten the fate of a parent or a son or any person at all of such degree of kinship (*omnino affectionis*) that killing him is included under the title of parricide...". Although *affectio* can mean "relation" of some sort, its emotive content should not be completely disregarded considering its choice as opposed to other existing verbal alternatives: homicide of *affectio*, framed as a father-son relationship, was similarly a grave crime, immoral for Roman traditional values, so the use of *affectio*, does not seem completely accidental as it might have had a rhetorical function as well in emphasising the gravity of going against the bonds of paternal affection. Clyde Pharr et al, eds, *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions* (Union: Lawbook Exchange, 2010), p. 170, 237.

<sup>34</sup> Servius lived and worked as a *grammaticus*, a teacher of the 'second' stage of Roman education, in Rome around 354-430 CE. Frances Foster, 'Reconstructing Virgil in the Classroom in Late Antiquity', *History of Education*, 43/3 (2014): 285-303.

<sup>35</sup> Servius, 1.644, *Commentarius in Vergilii Aeneidos* ['*Servius Auctus*'], eds Georg Thilo – Hermann Hagen (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner Verlag, 1881), vol. 1, p. 186: "RAPIDVM [...] non praemittit, nec enim sequitur ipse, sed praerapidum, quod ex *adfectu patris*, [[id est eius qui mittit,]] intellegendum est, non ex Achaetae velocitate." Virgil's passage, 1.643-644: "neque enim *patrius* consistere mentem passus *amor*."

as well, to generic conventions of which Cassiodorus adapted the royal proclamations, generously using the language of friendship and ties of patronage.<sup>36</sup> Altogether, Cassiodorus's use of, on the one hand, textual models offered by educational texts and, on the other hand, literary conventions of legal imperial and epistolary discourse in which he penned letters with their connotative penumbra firmly grounded the new script of the ceremonialised affection in the distinct Italo-Roman context. Even if the late-Roman expression of imperial liberality shared some similar traits with the script of the Ostrogothic court, Cassiodorus seemingly developed a visibly non-formalised affectionate rhetoric that signalled an adjustment of the imperial formulaic emotive scripts to the emotive mentalities of the no longer imperial Italo-Roman elite.

In the appointment letter to Argolicus, Cassiodorus explicitly fashions Theodoric as a distributor of equal "paternal affection" (*patrio affectu*) to everyone.<sup>37</sup> Apart from the paternal (and, sometimes, friendly) associations mentioned above, it is worth noting that this idea is culturally reminiscent of the Roman metaphor of the emperor's love as a fatherly love, which is, for example, present in the fourth-century epistolography addressed to the imperial chancery. In his letter to the emperors Theodosius and Arcadius, Symmachus, a fourth-century Roman intellectual and holder of high offices,

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<sup>36</sup> In his letter to Ausonius, an imperial bureaucrat and his senior close friend, Symmachus reproaches Ausonius for remaining silent, although his own old affection for him (*amoris veteris*) stays unaltered, and it is because, as he writes, "the more tender [viz., his] affection (*tenerior adfectio*), the readier the complaint." I quote Symmachus's text and the English translation from the edition: Symmachus, *The Letters of Symmachus*, trans. Michele Renee – Salzman Michael John Roberts (Atlanta: Society of Biblical literature, 2011). *Letters*, 1.34 (trans. Salzman and Roberts, pp. 78-79).

The words *adfectio/adfectus* make infrequent appearances throughout the corpus of Symmachus's letters. Overall, he showed a conscious preference for other verbal expressions of love and affection in epistolary friendship: specifically, *amor* (*Letters*, 1.14, 1.15, 1.16, etc.) along with *dilectio* and its variants (1.31, 1.34, 1.41, etc.).

<sup>37</sup> Var. 3.11.1 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 129). Kamil Cyprian Choda – Maurits Sterk de Leeuw – Fabian Schulz, *Gaining and Losing Imperial Favour in Late Antiquity: Representation and Reality* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), p. 174. Furthermore, this affectionate language is already present in the early-second-century principate historiographical discourse of Suetonius's *Life of Titus*: "In the face of calamities of such magnitude, Titus offered not just the concern of an emperor but the love which only a parent can provide (*parentis affectum*), giving consolation in his edicts and as much practical help as his resources allowed." Suetonius, *Titus*, 8, *Lives of the Caesars*, trans. Catharine Edwards (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 278.

persuades the emperors that they “occupy the secret recesses of all hearts [of their subjects], those places reserved for noble family affections (*adfectio*) wherein dwells the love of children for parents and of parents for children.”<sup>38</sup> I presume that in his letters of appointments, Cassiodorus thus reveals the authorial manipulation of existing emotive codes of affection from several discursive contexts as a means of engendering a paternal royal persona, and for that he must have expected the educated Italo-Roman elite to be capable of deciphering the underlying emotive content of these letters. Furthermore, the ceremonialised script of promotion explicitly imbued with such parental affection to officials aligns with Theodoric’s the Great ideology of political representation, which embraced a close association with the principate, that is, the period of the Early Roman Empire, when the emperor was perceived as the first among others and as a “father figure” for *populus Romanus* that could be traced to the historiographical discourse as well.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the social performativity of this script as ceremonial imperial generosity, on the one hand, and affectionate patronage, on the other hand, performed a function of reinforcing the Ostrogothic self-fashioning rhetoric and post-Roman social structures which imitated the principate, however, inescapably adapting it to the figure of the Ostrogothic king, who was less sacred and less symbolically as well as physically distant than a late-Roman emperor. The shift in sociopolitical and ideological structures enabled the shift in emotive mentalities in which the socially prescribed performance of distributing favours for the king, a rather politicised action, created the social and political context to which paternal and emotively charged language was applicable.<sup>40</sup>

However, suggested emotive interiority of the paternal feelings did not signify the factual emotional intimacy and proximity to the ruler. The

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<sup>38</sup> I quote Symmachus’s text and the English translation from Symmachus, *Prefect and Emperor: The Relations of Symmachus A. D. 384*, trans. Reginald Haynes Barrow (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973). *Relationes* 9.4 (trans. Barrow, pp. 68–69).

<sup>39</sup> Jonathan J. Arnold, *Theoderic and the Roman Imperial Restoration* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 72–77.

<sup>40</sup> Despite the fact that such ceremonialised affection did not accompany all appointments of officials, such affection apparently was acknowledged and established as a normative and expectable code and pattern of the Ostrogothic royal behaviour, since in the formulas in 6<sup>th</sup> book, stylistic and moral models for the officials who followed Cassiodorus, he speaks of affection (*affectus*), which is demonstrated through the attention of the ruler devoted to the official and his service. *Var.* 6.5.1 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 251).

script of intimate type of love (2) was conventionally marked with the word *amor* and its derivatives and emphasised physical (and not symbolical) closeness to the Ostrogothic court. Thus, in the letter to the Senate, Theodoric emphasises that Artemidorus, a relative to the emperor Zeno by marriage, demonstrated that he deserved "our love" (*amorem nostrum*) because not only he abandoned the career perspectives at the Eastern court and performed his duties, but also:

This man, beyond this exceptional fidelity (*eximiam fidem*), has shared with us the comfort (*solacia*) of his conversation, so that he would sometimes disperse with the sweetness (*suavitate*) of his speech the stormy cares (*curas*) of the republic, which we undertake according to the necessity of emerging affairs ... This man has made himself famous by the great purity of his intentions (*qui tanta se animi puritate clarificavit*) [the bold font is mine – A. M.], so that when he deserved from us the dignities of court, he satisfied himself with the pleasant duty of arranging the spectacles, so much that he seemed to willingly prefer serving under the guise of pleasure, even to the extent of withholding himself from duties, but estranging himself from us in no portion. For even as a cheerful dinner companion, he has adorned the royal table, here striving to attach himself to us (*se nobis studens iungere*), where we are most able to take pleasure (*gaudere*).<sup>41</sup>

Although this passage requires a more detailed contextualisation of the emotional concepts, which is beyond the scope of this paper, what strikes a distinctive note is a provided glimpse into the emotive interiority of the king, which, considering an elaborate rhetorical structure, Cassiodorus expected that at least some part of the Italo-Roman audience could be able to decipher through several narrative signs.<sup>42</sup> Firstly, a sort of cumulative structure, with

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<sup>41</sup> *Var.* 1.43.2-4 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 73): "*Qui* super hanc eximiam fidem solacia nobis suae confabulationis adiecit, *ut* asperas non numquam rei publicae curas, quas emergentium rerum necessitate suscipimus, sermonis suavitate deliniret. blandus alloquio, supplicantium fidelis patronus, accusare nesciens, commendare praesumens. *qui* tanta se animi puritate clarificavit, *ut* cum apud nos mereretur aulicas dignitates, spectaculorum ordinationem laetissimam sibi militiam vindicaret, quatenus sub specie voluptatis libere videretur velle servire, a laboribus quidem temperans, sed in nulla se nobis parte dissocians. Regalem quin etiam mensam conviva geniatus ornavit, ibi se nobis studens iungere, ubi nos certum est posse gaudere."

<sup>42</sup> I gained this expression from Ríkharrðsdóttir, and I understand it like the specific narrative or discursive indicators that guide the reader's interpretation.

*anaphoras* (*qui...*, *ut...*), emotive words, and an argumentative sequence of personal features, typical for recommendation letters, however, quite personalised and attached to the person of Theodoric in our case, conveys a sort of emotive intensity even without much of the love vocabulary involved. Secondly, this sensibility of the Italo-Roman elite would be also informed by the classical ways of thinking about love between friends as a shared activity, which originated from Aristotle and offered a perception of friendship as a matter “manifested through a flow of acts of affection that continually reaffirm and sustain the love”.<sup>43</sup> There are also other popular Roman tropes of friendship interwoven into the letters surrounding the appointment of Artemidorus: appeal to the benefits (*fructus*) and shared pleasures (*gaudere*), fidelity (*fides*), and the motif of the union in life (“...but estranging himself from us in no portion”).<sup>44</sup> In his letter to Artemidorus, Theodoric explicitly refers to their connection as “consecrated friendship” (*sacrae amicitiae*), however, in the letter to the Senate, this verbal characteristic is communicated in a rhetorically more powerful and implicit empathic way, which would engage the audience with the king’s feelings through a discursive arrangement and could be deciphered as a code of intimate friendship. It is also important that in this panegyric to Artemidorus, Cassiodorus purposefully omitted the description of the moral virtues of Artemidorus, except *puritas animi* “purity of his rational soul,” the existence of which, in my view, could have appeared evident for the audience through the intimate king’s love and friendship because the ancient ideal of friendship founded itself on the idea of “union by regard of virtue.”<sup>45</sup> The curious downplay of social distance between Artemidorus and Theodoric also aligns with a more radical sense of moral egalitarianism provoked by the shift in the perception of friendship under the empire, as the vertical relations between nobility became considerably more

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<sup>43</sup> Konstan, *In the Orbit of Love*, pp. 46–47.

<sup>44</sup> Benefits: *Var.* 1.42.1; pleasure: *Var.* 1.43.3; fidelity: *Var.* 1.42.4; 1.43.3 (twice), the motif of the union in life: *Var.* 1.42.2, 1.43.3 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 72–73). For the analysis of Roman tropes of friendship, see Williams, *Reading Roman Friendship*.

<sup>45</sup> Cassiodorus, in fact, uses the rhetorical device of *praeteritio*: “But what more must be said concerning his morals, which suffice to thoroughly demonstrate that he has always deserved our affection (*amorem nostrum*)?”. *Var.* 1.43.4 (trans. Bjornlie, 73). For more on friendship as a union by virtue, see Konstan, *In the Orbit of Love*, p. 64; C. Stephen Jaeger, *Ennobling Love: In Search of a Lost Sensibility* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 27–28.

openly hierarchical and asymmetrical.<sup>46</sup> What is notable is the supplanting of moral arguments for the social advancement of the desired candidate by the affectionate argument of ruler's attitude, which stands out from late-Roman imperial emotional codes.

Certainly, Artemidorus is rather a notable exception, but such a script of royal intimate love also implied the constant intimacy underlying such a relationship. For example, Senarius, an official with long proximity to Amals, is said to have "locked away our secrets with the probity of good morals (*bonarum iussiorum*), being privy to many things."<sup>47</sup> The long-term trustworthy service combined with particular characteristics of the court official also served as a precondition to prove being worthy of *amor*.<sup>48</sup> The crucial element for the establishment of these bonds was also the virtue of fidelity (*fides*) to the Ostrogothic king. Characteristically, such high moral standards were not a prerequisite for receiving ceremonialised affection: Liberius, a patrician and former partisan of Odoacer, could have "feigned hatred" (*odium*) for his master to "procure the affection of another" (*affectus alterius*), that is, the Ostrogothic king Theodoric. The fidelity to the king could be performed through either civil service or manifestations of male *virtus*, as in the case of Tuluin, a Gothic heroic general, who performed his love for the devout king (*amor piissimi regis*) when he risked his life re-entering the stormy sea in order to rescue Theodoric.<sup>49</sup>

Apparently, the last three scripts played a much less prominent and strictly circumscribed role in the emotive codes of the royal behaviour, at least quantitatively, nevertheless, substantially complemented the performative range of royal affection. Although love credited in recognition of service (4) makes only two proper appearances, both cases portray the appointments of the officials who, lacking in proximity to the royal court, still required a

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<sup>46</sup> Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World*, p. 148.

<sup>47</sup> *Var.* 4.3.3 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 168).

<sup>48</sup> *Var.* 3.28.1 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 142).

<sup>49</sup> Fidelity in civil service: "...which he knows that public servants (*servientes*) please us. This fidelity (*fides*) in former years promises blessings he will produce in the future." *Var.* 4.4.2; the episode with Tuluin is described in *Var.* 8.10.9-10. Although there are no explicit verbal mentions of Athalaric's affectionate sentiments to Tuluin or his fidelity, he enjoyed specific proximity to the king being a royal page in his youth and, then, retained a sufficient affinity to the Amal court due to his kinship with Amal dynasty. *Var.* 8.9.8; 8.10.3 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 269, 325).

separate script less devoid of emotional content than mere affection. Thus, Cassiodorus describes the virtues of Liberius, who is mentioned above as a servant unwaveringly loyal to Odoacer until his undeniable defeat – ironically, as Bjornlie suggests – but who quickly shifted his fidelity to Amals with the symptomatic for the period malleability of loyalties in pursuit of the benefits for his palatine service.<sup>50</sup> Despite Liberius’s duplicity, Theodoric, in Cassiodorus’s quill, rather explicitly states that Liberius’s faithfulness to Odoacer is precisely an activity, which gained him Theodoric’s respect and loving disposition:

Indeed, you recall, conscript fathers, the patrician Liberius had been praiseworthy even in his rivalry with us (*in aduersitate nostra laudabilem*), when he thus offered unwavering (*integerrimis*) service to Odoacer, so that after he was known to accomplish so much against us as an enemy, he was even more worthy of our esteem (*dilectione nostra*).<sup>51</sup>

It is worth noting that the royal attachment is primarily signified by the noun *dilectio*, which is a weaker, less passionate and less intimate equivalent of *amor*.<sup>52</sup> Irrespective of whether we interpret this fragment ironically or literally, the emphasised intensity and seeming effectiveness of Liberius’s service seems to be crucial in attaining Theodoric’s *dilectio*, which is conflated with his political loyalty. This complex hermeneutics of fidelity and committed service reappear in other central themes in this script, that is, the virtue of integrity (*integritas*) and extreme dedication to the public service, an inherent value of the traditional Roman elite. Thus, Liberius “increased the fisc and advanced public weal without loss to private concerns”.<sup>53</sup> The second example, Athalaric’s letter of appointment for Cassiodorus as praetorian prefect (ironically, penned by Cassiodorus himself) contains the same elements,

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<sup>50</sup> Bjornlie, *Politics and Tradition*, pp. 167-168.

<sup>51</sup> *Var.* 2.16.2 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 93).

<sup>52</sup> For *amor* as the stronger affectionate word compared to *dilectio*, see TLL 1.1967.48-1973.77.

<sup>53</sup> Integrity: *Var.* 2.16.2 (twice); 2.16.4; public service: *Var.* 2.16.4-5 (trans. Bjornlie, pp. 93-94). Apart from increasing the public finances, Liberius was also in charge of successful division of the land and settlement of Gothic army on Italian property. For the dedication to public service as a defining quality for the Roman elite’s way of life see: Laurens Ernst Tacoma, *Roman Political Culture: Seven Studies of the Senate and City Councils of Italy from the First to the Sixth Century AD* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); Jeroen W. P. Wijnendaele (ed.), *Late Roman Italy: Imperium to Regnum* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023).

although, unsurprisingly, it is twice as long and contains an elaborate encomiastic account.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, per se this script marks a relationship based on the ruler's recognition and honouring of the official's actions that contributed to the public welfare or direct services provided to the ruler, the relationship, which is manifested, similar to intimate and ceremonialised affection in concrete favours: the favours provided to the son of Liberius, in the first case, and Cassiodorus's promotion under the new ruler, in the second.

Unlike the three affectionate scripts mentioned above, which were mainly addressed to individuals, the addressed actors concerned with the script of esteemed love (3) were commonly a collective body of royal subjects or a particular social class. The script's underlying emotive meaning of reverence came from the traditional Roman terminology, specifically, the word *caritas*. In late-republican Rome, love in the form of *caritas* was considered one of the main virtues on which social life was grounded. Cicero associated this feeling with the respectful disposition towards parents, fatherland and people, prominent in wisdom or power.<sup>55</sup> With the gradual adoption of Christianity in the Roman Empire and Latin translation of biblical textual canon, *caritas* as a feeling was re-conceptualised within patristic literature as an equivalent of Greek *agape*, love of God and charitable love to the neighbour.<sup>56</sup> However sparse is Cassiodorus's use of *caritas* in the association with the *princeps* in the context of his relationship with his subjects, it seems to neglect the layer of biblical Christian hermeneutics by reviving the Roman emotive code and applying it to the contexts involving the Senate to signify a subjective attitude of respect, "esteem," a sentiment of appreciation, not necessarily requiring exact actions.<sup>57</sup> However, while referring to people and regnum as an addressee of

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<sup>54</sup> Integrity: *Var.* 9.24.7; 9.25.12; public service: "May heavenly powers witness his arrangements, so that one whose wisdom we have tested by long association shall be found fortunate in his own affairs, most faithful to us (*fidelissimus nobis*) and useful to the republic (*utilis rei publicae*)."  
*Var.* 9.25.12; and, most importantly, *dilectio*: "Hence it is that you [Cassiodorus] used to be publicly associated with the affection of the most gloriously just Princeps [Theodoric] (*principi gloriosa dilectione*), because you were separated from vices by a known reserve". *Var.* 9.24.4 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 386, 389).

<sup>55</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Partitiones Oratoriae*, 88, 12 (Teubner: W. Friedrich, 1907), p. 410.

<sup>56</sup> Carter Lindberg, *Love: A Brief History through Western Christianity* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), pp. 51–65.

<sup>57</sup> In the letters to the Senate concerning the appointment of Artemidorus, Theodoric displays his special *caritas* to the Senate (*caritatem vestri praecipuam*) by the fact that he does not disregard



such respectful love, Cassiodorus playfully blurred the boundaries between Christian and traditional Roman understandings of *caritas*, and he could have expected his audience to decode subtle narrative signs for this, such as positioning of *caritas* in the old-Roman meaning of respect towards the kingdom between two consequent mentions of God:

Now, rouse your courage (*animos*) and with God's grace (*deo propitio*) always choose better things, so that, just as we have commenced upon royal power with affection (*a caritate potestatem regiam*), thus by God (*deo*) will we pursue peaceful tranquillity in following years [the bold font is mine – A.M.].<sup>58</sup>

Finally, as Graeco-Roman tradition treated love in any public discourse as an ethical subject,<sup>59</sup> the script for love of virtues served as a tool for voicing and performing the moral values prescribed for the Ostrogothic *princeps*. Cassiodorus described the ruler's attachment to any appointee almost exceptionally with nouns, thus, generalising the emotion and depersonalising the relationships.<sup>60</sup> However, he used verbs to further emphasize the *princeps'* passion as a distributor of rewards or lover of virtues, and this personalised emotion as an action generated and experienced by the subject.<sup>61</sup> For example, Theodoric writes that “we cherish” (*amamus*) “exceptional dignities” bestowed from his liberality (*benignitas*)<sup>62</sup> or duplication of “our favors” (*beneficia nostra*).<sup>63</sup> Apart from playing the role of a benefactor, Theodoric also fashions himself as a virtuous model for his subordinates, who “are able to love (*sola diligere*) only in that in which you also know us to love (*amare*).”<sup>64</sup> It is in this script that

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its admonitions regarding the civil disturbances in Rome and shows his concern by the very same cares (*ex ipsa cura*) when he appoints his confidant to the urban prefecture. *Var.* 1.44.1 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 74).

<sup>58</sup> *Var.* 8.3.5 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 317).

<sup>59</sup> Jaeger, *Ennobling Love*, 28.

<sup>60</sup> Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), pp. 58–61.

<sup>61</sup> Ríkharrðsdóttir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature*, p. 50.

<sup>62</sup> *Var.* 3.12.1 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 130).

<sup>63</sup> *Var.* 2.2.1 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 80).

<sup>64</sup> Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, 58. *Var.* 4.37.1 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 190). It is important to note that addressing the letter to Theodogunda, an *illustris* woman, responsible for closing the litigation between two persons, Cassiodorus also subtly extends these principally masculine emotive codes to the noble females.

Cassiodorus most expressly glorifies the emotive behaviour of the king as it attests to the governmental virtue of both ruler, who promotes worthy members of the civil elite, and of these members, who are exhorted to support stability and the ruler's virtuous rule. Such manner of affectionate and morally superior distribution of favours reinforced the image of *imitatio imperii* and specifically uninterrupted continuity of late-Roman imperial practices of liberality.<sup>65</sup>

To summarise, all these five different scripts of the ruler's emotive world reflected a social performativity that accommodated the social and political realities of sixth-century Italy. Although the presented system of social differentiation through the scripts of love could seem static, these scripts could and did overlap explicitly or implicitly, even if we cannot access the precise dynamics of change and interaction throughout the entire period.<sup>66</sup> However, as we see, they all stressed the preserved Roman emotive comportment and the governmental virtue of the rulers, which was not a universal characteristic for all Ostrogothic kings.

### **Divergence from the Script: the case of Theodahad and Witigis**

In this last part, I will briefly describe how the generic parameters of official correspondence written in the name of the ruling king still left vacant space for representing divergence from the royal scripts of love by looking at the example of the letters issued in the name of Theodahad. As I have tried to show above, the emotive scripts introduced earlier were a part of normative nuanced system of royal behavioural codes, which were recognised by the

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<sup>65</sup> Choda – Leeuw – Schulz, *Gaining and Losing Imperial Favour*, p. 84; Marco Cristini, 'Diplomacy at the End of the World: Theoderic's Letters to the Warni and Hesti', *Klio*, 103/1 (2021): 270–296; Carlos F. Noreña, *Imperial Ideals in the Roman West: Representation, Circulation, Power* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 82–92.

<sup>66</sup> Explicitly, in the case of Artemidorus, the latter enjoyed both royal intimacy and affection expected from the king by the palatine servants (*Var.* 1.42.2 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 72)). Implicitly, a more interesting case presents Cassiodorus, since in the letters of his appointment as praetorian prefect, the specific verbal coding and some recurring themes could have implied a special intimacy with the rulers (2). For example, the emphasis on fidelity (*Var.* 9.24.11; 9.25.12 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 387, 389)) and proximity: "You acted as a personal judge and private advisor to the master of the state. ...he would draw the opinions of the wise from your stories, so that he might compare his own deeds to those of antiquity." *Var.* 9.24.8 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 386).

Italo-Roman elite. Theodahad's letters, however, diverge from these in several minor, at first sight, but crucial aspects, considering the generic limitations.

First, Cassiodorus introduced a prescriptive element to the bestowal of royal ceremonialised affection and explicitly articulated expectations of reciprocity. While the previously mentioned royal affection explored the role of the Ostrogothic king as a benefactor and feeling subject, Theodahad reversed the actors, making officials a feeling subject, who were demanded reciprocity in an almost jussive manner.<sup>67</sup> The assassination of Amalasuntha (535 CE) puts all of his letters into a wider historical context, where his political position seemed unstable, so Theodahad attempted to secure it with installing a Gothic garrison in Rome, which prompted the Senate to request an oath of security from him, which he eventually took. Thus, in the letter to the Senate, Theodahad writes that for his display of royal affection he expects *affectus* in return: "demonstrate (*monstrate*) good faith for the assurance you have obtained, since after such a thing, affection (*affectus*) ought to be returned (*redditur*) for our clemency (*nostrae clementiae*), rather than promised (*offertur*)."<sup>68</sup>

Other three vital points are Theodahad's grammatical individualisation of ceremonialised affection, imperative constructions, and heightened emotionality, all of which could be vividly illustrated with one concrete example. In the letter to the Senate, which elevated Maximus, a member of leading senatorial families, to the rank of *primicerius*, Theodahad also attempted to represent Maximus's announced marriage to a woman of the Amal family as the one that cemented the union of the Amal dynasty with the Senate and the Roman people:

But we add to his honorable distinctions, conscript fathers, so that the shining grace of your order may be commingled in lofty kinship with us. Indeed, it is not possible for only one man to assume to claim for himself the glory that we are granting to the Roman name. Return (*reddite*) the fullest regard (*plenissimam caritatem*) for my affection (*affectui meo*). A subject who

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<sup>67</sup> According to Vidén, Cassiodorus frequently resorted to imperative as a polite, soft command with only imaginary jussive sense that functioned as a stylistic feature. Consequently, Cassiodorus's use of *praesens imperfecti* might be an attempt to articulate another type of command making it slightly stricter. Gunhild Vidén, *The Roman Chancery Tradition: Studies in the Language of Codex Theodosianus and Cassiodorus' Variae* (Göteborg: Acta universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1984), pp. 65–68.

<sup>68</sup> *Var.* 10.16.2 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 405).

is worthy enough that his master bestows kinship upon him must be loved more (*plus est amandus*) ... How could entreaties demand of me what my heart has granted of its own accord (*meus animus spontanea deliberatione*), so that the men of your order whom we are truly able to call fathers should be bound to us with the distinction of kinship?<sup>69</sup>

Here Cassiodorus uses for the first and for the last time a possessive first-person singular adjective "*meus*" instead of plural "*noster*," as was the norm for kings that represented governmental virtue, thus, he extraordinarily individualises the affection manifested through Theodahad's royal favour. The discursive arrangement also implies that respective *caritas* has to be returned specifically to Theodahad as a person currently possessing the power of the king rather than an institutionally and symbolically entitled ruler. It creates the effect of Theodahad's actual and symbolical dissociation from the embraced role of the *princeps*, as he essentially steps out of the royal public persona to demand public love. Then, the gerundive *amandus* in the expression *plus est amandus* is used in its imperative meaning as an attempt to prescribe and impose feelings of personal attachment towards his current protégé. Third, an emphasis on "my rational soul" (*meus animus*), which classical writers largely considered as one of the main seats of emotions,<sup>70</sup> as a vehicle for making a decision for granting a favour, as opposed to abstract imperial virtues such as generosity and love of virtues, sheds an unfavorable light on Theodahad's allegedly heightened emotionality.

Overall, though Cassiodorus never explicitly indicated the excessive expression of emotions in Theodahad's rhetoric or bodily gestures, all these literary and discursive means in the official public discourse convey the subtle breach with normative emotive conventions implied by the Roman ideal of self-command and self-restraint.<sup>71</sup> Cassiodorus's subtle criticism targeted this deviation from the traditions of antiquity, which, eventually, further exacerbated the internal conflicts between the civil elite and Theodahad, leaving the Ostrogothic *regnum* vulnerable to external attacks.

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<sup>69</sup> Var. 10.12.3-4 (trans. Bjornlie, p. 402).

<sup>70</sup> Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions, 600-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 52-63.

<sup>71</sup> Stavroula Constantinou – Mati Meyer, *Emotions and Gender in Byzantine Culture*, New Approaches to Byzantine History and Culture (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 4.

## Conclusion

Cassiodorus's *Variae*, as a pro-Ostrogothic textbook intended for the next generations of the bureaucratic Italo-Roman elite, documented the new perplexing reality as a combination of both governmental successes of early years and political failures of the late 530s, in which the Roman institutional and cultural continuity served as an authorial measuring instrument. In this context, the emotive behaviour of the rulers and the quality of their interactions with the administrative apparatus acquired a central role, which was indissolubly linked to imperial court culture and public performances of affection. Despite the historiographical and of the "Roman imperial restoration," promoted by Cassiodorus idea, the patterns in which the public persona of the rulers could display their love and affection to officials visibly departed from the late-Roman imperial codes. These traditional types of imperial benevolence with their strictly formulaic and limited vocabulary were no longer applicable and meaningful for the Italo-Roman elite, who, in the fifth century, witnessed how the imperial power and authority was effectively fading away in the unrelenting struggles for the control of the Western Roman Empire followed by Odoacer's twenty-year dissolution of western Roman emperorship.<sup>72</sup> Cassiodorus preserved the basic semantic signifiers of the imperial codes such as love vocabulary but significantly expanded on their performativity (rhetoric) and emotive range (epistolography of friendship, paternal and familial language, metaphors). Different identifiable royal love scripts performed a social function of reproducing some of the imperial patterns of behaviour with its stratified system of favours and culture of patronage, in its wider sense. In the narrower sense, however, the Ostrogothic political structures, self-fashioning pursuits of the Roman principate and adaptation of the imperial and Italo-Roman codes engendered a more affectionate persona of the king with emotive interiority, deeply embedded in the sixth-century understanding of Romanness. These nuanced sensibilities of the Italo-Roman elite were the most apparent in the subtle narrative signs, which marked Theodahad as a king that diverged from normative emotive scripts – all those have been pointing to his deviation, in Cassiodorus's perspective, from the fundamental Roman emotional ideal of self-restraint.

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<sup>72</sup> Wijnendaele, *Late Roman Italy*.

As Ríkharðsdóttir notices, "emotion is a literary device for engendering and rectifying narrative imbalances to convey a literary message of social behavioural codes."<sup>73</sup> It is precisely through this discursive and linguistic representation of such emotion as royal love that we can locate the new conflicted emotive sensibility of the Ostrogothic reality.

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<sup>73</sup> Ríkharðsdóttir, *Emotion in Old Norse Literature*, p. 177.

# A Database for Capestrano's Correspondence: Why and How?\*

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**Abstract:** The friar John of Capestrano (1386-1456) was a key figure of the Quattrocento, with a core during his "European Mission" (1451-1456). He was, in his lifetime as (sometimes) still at present a controversial character: Franciscan reformer, jurist, inquisitor, promoter of the Observant movement, Vicar general of the Observance, preacher and a crusader on the occasion of defending Belgrade. It is necessary to definitively overcome apologetic, romantic and ideological interpretations and break through the distorting mirrors at the root of opposing prejudices.

The friar's rich correspondence has been identified as an indispensable starting point not only to read his figure in other terms. In fact, the 'Capestrano-case' – if placed in the complex European political and religious contemporary context – proves to be an excellent detector for the intertwining of religious reforms, political perspectives and the process of making Europe at a crucial moment.

Two objectives are therefore primary:

1. to study the entire *corpus* of his correspondence in a critical edition;
2. to process this *corpus* by making it available to European scholars on an electronic platform.

My dissertation is focused on the so-called Italian letters and my challenge is fine-tuning a database to be then applied to the whole *corpus*.

**Keywords:** Late Medieval Europe; Franciscan Studies; John of Capestrano; Correspondence; Digital Humanities; Database.

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\* The paper was presented at the International Conference *Revising Revisionism: Paradigms, Interpretative Models and Heuristic Tools in Historical Research* (Cluj-Napoca, Doctoral School in History, Civilization, Culture – 11 Novembre 2023). It offers an overview of the motivations, objectives and provisional results of my doctoral research: *Una piattaforma informatica per la corrispondenza di Giovanni da Capestrano. Dal campione delle lettere "italiane" al database del Grand Tour (1451-1456)*. In the meantime, the thesis has been discussed in July 2024.

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**Rezumat:** Călugărul Ioan de Capistrano (1386-1456) a fost o figură cheie a secolului al XV-lea, cu un rol central în timpul „Misiunii europene” (1451-1456). El a fost, în timpul vieții sale și (uneori) chiar și în prezent, un personaj controversat: reformator franciscan, jurist, inchizitor, promotor al mișcării Observante, vicar general al Observanței, predicator și cruciat cu ocazia apărării Belgradului. Istoriografia necesită depășirea interpretărilor apologetice, romantice și ideologice și înlăturarea oglinzile deformante care stau la baza prejudecăților aflate în opoziție. Corespondența bogată a călugărului a fost identificată ca un punct de plecare indispensabil nu numai pentru a-i citi figura în alți termeni. De fapt, „cazul Capestrano” – dacă este plasat în contextul complex al politicii și religiei europene contemporane – se dovedește a fi un excelent detector al împlinirii reformelor religioase, perspectivelor politice și procesului de construire a Europei într-un moment crucial. Prin urmare, două obiective au fost primordiale: 1. studierea întregului *corpus* al corespondenței sale într-o ediție critică; 2. prelucrarea acestui corpus, punându-l la dispoziția cercetătorilor europeni pe o platformă electronică.

**Cuvinte cheie:** Europa medievală târzie; Studii franciscane; Ioan de Capistrano; corespondență; digital humanities; bază de date.

### **John of Capestrano: the Figure, his European Tour, and his Correspondence**

The Italian Franciscan friar John of Capestrano (from now on: JoC) was born in 1386 in Capestrano, a small town near L'Aquila, in Abruzzo. The region, bordering the Papal State, was then part of the Kingdom of Naples, ruled by the Angevin dynasty until 1442, then by the crown of Aragon.

As a student, JoC moved to the University of Perugia, at that time renowned for juridical studies, regularly attracting students from all regions of Central Italy. After his studies, he became a jurist. He was a councillor at the royal court of Naples and then a civil judge in Perugia. In 1416, he joined the Friars Minor, within the Observant branch of the Order. He continued to use his legal skills after becoming a friar and was a key figure in the institutional development of the Observance from the 1440s, when he collaborated with Bernardino of Siena. Immediately after Bernardino's death (in 1444), the first bitter controversies broke out between the two branches of the Order, worsening later, throughout the second half of the century. JoC



took the opportunity to provide the Observant branch with a canonized saint: he was the principal hidden manager of the process, which ended with Bernardino's canonization in 1450. In the name of saint Bernardino, and in close collaboration with Pope Eugene IV,<sup>1</sup> he conceived and promoted a project of Observance, aimed to transform the originally eremitic movement subjected to the Order's hierarchy, in a group substantially self-governed, *de facto* alternative to the Order and openly competitive with it. The group was generally called in papal text as *fratres minores de observantia*, and by themselves *fratres de familia*: all of them used the word 'family' to denote the Observance, and the word 'Conventuals' to denote the other part of the Minors' Order.

In 1451, on the order of Nicholas V, JoC left for Vienna, to meet the emperor, Frederic III.<sup>2</sup> He could not imagine, then, that his journey over the Alps would be without return. His initial diplomatic task, turned into a European mission, developed according to an unplanned itinerary. From time to time, he faced different degrees of urgency: the pressing invitations addressed to him from various towns and Countries (first, the Polish Kingdom), or his attempts to meet in person the 'supposed' enemies of Christianity (first,

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<sup>1</sup> He is considered the author of the Martinian Constitutions (issued at the Chapter of Assisi in 1430) and of the bull *Ut sacra* (18 July 1446), issued by Eugene IV, which established the regime of substantial self-government of the Observance *sub Vicariis*. See Mario Fois, 'I papi e l'Osservanza minoritica,' *Il rinnovamento del francescanesimo: l'Osservanza*. Proceedings of XI Conference of the International Society of Franciscan Studies [Assisi, 20-22 October 1983] (Assisi: University of Perugia – Centre of Franciscan Studies, 1985), pp. 29-106, especially 48, 53; Grado Giovanni Merlo, *Nel nome di san Francesco. Storia dei frati Minori e del francescanesimo sino agli inizi del XVI secolo* (Milano: Editrici Francescane, 2003), pp. 235, 332. On the pontificate of Eugene IV (Gabriele Condulmer) see at least: Denys Hay, 'Eugenio IV,' *Enciclopedia dei papi* (Rome: Treccani, 2000), vol. II, pp. 634-640.

<sup>2</sup> It was the imperial secretary Enea Silvio Piccolomini who had invited JoC to preach in Vienna. The aim was to pacify, with his charisma, the relations between the Roman papacy and the German nobility after the troubles following the Council of Basel. For JoC's travel, reference is made to the historiographical 'refoundation' elaborated by Letizia Pellegrini for an unfunded ERC project and presented in summary in Letizia Pellegrini – Ludovic Viallet, 'Between Christianitas and Europe: Giovanni of Capestrano as an Historical Issue,' *Franciscan Studies*, 75 (2017): pp. 5-26; see also Letizia Pellegrini, 'Riforme religiose, movimenti osservanti ed Europa. Intorno alla (e oltre la) missione di Giovanni da Capestrano (1451-1456),' in György Galamb (ed), *Franciscan Observance Between Italy and Central Europe*. Proceedings of International Conference [Szeged, 4-6 December 2014], [Chronica. Annual of the Institute of History – University of Szeged, 15 (2017)], pp. 19-36.

the Bohemian 'heretics'). After the conquest of Constantinople, the 'Turkish nightmare' became for many (including JoC) a reality even more raw and threatening than in the past. Thus, 1453 was a turning point in his mission: from then on, JoC was almost exclusively concerned with the totally unsuccessful diplomatic attempt to organize a crusade against the infidels. He saw a crusade of Christian princes as the only means to prevent the Ottomans of Muhammad II from conquering the heart of Christian Europe, particularly the Kingdom of Hungary. However, only John Hunyadi was willing to support this plan and was ready for battle, with Pope Callixtus III ideally supportive of the undertaking. On the other hand, – perhaps in the wake of the recent 'Christian' defeat of Varna (1444) – the imperial Diets convened for the purpose failed.<sup>3</sup> On these occasions, the inflammatory sermons of JoC (although effective within the crowds of citizens) seem to have been, compared to the political powers, a *vox clamantis in deserto*.

In parallel with these political and religious activities, there is a constant in the mission of JoC: to disseminate the 'Italian style' Franciscan Observance in the Countries of Central and South-East Europe, subjected to the jurisdiction of the Italian friars since 1447. The Italian observant family had been involved in this commitment for a long time before JoC.<sup>4</sup> It is necessary to investigate these previous experiences (with more or less success)

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<sup>3</sup> On the broad topic of 'late crusades' the basic references are at least Norman Housley, *The Later Crusades, 1274-1580. From Lyons to Alcazar*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); Idem, *Crusading & the Ottoman Threat (1453-1505)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Iulian Mihai Damian, 'From the 'Italic League' to the 'Italic Crusade': Crusading under Renaissance Popes Nicholas V and Pius II,' in Iulian Mihai Damian – Dan Ioan Muresan *et alii* (eds), *Italy and Europe's Eastern Border. 1204-1669*. Proceedings of the International Conference [Rome, November 2010] (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012), pp. 79-94.

<sup>4</sup> In many of the areas in which he acted, JoC also moved in the footsteps of a confrere, James of the Marches, who had travelled to Hungary and especially to the Balkan and trans-Adriatic regions during the pontificate of Eugene IV; however, there was not only James, but also several figures – mostly still unknown – who moved from Italy visiting or residing in the convents of Central and South-Eastern Europe to govern the local Vicars and Provinces. See *San Giacomo della Marca e l'altra Europa: crociata, martirio e predicazione nel Mediterraneo Orientale* (secc. XIII-XV). Proceedings of the International Conference [Monteprandone, 24-25 November 2006], Fulvia Serpico (ed.), (Impruneta (FI): Sismel – Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2007); *San Giacomo della Marca nell'Europa del '400*. Proceedings of the International Conference [Monteprandone, 7-10 September 1994], Silvano Bracci (ed), (Padova: Centro Studi Antoniani, 1997).

in promoting 'Italian style Observance' (*Observantia more Italico*) in foreign lands, at least as a long prelude to the success or failure of JoC.

The mission had its end point in the victorious battle of Belgrade, fought with the army of John Hunyadi, with the involvement of the papal legate Juan de Carvajal, and with the few crusaders gathered by JoC through his preaching. Immediately after the battle of Belgrade, JoC moved to present-day Croatia and died in the convent of Ilok on October 23, 1456.

Belgrade was the event that made him famous. His role as 'the hero of Belgrade', the victorious crusader, defender of the *antemurale Christianitatis* was what ultimately won him the prize. He has traditionally been regarded as the hero of Hungarian national pride, and for Catholics as the patron saint of military chaplains and the 'Apostle of Europe'.<sup>5</sup>

JoC's large correspondence that accompanied his entire mission is still only partially known, and – one would say – more exploited than studied. Yet it is a fundamental historical source, because it directly connects events and turns of the 'Great History' of Late Medieval Europe, as well as the internal struggles of the Franciscan world of the fifteenth century.

During his mission, JoC was constantly in touch with popes, cardinals, papal legates and other local members of the high ecclesiastical hierarchy (mainly bishops); with the hierarchy of the Franciscan Orders and Observant family; and with single Italian friars. Also, he established relations with kings, princes and nobles, and built a web of local friars who collaborated with him as secretaries, translators and supervisors of the convents he founded or reformed. All these figures became his correspondents, admiring or contesting him.

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<sup>5</sup> «Pio XII in coincidenza con il centenario della morte, lo qualificò con l'appellativo di 'Apostolo d'Europa' (...) riproponendo, in uno dei momenti più duri della 'guerra fredda' vissuti in Europa orientale, il modello di cattolicità rappresentato da Giovanni»: Hélène Angiolini, 'Giovanni da Capestrano, santo,' *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, 55 (2001). Actually, Pius XII in the letter, in reconstructing the pronouncements of his predecessors on JoC, states that the appellation 'Apostle of Europe' was given to him by Alexander VIII, at the time of his canonization in 1690; cf. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 48 (1956), pp. 714-716. The reference to contemporary Europe and the context of the Cold War remains: Pius XII's letter begins and ends with the state of Europe in his time compared to that in which JoC lived. The same Pope beatified Innocent XI Odescalchi, celebrating him as "salvatore della Cristianità dalla invasione dei Turchi" and recalling the diplomatic activities that preceded the victory at the Battle of Vienna. (*Ivi*, pp. 762-778, especially 774-778).

Correspondence is highly intertwined with the development of the mission. In essence, letters were the only communication media with strategic and absent interlocutors; they served, also, to state and manage his meetings. Moreover, the letters were an official proof of his prerogatives (granted by the pontiffs). Finally, JoC's letters expressed his concerns and urgencies, and his personal views on issues close to his heart. Thus, the letters reveal both his expectations and the reactions of his influential interlocutors.

Much of this vast epistolary *corpus* is well known. A consistent number of individual letters have been transcribed in manuscripts throughout Europe and published in major printed works, starting with Luke Wadding's *Annales Minorum*.<sup>6</sup> Ottokar Bonmann – the greatest systematic scholar of JoC correspondence – discovered that Wadding's source was a register kept by JoC («Ex Reg. Cap.») which, like all Vicarial registers, served as an archive of sent letters.<sup>7</sup> Instead, the letters received by the friar were carefully preserved in a kind of 'travel archive', as is shown by the fact that the originals – especially

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<sup>6</sup> In the first edition of the *Annales Minorum* (8 vols, 1625-1654) at least one hundred and fifty letters from JoC's correspondence are published. For some of them, the sources are the register of his chancellery-register, documents from the Vatican Archives or manuscripts from the Convent Library in Capestrano. The letters relating to the years of the European mission are in vol XII (1448-1456) of the latest edition: Luke Wadding, *Annales Minorum seu trium ordinum a S. Francisco institutorum*, t. XII, Editio tertia, (Ad Claras Aquas: Frati Editori di Quaracchi, 1932).

<sup>7</sup> Registers of this kind were found and published for the Observant Vicars of the second half of the century: *Regestum Observantiae Cismontanae (1464-1488)*, Clemente Schmitt (ed) (Grottaferrata: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1983) [*Analecta Franciscana* 12]. About JoC's register see Ottokar Bonmann, 'L'epistolario di S. Giovanni da Capestrano nel corso dei secoli,' *Studi francescani*, 53 (1956): 275-298, especially 286-287. Bonmann tried, unsuccessfully, to find the register that should have been in Rome, at the Irish College of St. Isidore, where the writers of the *Annales* worked. He writes that it was probably stolen by a private individual whose name he does not mention. The elements he provides in the course of the article are enough to identify him as its last user: Antonio Sessa of Palermo. The Register is still lost. See also Ottokar Bonmann – Johannes Hofer, *Johannes Kapistran. Ein Leben im Kampf um die Reform der Kirche von Johannes Hofer, neue, bearbeitete Ausgabe*, band I (2 vols, Heidelberg – Rome: Editiones Franciscanae, 1964), pp. 367-368 (excursus 1: *Das Briefregister Kapistrans*). Filippo Sedda comes, in parallel, to the same results as Bonmann: Filippo Sedda, 'Corpus epistolarum Capistrani (CEC): An Overview of the Database of John of Capestrano's Epistolary,' in Paweł Kras – Halina Manikowska – Marcin Starzyński – Anna Zajchowska-Boltromiuk (eds), *The Correspondence of John of Capistrano. Letters Related to the History of Poland and Silesia (1451-1456)* (Warsaw – Lublin: Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History – Polish Academy of Sciences, Wydawnictwo KUL, 2018), pp. 35-46, especially 41-42.

those of legal value – are currently kept in the library of the convent of Capestrano, where they were brought back (together with his books) by his confreres, at the explicit request of JoC himself on his deathbed. Moreover, traces of the letters sent to him can be found in the records of the chancelleries of origin or transcribed in ‘national’ chronicles: the libraries of the mission Countries are still largely unexplored mines.

Partially handing down JoC’s correspondence was friar Alessandro de Ritiis of L’Aquila, in his *Chronica Ordinis Minorum* (last quarter of the 15th century).<sup>8</sup> He transcribed around fifty letters (twelve of which relate to the mission years).

Compared to a relative silence on JoC’s epistolary in the 16th century, the consistent recourse to it in the *Historie Hussitarum libri XII* by Johann Cochlaeus stands out.<sup>9</sup> Due to the anti-Hussite character of the work, letters sent or received by JoC concerning the Bohemian political-religious situation are transcribed there.

From the seventeenth century, Capistranian source-collections became more systematic: in addition to the already mentioned first edition of the *Annales Minorum* (1625-1654), the strongest impetus for the systematic collection and transcription of correspondence was the resumption of the job around his canonisation process. JoC had died almost two centuries earlier. In the absence of eyewitnesses to his biography and early miracles, the plan was to proceed with the analysis of his writings and authoritative testimonies in indirect support of canonisation. In this documentary context, letters sent to JoC by the ‘very important persons’ of his time were transcribed in the so-called *Liber Epistolarum* (c. 1623).<sup>10</sup> Moreover, in 1680, the General Minister

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<sup>8</sup> L’Aquila, Archivio di Stato, ms. S73. Single pieces of the *Chronica* have been published by Aniceto Chiappini, ‘De vita et scriptis Fr. Alexandri de Riciis,’ *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, 20 (1927), pp. 314-355, 563-574; *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, 21(1928), pp. 86-103, 289-291. The Observant chronicler (a member of the L’Aquila convent of St. Bernardine), for the JoC letters probably resorted to materials preserved in Capestrano and now lost. The criterion for selecting the letters he transcribed is to focus on the conflict with the Conventual friars (particularly exacerbated in L’Aquila, where it broke out in 1452).

<sup>9</sup> Johann Cochlaeus, *Historiae Hussitarum libri duodecim (...) quibus adiuncti sunt* (Moguntiam: apud S. Victorem prope, 1549).

<sup>10</sup> When the trial resumed, in 1623, the reliquary kept in the chapel of the convent in Capestrano was opened and many letters were found. Some of them, selected according to the rank and importance of the senders, became judicial documents and formed the *Liber epistolarum*.

charged friar Antonio Sessa of Palermo with a new compilation of JoC's *opera omnia*, known as *Collectio Aracelitana*:<sup>11</sup> and among his Works, the letters are also transcribed.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the uses of JoC's correspondence, and thus the edition of some of his letters, took another direction, which we would call selective on a territorial basis. Alongside partial editions, however, also great works contained the transcript of many letters: e.g. Amandus Hermann's *Capistranus triumphans*,<sup>12</sup> and the critical masterpiece of the dossier in the *Acta Sanctorum*.<sup>13</sup>

In the twentieth century – for the fifth centenary of JoC's death – the Franciscan Order promoted a systematic interest in his figure. A *Commissio Capestraniana*<sup>14</sup> was then established, which decided to focus initially on the

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This collection, in the first manuscript identified – coming from the Jesuit College of Rome – has the title *Epistolae summorum pontificorum, cardinalium, episcoporum, presbyterorum, regum, principum, aliorumque personarum missae ad beatum Ioannem de Capestrano, Ordinis Minorum*. It was rediscovered at the end of the 19th century by the Czech historian Ferdinand Tadra. It contains about one hundred letters to JoC, written by illustrious personalities, both ecclesiastical and secular, and transcribed in the hierarchical order of the senders (*Liber epistolarum B. Johannis de Capistrano*, Rome, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, ms. 2468, ex Ges. 339).

<sup>11</sup> The realisation of the *Collectio Aracelitana* took twenty-five years. It therefore lasted much longer than the canonisation of JoC (1690). The monumental work includes two tomes devoted to the correspondence: vol. I, t. 1/a letters received; vol. V t. 3 letters sent. As the work is intended to attest to the candidate's orthodoxy, the letters are ordered according to their genre and content. The work is easily accessible in anastatic reprint: *Opera omnia sancti Ioannis a Capistrano*, Giacinto Marinangeli (ed) [5 vols. – facsimile reproduction of the *Collectio Aracelitana* compiled by Antonio Sessa of Palermo (Rome, Aracoeli Provincial Archives, 1700] (L'Aquila: Provincia di S. Bernardino da Siena dei frati minori in Abruzzo, 1985).

<sup>12</sup> Amandus Hermann, *Capistranus triumphans, seu Historia fundamentalis de sancto Joanne Capistrano, Ordinis Minorum insigni regularis observantiae propagatore* (Coloniae: apud Balthasarem Joachimum Endterum, 1700). The work is divided into 38 sections, each consisting of a series of chapters, in which many letters are copied but without stating the source. In any case, Hermann's compilation is valuable, at least for the abundance of material.

<sup>13</sup> *Acta Sanctorum quotquot toto urbe coluntur* (...), t. X, *Octobris*, Joseph van Hecke, Benjamin Bossue, Victor De Buck, Eduard Carpentier (eds) (Parisiis: Typis Henrici Goemaere, 1861), pp. 269-552. The *commentarius praeuius* (pp. 269-439) provides a wide biographical reconstruction, intertwined with the critical review of all possible sources.

<sup>14</sup> An 'anonymous' and out of print pamphlet, dated April 1965, gives an account of the intentions, problems and difficulties that led first to the creation of a Capistran Commission and then to the transfer of the papers and documents collected by the Historical Commission at Quaracchi to the College of St. Anthony in Rome. This decision, taken by General Sépinski

correspondence. Furthermore, thanks to the job of Ottokar Bonmann, the *Commissio* procured a second edition (updated and broadened) of the classic biography of JoC by Johannes Hofer.<sup>15</sup>

In the 1950s, Bonmann undertook the research that resulted in the several boxes and files of his 'Capestranian archive': his aim was to give the edition of the entire correspondence, which he was unable to finalize due to his early death (1977). In any case, in 1956 he published an article that remains fundamental, on *L'epistolario di s. Giovanni da Capestrano nel corso dei secoli*:<sup>16</sup> there he provided an overview of previous studies, the work in progress at the time and the outline of the research needed to achieve the task. Besides, he highlights the cultural impulses that led twentieth century scholars to develop a perspective capable of overcoming the secular and multi-directional approaches linked to multiple objectives, shifting interest from thematic collections of letters to the correspondence in itself, as a whole.

In the twentieth century, the first catalogues of JoC's correspondence were finally produced: the Italian friar Aniceto Chiappini and the Hungarian Ödön Bölcskey undertook this cataloguing work in the same years.<sup>17</sup> The two scholars drew upon different sources and adopted disparate perspectives, resulting in catalogues that are not mutually overlapping. They frequently

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in 1953, was the fulfilment of a resolution of the General Chapter of 1921, which proposed the realisation of the Opera omnia. The anonymous author of the pamphlet was Ottokar Bonmann: although he did not sign the pamphlet and wrote it in the third person, he can be identified as the pivot of the unfinished editorial project. See [Ottokar Bonmann], *La commissione capistraniana* (pro manuscripto), Rome: Pax et Bonum, 1965.

<sup>15</sup> In 1936, a modern biography of JoC was published in Germany with a trumpeting title: *Johannes Kapistran. Ein Leben im Kampf um die Reform der Kirche*. Its author was the Austrian Redemptorist priest Johannes Hofer (1879-1939). The second edition of the work was edited by Ottokar Bonmann (Bonmann – Hofer, *Johannes Kapistran*, who added a preface and bibliography. The work was the first in the series *Bibliotheca Franciscana*, commissioned by the General of the Order, Augustin Sépinski. In his wishes, a *Prodromus* of the then known Capestran letters was also to be published here.

<sup>16</sup> Bonmann, *L'epistolario*, pp. 275-298.

<sup>17</sup> See respectively Aniceto Chiappini, 'La produzione letteraria di s. Giovanni da Capestrano: trattati, lettere, sermoni,' *Miscellanea Franciscana*, I: 24 (1924), pp. 109-149; II: 25 (1925), pp. 157-198; III: 26 (1926), pp. 52-66; IV: 27 (1927), pp. 43-103 (single volume extract: Gubbio: Scuola Tipografica Odorisi, 1927), Idem, *Reliquie letterarie capestranesi: storia, codici, carte, documenti* (L'Aquila: Vecchioni, 1927 (first published in *Bullettino della Regia Deputazione abruzzese di storia patria*, Serie III: 9-10 (1918-'19), pp. 27-185; 14 (1923), pp. 55-140), and Ödön Bölcskey, *Capistránói szent János élete és kora. I-III*, vol. III, (Székesfehérvár: Debreczenyi István, 1923-1924).

diverge in their dating of letters and exhibit a summary philological approach that gives rise to duplications and omissions of letters. Despite these shortcomings, the two catalogues remain a valuable resource. They should be considered, with due checks for unavoidable errors, alongside the more recent catalogue produced at the Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University (NY) between 1989 and 1992 by Gedeon Gál and Jason Miskuly, on the basis of the Bonmann archive. This catalogue is entitled *Provisional Calendar*,<sup>18</sup> reflecting the understanding that even this work, verified as far as possible, cannot be considered definitive.

Finally, in 2013, in a workshop held at the CEU in Budapest, Letizia Pellegrini, Ludovic Viallet, and Gábor Klaniczay, shared the new trend of Capestranian research with a group of scholars from all the European countries involved in the mission. Thus began a path articulated by national teams, which have already produced editions of the Polish and Hungarian letters.<sup>19</sup> This is the new trend of Capestranian studies with a European scope, of which my PhD dissertation is conceived as a last step.

### **A Historiographic Turn about a 'Contested Hero'**

In November 2012, when Gábor Klaniczay and Letizia Pellegrini presented the idea of a project on JoC's correspondence to Prof. Gert Melville,

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<sup>18</sup> Gedeon Gál – Jason Miskuly, 'A Provisional Calendar of St. John Capistrano's Correspondence: I. The Italian Period: Oct. 24, 1418 – May 30, 1451,' *Franciscan Studies*, 49 (1989), pp. 255-345; 'II. Mission in Central Europe and Poland: The Hussite Controversy: June 30, 1451 – May 17, 1455,' *Ibidem*, 50 (1990), pp. 323-403; 'III. The Crusade Against the Turks: May 18, 1455 – December 10, 1456,' *Ibidem*, 52 (1992), pp. 283-327.

<sup>19</sup> The reflections and the historiographical focus that were developed between 2010 and 2013 have been published in Pellegrini – Viallet, *Between Christianitas and Europe*, pp. 5-26; Pellegrini, *Riforme religiose, movimenti osservanti*, pp. 19-36. The development of international research has been recalled on several occasions: for the edition of the volume concerning the Kingdom of Poland and Silesia in 2018 (Letizia Pellegrini, 'The Correspondence of John of Capistrano: The History of a Research Trajectory,' in *The Correspondence (...) Poland and Silesia*, pp. 21-34, especially 26-31), and more recent, in 2023, on occasion of the publication of letters relating to the Kingdom of Hungary (Gábor Klaniczay, 'An Itinerary of Cooperation,' in György Galamb (ed), *The Correspondence of John of Capistrano. Letters Exchanged During His Stay in the Kingdom of Hungary (1455-1456) and with Hungarian Recipients Beforehand (1451-1455)* (Budapest – Szeged: Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of History – University of Szeged, 2023), pp. 21-31, especially 25-28).



the German scholar had a sudden and strong reaction: “*Why study such an obscurantist and fanatical figure?*”. This question is relevant for the persistent attitude of moral judgment directed at JoC. This attitude is entirely double-sided: he is, according to opposite ideological marks, a living saint or the devil in person; a martyr or a persecutor, and so on. After all, during his lifetime (above all during his mission) and over the centuries, JoC has had admirers and detractors, and drawn the attention of both hagiographers and polemicists. In the eyes of the Hungarians, for example, he was a national hero defending the challenged borders of the Kingdom; for Italian Catholic culture and the Observant friars, he was a holy hero, portrayed with the crusader’s flag. JoC’s haters included the Bohemian Hussites, several Jewish communities, some Franciscan friars who had a different idea of Observance, and the Saxon religious culture, which refused to recognise him as the *longa manus* of the Roman Curia.

The European research developed by a group of scholars since 2013 completely overcomes these opposing interpretations, which had the same idol and made the same methodological mistakes. My doctoral dissertation is conceived as the last step of this research and my approach to JoC’s correspondence shares its assumptions.

The words of two prominent Italian scholars clarify some methodological stakes for the topic (as for historical research in general). Giovanni Miccoli asserted that: «È affermazione consueta che non è compito dello storico instaurare processi: bisognerebbe tuttavia aggiungere che anche le difese d’ufficio non hanno ragion d’essere in sede di ricerca».<sup>20</sup> Ovidio Capitani – specifically about JoC – in 1986, stated:

Il bisogno di scrivere una storia “in difesa” non si comprende (...) nella ricerca di una spiegazione storica: Giovanni da Capestrano nella Chiesa e nella società del suo tempo non deve essere difeso o accusato (...) deve essere capito come emblematico di quella società (...) C’è da riscrivere una storia dell’età di Giovanni da Capestrano: non per fare centro su di lui ma per far reagire tutto un contesto sull’ultimo modello che si fosse concepito nella prima metà del Quattrocento.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Giovanni Miccoli, ‘La storia religiosa,’ *Storia d’Italia*, II.1: *Dalla caduta dell’Impero romano al secolo XVIII* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1974), pp. 429-1079, especially 443.

<sup>21</sup> Ovidio Capitani, S. Giovanni da Capestrano nella storiografia, in Edith Pásztor – Lajos Pásztor (eds), *San Giovanni da Capestrano nella Chiesa e nella società del suo tempo*. Proceedings

What does this historical perspective mean, if applied to JoC's case? According to the quotation from Capitani, we did not discover anything new; we have simply made free JoC from the iron and golden cages in which his figure has been trapped for centuries. The core of our research is not a new or different moral judgement on JoC's person and charisma. Our concern is the making of Europe in the middle of the fifteenth century. As historians, we have no prejudices against (or for) JoC's actions. Instead, reading his correspondence becomes a detector of dynamics developed around and beyond his personality. JoC is recognized as a touchstone not as himself, but with respect to the reactions – by outstanding personalities – to his political-religious project.

When he crossed the Alps in May 1451, he was not only an efficient popular preacher and a learned jurist, but also a delegated inquisitor and penitentiary of the Roman Curia. He was also the leader of the Italian Franciscan Observance during the years of its great development, in the wake of Bernardino's preaching and, moreover, after his canonization, intended as a ratification of his religious family. JoC managed his mission according to his previous experience at the heart of the Italian Observance, and with relevant consequences to our 'European' theme: he had a clear project for the political set-up of Europe. He was confronted with several embryonic 'national' identities. What is historically telling is the impact he had, and the revealing reactions to his vision.

The letters written and received by him reflect the network built during his mission in several European Countries and are the mirror of his activity: letters written by him are the hidden control panel of his mission; letters addressed to him are the feedback (sometimes really frustrating) of his activity. Only by reading these documents as a *corpus* can one reconstruct the dynamics of action and reaction generated by his proposals (pastoral, ecclesiastical and, definitely, political).<sup>22</sup>

There is also a historiographical reason for systematically studying his correspondence: in fact, we realised that the letters are the hidden skeleton

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of the International Historical Conference [Capestrano – L'Aquila, 8-12 October 1986] (L'Aquila: Arti grafiche aquilane, 1989), pp. 1-19, especially 4.

<sup>22</sup> The reference is here to Pellegrini – Viallet, *Between Christianitas and Europe*, pp. 5-26: especially 20.

in the reference work for JoC's biography, by Johannes Hofer.<sup>23</sup> This work written in the 1930s sounds sometimes like a modern hagiography, or an apology of the friar; therefore, it is ideologically fuelled. Nevertheless, for scholars in general, Hofer's biography is still the 'royal road' to JoC (together with hundreds of pages and documents collected in the Wadding's *Annales Minorum*). As I said, correspondence is the skeleton of Hofer's work: his narrative pattern is an undeclared paraphrase of the letters. To write the biography, Hofer collected hundreds of small cards, one for each letter. These cards were then passed on to Ottokar Bonmann as the basis for his (planned and unfulfilled) edition of the correspondence. Bonmann's heritage has been used by two friars in St. Bonaventure University, to produce their *provisional calendar*.<sup>24</sup>

### **A Database for JoC's Correspondence (EpICa – *Epistolarium Iohannis de Capistrano*)**

My dissertation was conceived as the final step in the international research on the edition of JoC's correspondence. It is developed in two levels that correspond to different purposes:

- At the informatic level, the aim is to create a database to systematically collect and organise the edition of the correspondence related to JoC's mission (1451-1456). The database is not intended as a mere storage tool or a basis for statistical purposes. It is designed to make possible a full historical investigation on the whole *corpus*; after all, it is well-known how serial reading, and computerised filing allow research paths impossible or difficult to realize on printed editions.
- At the historical level, my dissertation fills a pivotal gap in the project. The volumes of the letters concerning Poland and Silesia, and the Hungarian Kingdom have already been published. A team in Olomouc is currently working on the volume of the Bohemian correspondence,<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Johannes Hofer, *Johannes Kapistran. Ein Leben im Kampf um die Reform der Kirche* (Innsbruck: Tyrolia Verlag, 1936).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 6 and n. 18.

<sup>25</sup> The related project, currently in progress, is coordinated by Antonin Kalous and Petra Mutlová and is entitled *Observance Reconsidered: Uses and Abuses of the Reform (Individuals,*

while a group of scholars is set up to deal with the correspondence concerning the imperial German lands. The letters exchanged between JoC and the Italian correspondents are absent in this panorama. Thus, since I had to choose a documentary basis to test the database, I decided to deal with the 'Italian' letters. The sample is relevant if one considers the role of Italy and the Papacy in the European balance of the mid-fifteenth century and in the institutional structuring of the Cismontane Observance.

The approximately 250 letters so far published demonstrate the need for a digital collection of correspondence. In addition, the work made to publish the letters has highlighted the difficulties in dealing with the *corpus*, and thus indirectly indicates the characteristics of the database.

The work of the national teams has produced excellent results, parcelling out a huge amount of correspondence that was otherwise difficult to publish as a *corpus*. The wide range of contexts in which the letters were produced multiplies the themes and contents linked to the individual history of each country: this made it necessary to entrust the task to scholars who mastered the history and historiography of their countries, and thus able to grasp (and rightly deepen) local figures and aspects emerging from the epistolary source.

On the other hand, the work by national teams – although necessary – has some limits, foreseen from the outset:

- Each volume runs the risk of producing a partial edition. Due to the difficulty of fixing shared selection criteria, some letters can be included in different volumes, while others may be excluded altogether. Each volume is organized by a 'reasoned arbitrariness' which depends on the history of the Country and the specific nature of related sources.
- The national laboratories follow the editorial criteria and philological traditions usual in each European historiography/historical tradition, but different from one another. The individual volumes are therefore internally coherent, but not homogeneous as a book-series.

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*Institutions, Society*) and provides for the edition of 'Czech' letters. The project was sponsored by Palacký University (Olomouc) and Masaryk University (Brno) and was funded by the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic.

- The production of a book-series – apart from the editorial and financial difficulties – would not achieve the goal of systematic research on the entire *corpus*.
- A printed edition in traditional format fits static and ‘closed’ writings. An epistolary edition, on the other hand, must be updated in progress: open to new documents and the results of ongoing research.

The creation of the database aims to overcome these difficulties (or address these issues):

- It provides the whole collection of correspondence in a single repository, easy to consult according to different search paths.
- It allows the updating (integration, correction and modification) of the documentary series: the dynamic and flexible approach required by epistolary sources, is one of the specificities provided by the IT tools.
- It guarantees the physical preservation of documents, often considerably deteriorated, through digital editions and digitization of the associated manuscripts.
- It allows one to create connections among documents, for multidirectional, polythematic and interdisciplinary levels.
- It provides immediate access to data and information for each document.
- Finally, taking advantage of the multimedia nature of the digital tool, a website could host files and devices that could be integrated into the edition of each letter like GIS (geographical information systems), iconographic galleries, and so on.

To sum up: a digital platform for the study of JoC’s correspondence and dissemination of the outcomes can have the following benefits:

1) To bring order to centuries of scholarship, among works that served a rationale for the time they were conceived. Such works produced pioneering, selected ‘editions’, but they show gaps and/or overlaps and, philologically speaking, cannot fit the requirements of contemporary historiography.

2) The database speaks English: it means to link scholars/users to the previous (and rich) results of national historiographical traditions, that currently do not communicate because they are produced in non-international

languages (this is the case of present-day Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Croatia, Romania and even Italy).

3) A database can provide the European network of scholars with a reliable and well-defined documentary basis for future exchanges and historiographical outcomes. This is not a mere omen. The database is an unprecedented achievement, fed by the research of the national teams; at the same time, it is the first step for updated research, fed by the database itself.

4) I would like to end with a cultural topic: all the activities I have recalled are evidence of the need to share research among different European countries and their scholarship; this is precisely the core of the humanistic, multilingual and open-minded approach that is the basis of our European identity.

### **From the sample of 'Italian' letters: provisional outcomes of the historical research**

It is worth noting that the letters that would have been designated as 'Italian' (and thus subjected to analysis by a national team, as were the 'Polish', 'Hungarian' and, in the future, 'Germanic' and 'Czech' letters) were not so far included in the work in progress on the correspondence. This was because in Italy, unlike in the other countries involved, no sponsors or research funds could be found.

The 'Italian' sample can thus also be usefully employed to extend the research on the correspondence and to bring the edition to completion.

To have a documentary *corpus* on which to test the database, it is essential to have a sample of significant size and variety, and this is fully satisfied by the more than one hundred letters exchanged with subjects from and realities pertaining to the Italian Peninsula.

Considering these matters, I identified a *corpus* of letters that could be reasonably (and conceptually) designated as 'Italian', meaning the political and territorial realities – different in structure, borders and governments – that correspond to the current Italy. It is also noteworthy that during the fifteenth century, 'Italy' also encompassed Rome and the papal Curia: an eminent institution that had its own territorial jurisdiction for centuries, yet on a different level, was 'ecumenical-universal'.

Furthermore, JoC was Italian, a collaborator for decades with the Roman Curia, the most frequent destination for him and the friars of the Observance. He had played a pivotal role in shaping the Observance, whose most renowned members had preached in various regions across the Peninsula. In conclusion, while Italy in the modern sense did not exist, the *fratres Italici* defined themselves as such. The physical borders of the seas and mountains could not be blurred: when the friars crossed the Alps or went overseas, they perceived that they were crossing a frontier by leaving the Peninsula. Italy was also referred to by JoC and other 'Italians' in their correspondence.<sup>26</sup>

I have therefore selected all letters written or received by JoC to/from Italian interlocutors, even in cases where the 'Italians', senders or recipients, were temporarily and for various reasons elsewhere. For example, Enea Silvio Piccolomini, as imperial secretary and resident in Vienna, would be politically and strategically an 'Austrian', representing an authority from the Germanic area. And yet, the completeness of an 'Italian' epistolary requires that he be taken into consideration: not for his status as bishop of Siena, but for his significance in Italian history and culture of the time, and for the activity he carried out in Italy, before and then periodically up to the papal throne. This criterion applies even more to popes. Strictly speaking they are one Italian and one Spanish;<sup>27</sup> but letters exchanged with the Roman Curia have the same value in JoC's eyes: they represent 'Rome', i.e., the main interlocutor for the two major themes dealt with in the 'Italian' letters (the *status* of the Observance and the tension towards the 'crusade'). The papal letters cannot therefore be excluded from the 'Italian' correspondence: they are fundamental to investigate the role of the papacy in the European and Peninsular balances and in the institutional affairs of the Franciscan Order in the mid-fifteenth century. Lastly, the 'Italian' letters are the constant backbone of JoC's entire mission, transversal to every phase of it, regardless of the itinerary he was following.

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<sup>26</sup> Altogether, the term *Italia* has, in the letters I selected, 51 occurrences and has no synonyms; for its adjective, however, the forms *Italus* and *Italicus* occur.

<sup>27</sup> Tommaso Parentucelli (Nicholas V) and Alonso Borja (Callixtus III). See respectively: Massimo Miglio, 'Niccolò V,' *Enciclopedia dei Papi*, vol. II (Rome: Treccani, 2000), pp. 644-658; Michael E. Mallett, 'Callisto III,' *Enciclopedia dei Papi*, vol. II (Rome: Treccani, 2000), pp. 658-662.

Screening the correspondence in light of these criteria, a *corpus* of 110 letters emerged, the first written on 6 April 1451, and the last on 21 October 1456, two days before the death of JoC, the sender of both.

Now, I would like to present one of the properly historical results of my research, derived from the search (facilitated by the database queries) on the strongest documentary contribution of the 'Italian' correspondence: the events concerning the structuring of the Observance, the content of the term 'observance' itself, and how JoC intervened in these processes 'from a distance', as head of a sort of parallel workgroup acting from beyond the Alps.

The serial reading of the correspondence has brought to light entirely new dynamics and names that make it possible to rewrite what Letizia Pellegrini called the 'great tale' about the Observance.<sup>28</sup> It was transmitted (predominantly though not exclusively) by the 'pro-Observant' narrative of Luke Wadding's *Annales*, among whose sources – particularly for the polemical confrontation between the two branches of the Order – was certainly the *Chronicle* of Bernardino Aquilano.<sup>29</sup> What has been fixed by the Observant tradition as the 'great war' waged by the Conventuals against the *fratres de familia*, actually hiding the tensions within the Observance, both between eminent personalities of the *familia* itself (e.g. JoC and the Vicar Marco da Bologna) and with friars stigmatized as fugitives, rebels, emulators (*fugitivi, rebelles, emuli nostri*). They may have occupied a 'grey zone' within the Order, as some evidence in the JoC's correspondence suggests.

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<sup>28</sup> It consists of the trite history of the Observance as reform, which lines up the hermitage of Brogliano, the 'four columns,' the war between the Observants and the Conventuals, and finally the triumph of the good reformed Franciscans. In several contributions Pellegrini has questioned the relationship (and potential divergence) between Observant projects and practices, going so far as to deconstruct the very internal history of the *familia*. See Letizia Pellegrini, 'Bernardino da Siena, il minoritismo e l'Osservanza: ambiguità e ambivalenze a partire da Monteripido,' in Fulvia Serpico (ed), *Giacomo della Marca tra Montepremonente e Perugia. Lo studium del convento del Monte e la cultura dell'Osservanza francescana* (Firenze – Perugia: Sismel – Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2012), pp. 21-35; Eadem, 'Osservanza / osservanze tra continuità e innovazione,' in *Gli studi francescani: prospettive di ricerca*. Study meeting on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the training seminars (Assisi, 4-5 July 2015) (Spoleto: Cisam, 2017), pp. 215-234; Eadem, 'Observantes de familia,' in *Identità francescane agli inizi del Cinquecento*. Proceedings of the Conference of the International Society for Franciscan Studies (Assisi, 19-21 October 2017) (Spoleto: Cisam, 2018), pp. 3-34.

<sup>29</sup> See the recent edition by Letizia Pellegrini, *Bernardino Aquilano e la sua Cronaca dell'Osservanza, con nuova edizione e traduzione a fronte* (Milano: Biblioteca Francescana, 2021).



With regard to the turmoil that threatened the regime of *sub Vicariis* Observance (and therefore JoC's idea of Observant reform) since the 1950s (JoC being absent), two letters – hitherto unpublished, that I found in the State Archives in Bologna – are particularly significant.<sup>30</sup> In these letters, JoC uses unprecedented tones and formulations.

In the first one, addressed to the Cardinal Protector of the Order, Domenico Capranica, he says that the familia was 'quiet, peaceful, one, uniform, united' but, after the suspension of the bull *Ut sacra*, it had become 'bifurcated, torn and divided'. It can be deduced that he clearly identified the papal decision to annul the bull of Pope Eugenius IV, which had sanctioned the *sub Vicariis* regime, as the discriminating factor in this metamorphosis. In the other letter – a circular addressed to all the Vicars of the Cismontan Observance – he even lists the names of those responsible for the division, i.e. friars who, from esteemed members of the *familia*, became his enemies following Roberto Caracciolo: Giovanni da Volterra, Giovanni da Ischia, Giacomo da Cagli.

Other names of this circle appear in a letter sent by the Vicar Marco da Bologna to JoC. He claims not to know how to define the condition of these friars: Paolo da Roma, first *de familia*, then *ad vomitum reversus*; Giovanni Colonna *vel de Nexio* who, it is said, had joined brother Robert.

These names (some of which are unknown today) seem to say that the biggest problem was not the Conventuals, but the friars *de familia* who no longer recognized themselves in it.

A further step in the research is possible by reading, alongside the correspondence, the *Chronicle* of Bernardino Aquilano. In it, in fact, a second group of 'enemies' of the 'grey zone' appear, who disowned the *familia* and formed separate communities residing in their own convents. This would not mean that – as the Observants tend to write – they 'returned to the vomit' by choosing Conventual membership: rather, they simply found themselves *sub Ministris* once they had undertaken other experiences of observance, lived outside the *familia sub Vicariis*.

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<sup>30</sup> The existence of the two letters is not ignored by Celestino Piana who argues that in the envelope of the Archive of S. Paolo in Monte (now kept at the State Archive in Bologna), there were other letters in addition to those he published that were, however, dispersed: cf. Celestino Piana, 'Scritti polemici fra Conventuali ed Osservanti a metà del '400 con la partecipazione dei giuristi secolari,' *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 72 (1979), pp. 37-105, especially 51-52, note 3.

A passage from the *Chronicle* is decisive in this regard:

In fact, the Conventual friars and many friars who had passed from our *familia* to the Convents, and some of our emulators, used two prevailing arguments against us by reason of which the *familia* had to return to obedience *sub Ministris*: (...) firstly, that the bull of Eugenius (...) was surreptitious, and therefore of no juridical value (...); secondly the fact that, because of that bull, assuming it was valid, the Order, according to them, was divided, and therefore the *fratres de familia*, were not Minors friars et friars of St. Francis, but were to be called *fratres bullati*, or by any other name.<sup>31</sup>

Bernardino Aquilano distinguishes the *fratres sub Ministris* into three groups:

- the Conventuals, properly said *patres conventuales*, meaning the friars who always remained *sub Ministris*;
- the many friars passed from the *familia* to the Convent: this is the case of Roberto Caracciolo and his followers;
- some emulous of the *familia*: a third genre that does not explicitly appear in the JoC's correspondence, but that in the Aquilano's *Chronicle* includes at least Lorenzo di Puglia, Sante Boncor and Giacomo di Cittaducale.

The Latin term *emuli* is problematic in this context: does it mean 'competitor', 'antagonist', or rather 'imitator'? The distinction stated by the Aquilano between properly called *patres conventuales* and *emuli nostri* inclines toward the second meaning.

In the language of the Observants, therefore, the 'enemies' of the *familia* were on the one hand the rebels led by Robert of Lecce, and on the other the emulous, organized in various groups that imitated the lifestyle of Observance, but living separately *sub Ministris*. Among these appears Sante della Penna, whom Letizia Pellegrini has recognized as Sante Boncor, the first hagiographer of Bernardine of Siena, as he was the author of the legenda

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<sup>31</sup> Nam patres conventuales et plurimi qui de nostra familia accesserant ad Conventus, e nonnulli nostri emuli duo precipue contra nos allegabant, propter que familia ad obedientiam Ministrorum redire debeat (...): primum quod bulle Eugenii (...) erant surreptitie et consequenter nullius momenti (...); secundum erat quod per istas bullas, posito quod fuissent valide, secundum eos Ordo erat divisus, et consequenter fratres de familia, non fratres Minores et sancti Francisci, sed fratres bullati, vel alterius cuiuscumque nominis, appellandi. Cf. Pellegrini, *Bernardino Aquilano*, pp. 196-199, quotation: ll. 1404-1409, 1429-1432.

*Fior novello*.<sup>32</sup> Bernardino Aquilano relates that friar Sante tried unsuccessfully to grab custody of Bernardino's body in L'Aquila, guarded by the *fratres de familia*.<sup>33</sup> Daniele Solvi has rightly remarked that these events are only seemingly contradictory if one considers the ambivalence of Bernardine of Siena's canonization: saint of the Order for the Friars Minor, later called Conventuals, and saint of the Observance for the *fratres de familia*, with the related controversies even around his custody.<sup>34</sup>

The story of Sante Boncor can be related to that of Roberto Caracciolo. In fact, in a recent biography by Giacomo Mariani,<sup>35</sup> Caracciolo turns out to be the most 'Bernardinian' of the 'ex-Observants': he recounted in the pulpit that he had been miraculously cured twice through the intercession of St. Bernardine; in both cases he had made a vow to preach forever in his honour,<sup>36</sup> he had been commissioned by JoC to preach in Rome on the occasion of his canonisation.<sup>37</sup> Several elements prove the close relationship between JoC and Robert Caracciolo: looking at the dates and places of their preaching, we can see how Robert followed JoC step by step, preaching in the same places immediately after him;<sup>38</sup> furthermore, JoC shows his esteem for Robert on several occasions, for example by appointing him as his replacement in Milan shortly before his departure, as can be seen from the correspondence between him and Francesco Sforza.

These considerations raise a question: had Robert suddenly gone mad in a few months (as Nicola da Fara said in a letter to JoC), or did the Observants call 'madness' (or 'pride' or 'betrayal') his refusal to conform/adjust

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<sup>32</sup> The first edition of the text was made by Serafino Gaddoni, *Vita inedita di s. Bernardino da Siena scritta circa il 1450 da Fr. Sante Boncor O.F.M.* (Arezzo: Cooperativa Tipografica, 1912); it has been re-published (with correction, introduction and footnotes by Daniele Solvi, *L'agiografia su Bernardino santo (1450-1460)*, vol. 2, in Alessandra Bartolomei Romagnoli – Daniele Solvi, *Le vite quattrocentesche di S. Bernardino da Siena* (4 vols) (Firenze: Sismel – Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2014).

<sup>33</sup> Pellegrini, *Bernardino Aquilano*, pp. 192-195; a similar feat had already been attempted by Lorenzo di Puglia, *Ibidem*, pp. 190-191.

<sup>34</sup> See Daniele Solvi, *Il mondo nuovo. L'agiografia dei Minori Osservanti* (Spoleto: Cisam, 2019), p. 41.

<sup>35</sup> Giacomo Mariani, *Roberto Caracciolo da Lecce (1425-1495). Life, Works, and Fame of a Renaissance Preacher*, (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2022).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74-76.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 92, 94.

the idea of observance to the practices of the family? In his choices and in the whole of his behaviour, a Bernardine spirit seems to survive, linked to the primary concern for the unity of the Order. Bernardino had expressed this option in a clamorous episode, experienced with great embarrassment by the Observants: at the Chapter of Padua in 1443, he had refused to elect the Observant Alberto da Sarteano as General and, against the wishes of the pontiff Eugene IV and in agreement with the Conventuals, voted for the election of Antonio Rusconi.<sup>39</sup>

If my reading is correct, Robert and his followers essentially rejected the vicariate regime granted to the *familia* with the *Ut sacra*, seeing it as a divisive measure for the Franciscan Order. As an Observant – which he remained, though he renounced the capital letter – he was more akin to the unionist ‘reform’ lines quite openly practiced by the two General Ministers, Angelo del Toscano and Giacomo da Mozzanica.

On the basis of these findings and considerations, I can anticipate here, in extreme summary, some conclusions of my research.

1. As Letizia Pellegrini has pointed out on several occasions, the relationship between Bernardino of Siena and JoC diplomatically contained the effects of their divergent vision about the Franciscan reform: an open clash between them was probably avoided only by the death of the Sienese in 1444. JoC took over from Bernardino the leadership of the Observant family, which he managed in his own way. Moreover, JoC also benefited from the death of the Sienese, such a popular and authoritative figure: in fact, it left him free to structure his own idea of an autonomous Observance (having the support of Pope Eugene IV); and allowed him – working largely in favour of Bernardino’s canonisation – to ratify the excellence of Observance, now endowed with a seal of sanctity. In this way, JoC made of Saint Bernardino the brand of Observance, marking a prestigious continuity, which in fact was not so. Now, JoC’s correspondence suggests that the Bernardinian unionist line was followed both inside the Order and among some of the *fratres de familia*. Internal differences emerged in terms of a hard and sharp rift in 1452, when Roberto Caracciolo (note: during JoC’s absence) rebelled against the *sub Vicariis* regime, which was precisely the institutional outcome of the

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<sup>39</sup> On the events of the Padua Chapter, see at least: Fois, *I papi e l'Osservanza minoritica*, pp. 50-51; Pellegrini, *Bernardino Aquilano*, cap. 9, pp. 150-155.

reform programme conceived by JoC. It is therefore no coincidence that Bernardino's body was at the centre of this controversy: its custody was coveted as a sign of the Sienese friar's affiliation to one or another part of the Order, with the authority that this entailed.

2. The internal struggles of the Franciscan Order, although much studied, have been interpreted according to contemporary and partial paradigms that have remained static for centuries (mainly according to the perspective of Luke Wadding). One of the results of my research is the discovery of other characters and other facets of these conflicts, breaking with the consolidated vision of a head-on clash between two distinct groups (Conventuals and Observants). The 'grey area' of the 'Observants outside the Observance', even if it needs further investigation to make it less 'grey', would also configure in Italy an embryonic form of what Ludovic Viallet has called (as for Ultramontane Observance) the 'via media';<sup>40</sup> in short, friars who considered themselves Observants even if rejecting the Vicariate regime, thus placing themselves *sub Ministris*.

3. Thus, it becomes clear that, if the label 'Observance' in Italy has always remained in singular and capitalized form, this is only because the possible alternatives to the monopoly of the *familia* have not been structured, except sporadically and for a very short time. Moreover, the brothers who sought these 'other forms' were from the outset rejected and segregated within the same group, labelled as rebels, impostors, 'enemies' and so on: a group in fact not indistinct, but judged as disgraceful. All of them were in clear opposition to what was (and is still traditionally) recognized as Observance: but now, more accurately, it should be called 'Capestranian' Observance, trying meanwhile to deepen the stories of the Italian *via media*.

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<sup>40</sup> Ludovic Viallet, *Les sens de l'observance. Enquête sur les réformes franciscaines entre l'Elbe et l'Oder, de Capistran à Luther (vers 1450 – vers 1520)* (Berlin : Lit Verlag, 2014), pp. 75-124; Idem, 'L'Observance franciscaine à l'époque de la canonisation de Bernardin : un état des lieux,' *Frate Francesco. Rivista di cultura francescana*, 77/2 (2011), pp. 421-431; Idem, 'L'autre Observance: les Reformati sub Ministris et les "Colétans",' in *Identità francescane agli inizi del Cinquecento*, pp. 121-139.

# Studying Small Medieval Communities in the Light of the Historiographical Revival of the Commons. The Case of Saint-Rémy-de-Provence (13<sup>th</sup>-mid 14<sup>th</sup>-century)

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**Abstract:** Commons, either collective rights or common goods, were seen for a long time as archaism, and compelled to disappear. The French *Annales* school shows great interest in the long-term evolution of collective rights, i.e. grazing and wood cutting. In recent decades, common goods have been reinterpreted and re-evaluated. In medieval history, Italian historiography has entered a fruitful dialogue with the modernists to place commons in a long-term perspective, to study how they were created, managed and evolved, and to show their fundamental role in the history and functioning of communities, considering the contributions of other social sciences under the influence of Anglo-American research. The small medieval community of Saint-Rémy-de-Provence gives a well-documented case study. After presenting the collective rights seen by French historiography, this article shows how the community tried to regulate them between 1290 and 1350. Then, to understand the common good of this Provençal community, a swamp bought under emphyteusis, the Italian historiography gives important leads. Commons were progressively restrained by the community, excluding foreigners: this change favoured agricultural activities at the expense of grazing. Leaving the hand of the Count of Provence, common goods were appropriated by the community, through private ownership.

**Keywords:** Commons; Provence; Middle-Ages; Communities; Historiography; *Annales*; Agriculture.

**Rezumat:** Comunalitățile, fie că este vorba de drepturi colective sau de bunuri comune, au fost considerate mult timp ca fiind arhaice și condamnate să dispară. Școala franceză *Annales* manifestă un mare interes pentru evoluția pe termen lung a drepturilor colective, adică pășunatul și tăierea lemnului. În ultimele decenii, bunurile comune au fost reinterpretate și reevaluate. În istoria medievală,

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istoriografia italiană a intrat într-un dialog fructuos cu moderniștii pentru a plasa bunurile comune într-o perspectivă pe termen lung, pentru a studia modul în care au fost create, gestionate și au evoluat și pentru a arăta rolul lor fundamental în istoria și funcționarea comunităților, luând în considerare contribuțiile altor științe sociale sub influența cercetării anglo-americane. Mica comunitate medievală din Saint-Rémy-de-Provence oferă un studiu de caz bine documentat. După prezentarea drepturilor colective conform istoriografiei franceze, acest articol arată cum respectiva comunitate a încercat să le reglementeze între 1290 și 1350. Apoi, pentru a înțelege bunul comun al acestei comunități provençale, o mlaștină cumpărată în emfiteuză, istoriografia italiană oferă indicii importante. Bunurile comune au fost restricționate progresiv de comunitate, excluzând străinii: această schimbare a favorizat activitățile agricole în detrimentul pășunatului. Părăsind mâna contelui de Provence, bunurile comune au fost însușite de comunitate, prin proprietate privată.

**Cuvinte cheie:** Agricultură; Anale; Bunuri comune; Comunități; Epoca Medievală; Istoriografie.

## Introduction

The commons, as an intellectual construct, are attracting growing interest not only in the historiographical and scientific spheres but also in the public and political spheres. Characterised by a form of ownership that lies somewhere between private and state ownership, and by regulation through collective organisation,<sup>1</sup> they are seen by some as a solution to ecological and social issues.

Commons can be defined from several different perspectives. They can be public goods or public rights, i.e. collective rights or goods belonging to a defined community – in this case, the inhabitants, to which they have access or use collectively or individually, as members of this community. It has many different names, structures and modes of operation, and concerns diverse resources in various times and places. Commons refer to a complex and evolving reality that has been the subject of diverse interpretations in human sciences, specifically in history. For a long time, the dominant

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<sup>1</sup> Elinor Ostrom and Laurent Baechler, *Gouvernance des biens communs: pour une nouvelle approche des ressources naturelles* (Brussels/Paris : De Boeck, 2010).

historiography regarded commons as a form of archaism that had to be uprooted as an obstacle to economic progress. In recent decades, however, they have been reinterpreted and reassessed. Recent medieval historiography has entered a fruitful dialogue with modernists, placing commons in a long-term perspective, studying how they were created, managed and developed, and showing their fundamental role in the history and functioning of communities, considering the contributions of other social sciences under the influence of Anglo-American research.

There are many issues surrounding the commons, and not all of them can be addressed in this work. The first issue is, of course, the definition of commons. The French term refers not only to common goods but also to collective rights. This purely analytical definition varies according to sources, periods, authors and historiographical approaches. Secondly, an entire field of historiography studies the origins of commons, in both practical and legal terms. The third issue is, quite logically, their evolution, and eventual disappearance: such evolution takes place over the very long term, and the academic separation of historical research into modern and contemporary history on the one hand, and ancient and medieval history on the other, means that work on the latter two issues is generally separate. The fourth issue is the day-to-day functioning of commons, the roles of the various players and their respective interests, and thus the regulation of commons in practice. The fifth relates to the representations and discourses held by the various contemporary players. Finally, the sixth issue is part of a broader academic framework than just history and concerns the economic efficiency of commons. Indeed, in a more normative approach, bourgeois thought (mercantile and then liberal) erected commons as a symbol of archaism and inefficiency.<sup>2</sup> Neo-institutionalists such as Elinor Ostrom rediscovered them in a new light, to the extent that they are now the subject of new scientific approaches, even being promoted by political currents – often on the left and linked to ecology.

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<sup>2</sup> See for France Marc Bloch, 'La lutte pour l'individualisme agraire dans la France du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Première partie : l'œuvre des pouvoirs d'ancien régime,' *Annales* 2/7 (1930): 329-83; Juliette Dumasy, 'L'approche des communautés rurales par le biais des communaux. Autour de Nadine Vivier et Nicole Lemaître,' in *La Formation Des Communautés d'habitants Au Moyen Âge. Perspectives Historiographiques*, Xanten (RFA), June 13-22, 2003 (online edition at LAMOP, 2005), 4; or Gérard Béaur, 'En un débat douteux. Les communaux, quels enjeux dans la France des XVIII<sup>e</sup> -XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles?,' *Revue d'histoire moderne & contemporaine* 53-1/1 (2006): 89-114.



These issues can be approached from various angles, including economic, social, political, legal and environmental history. This case study will tackle the first and fourth issues, i.e. the historical and legal definition and delimitation of the commons of Saint-Rémy in the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries, as well as their operation and regulation by the various players.

To study commons in the light of different historiographical trends, this article will focus on Saint-Rémy de Provence, a small community north of the Alpilles, south of Avignon, and part of the County of Provence – a possession of the Angevins since the mid-thirteenth century. The counts of Provence were also the lords of the *castrum*, the fortified centre of the town, giving them a strong hold over the community. This small town of around 300 families at the beginning of the thirteenth century, i.e. some 1,500 inhabitants, was not a simple village, but a small town, a *bourg*.

Between the end of the twelfth century and the middle of the thirteenth century, small communities gradually appear in the sources. The inhabitants of Saint-Rémy were first mentioned in 1198. Over a century, the community gradually began to structure itself around tax issues and the delimitation of its territory, notably around common pastures. In the first half of the fourteenth century, before the Black Death, they set up a council, appointing people elected to lead the community. An important part of their legislative activity consisted precisely in regulating common goods, in particular commons. In other words, commons were at the heart of local political life.

The regulation of collective rights and common property was the responsibility of several players.<sup>3</sup> Over the entire territory, the Counts of Provence hold the rights of justice and ban and are the supreme lords of the place: the inhabitants have recognised their *majus dominium* since 1252.<sup>4</sup> In practice, the *bayle* is the local representative of the count's power, managing day-to-day affairs and enforcing the payment of bans – or having them leased. Justice came under the jurisdiction of the Tarascon judge, then of Aix from the mid-fourteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Ecclesiastical institutions lost most of their

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<sup>3</sup> Romain Telliez, *Les institutions de la France médiévale : XI -XV<sup>ee</sup> siècle*, 3rd edn, Collection Cursus, Malakoff, Armand Colin, 2022, pp. 43-59.

<sup>4</sup> AD13, B. 169, fol. 87, AD13, B 169 fol. 97 r°, B170 fol. 146; BNF, ms. Lat. 10.125.

<sup>5</sup> Jean-Paul Boyer, Anne Mailloux and Laure Verdon, eds, *La justice temporelle dans les territoires angevins aux XIII<sup>e</sup> et XIV<sup>e</sup> siècles : théories et pratiques* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2005); Alexandra Gallo, 'Justice et municipalité : le cas de Sisteron au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle,' *Publications de l'École Française de Rome* 354/1 (2005), pp. 403-415; Gérard Giordanengo, 'Statuts royaux et

powers of justice in the early fourteenth century.<sup>6</sup> The local nobility is less well-known: its members belong to second-ranking lineages, who play an important role in administration and own seigneuries or lordship shares in neighbouring communities.<sup>7</sup>



Figure 1. Location of Saint-Rémy de Provence

justice en Provence (1246-1309),’ *Publications de l’École Française de Rome* 354/1 (2005): 107-126; Laure Verdon, ‘Justice comtale et justice seigneuriale en Provence au miroir des enquêtes : l’exemple de la baillie de Castellane entre 1278 et 1310,’ *Publications de l’École Française de Rome* 354/1 (2005): 371-338.

<sup>6</sup> Simone Balossino, ‘Saint-Rémy, Reims et Avignon : des relations complexes,’ in *Saint-Rémy-de-Provence : Son Histoire*, ed. Société d’histoire et d’archéologie de Saint-Rémy-de-Provence (Aix-en-Provence : REF.2C éditions, 2014), pp. 230-234; and Christine Martin-Portier, ‘Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, une ville au coeur de son territoire, Au miroir des enquêtes domaniales des comtes de Provence (1252-1332),’ in *ibid.*, pp. 172-176.

<sup>7</sup> For other regional cases, see Danuta Poppe, ‘Saint Christol à l’époque médiévale,’ *Publication des Annales de la Faculté des Lettres* (Gap : Ophrys, 1966), 7-33; Danuta Poppe, *Economie et société d’un bourg provençal au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle. Reillanne en haute Provence* (Wrocław : Ossolineum, 1980); Anna Rutkowska-Plachcińska and Urszula Sagan, *Salon-de-Provence, une société urbaine du bas Moyen Age* (Wrocław : Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1982); and Noël Coulet and Louis Stouff, *Le village de Provence au bas Moyen Age* (Université de Provence, 1987).

Some were descended from large families such as the Porcellets, well studied by Martin Aurell.<sup>8</sup> It seems that they shared the seignury's revenues with the Count of Provence, in the form of a co-lordship. As a result, the power of the *universitas* is limited. On the one hand, it holds only useful rights over common property, with eminent domain remaining in the hands of the Count of Provence. On the other hand, its participation in defining collective rights over the entire territory is only possible with the consent of the *bayle*, and more generally with that of the count's administration. As a result, communal statutes are often a mixture of provisions requested by the population or its representatives, and measures imposed by the *bayle*. The actions of the *bayle* and those of the community are not opposed in principle.<sup>9</sup>

The corpus of sources used for this study refers to Saint-Rémy's communal deliberations and statutes in the fourteenth century, plus a few court rulings to complete and clarify certain points. Most of these are located in the Archives Communales (AC) of Saint-Rémy, while some are held in the Archives départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône (AD13). Statutes can be defined as normative productions that communities produce or receive, providing for an internal organisation, in a certain relationship to the lord or princely administration.<sup>10</sup> I distinguish them from less complex deliberations, that deal with a limited number of subjects: appointing a person to an office or making a decision, without issuing a body of regulations. In practice, these decisions are part of a certain continuity, since statutes can take up and extend the content of previous deliberations, just as deliberations complement them.

This article aims to show the extent to which the historiographical developments of the last two decades are particularly fruitful for the study of medieval commons, collective rights and, above all, common goods, to understand how rural societies interact and regulate their relationships with their environment, in an approach that is not only economic or legal but also socio-political.

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<sup>8</sup> Martin Aurell, *Une Famille de la noblesse provençale au Moyen âge, les Porcellet* (Avignon : Aubanel, 1986).

<sup>9</sup> For a more comprehensive historiography, see Joseph Morsel, *Communautés d'habitants au Moyen Âge (XI-XV<sup>e</sup> siècles)* (Paris : Editions de la Sorbonne, 2018).

<sup>10</sup> Étienne Anheim et al., 'La notion de *libri statutorum* : 'tribut philologique' ou réalité documentaire? Les statuts communaux du Moyen Âge conservés pour l'actuel département de Vaucluse,' *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome - Moyen Âge* 126/2 (2014): p. 447-460, here p. 447.

First, commons, as collective rights, are the subject of a long historiographical tradition in France, around the work of the *Annales*, useful to understand Saint-Rémy's situation. Secondly, the historiographical revival since the late 1980s, particularly in Italy, about common goods, put a new light on the swamp bought by the community.

## I. From collective rights to commons

### A. *Collective rights, the traditional focus of Annales historiography*

Commons are not a new issue in French historiography, provided that the field of study is broadened to include commons of the modern era and that one considers the fundamental distinction between collective property and common rights.<sup>11</sup> Collective servitudes, "bind individual property itself,"<sup>12</sup> through the restrictions they place on private property as we know it today. However, one must be wary of any teleological narrative that would see medieval forms of property as incomplete, destined to become contemporary private property. These forms corresponded to other socio-economic relationships.

Marc Bloch devoted a great deal of thought to this subject, first in a two-part article, "La lutte pour l'individualisme agraire dans la France du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle,"<sup>13</sup> published in 1930, in which the Middle Ages and commons are little discussed. He distinguishes between various rights, which form a continuum in practice for the community and its members. In addition to the right of *vaine pâture*, i.e. grazing on other people's fields after the harvest, there was the right to roam in neighbouring villages.<sup>14</sup> The following year,

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<sup>11</sup> Davide Cristoferi, 'Da Usi Civici a Beni Comuni. Gli Studi Sulla Proprietà Collettiva Nella Medievistica e Nella Modernistica Italiana e Le Principali Tendenze Internazionali,' *Studi Storici* 57/3 (2016) pp. 577-604, here p. 590.

<sup>12</sup> Bloch, 'La lutte pour l'individualisme agraire dans la France du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Première partie,' p. 330.

<sup>13</sup> Bloch, 'La lutte pour l'individualisme agraire dans la France du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Première partie' and Marc Bloch, 'La lutte pour l'individualisme agraire dans la France du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Part two: conflicts and results. Troisième partie : la Révolution et le "Grand Œuvre de la propriété"', *Annales* 2/8 (1930): 511-556.

<sup>14</sup> Bloch, 'La lutte pour l'individualisme agraire dans la France du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Part One,' pp. 331-332.

in his famous work *Les caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française*, he showed the fundamental nature of collective easements on private and communal land, placing the history of collective rights more broadly within agrarian history, the history of techniques and rural customs that more or less rigidly regulated the activity of farmers. He shows that their development is linked to the growth of livestock farming and transhumance practices during the thirteenth century.<sup>15</sup>

Throughout his book *Les caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française*, Marc Bloch devotes considerable attention to collective rights, particularly in Provence, where collective rights were questioned at the end of the Middle Ages. As early as the thirteenth century, tenants forbid access to part of their fallow land – known as *mise en défens* (fencing) – to feed their plough animals. Marc Bloch observed a wider movement to question this custom during the next century.<sup>16</sup> He points out Pernes-les-Fontaines, in the Vaucluse region, to be one of the first communities to formalise this practice, where grazing was restricted as early as 1297, and banned from 1363 onwards, confirmed in 1395, 1397 and 1418<sup>17</sup> – even if the several confirmations indicate that it was not without difficulty. This trend was confirmed in 1469 by the Estates of Provence, which imposed year-round fencing.<sup>18</sup> Previously, the land was enclosed from spring to harvest. This ban confirms a trend, but is not the culmination of it, as the procedures continued into the modern era. The main contribution of Marc Bloch's work is to identify the causes of these changes. While the influence of Roman law and the organisation of land parcels were necessary conditions for these transformations, they do not explain their precociousness; the driving force was the evolution of socio-economic structures, in a well-defined environmental context of abundant grazing land. Marc Bloch emphasises that these transformations took place with difficulties: even during the French Revolution, many small farmers fought for the return of collective servitudes (p. 239-240). The opposing interests of different social groups, particularly breeders and farmers, their internal structuring, the

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<sup>15</sup> Marc Bloch, *Les caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française*. Volume 1, 2nd edition (1st ed. 1931) (Paris : Armand Colin, 1968).

<sup>16</sup> Bloch, *Les caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française*. p. 202.

<sup>17</sup> AC Pernes FF1/1 A to D

<sup>18</sup> Marcel Lachiver, ed. 'Défens Ou défends,' *Dictionnaire du monde rural : les mots du passé* (Paris : Fayard, 1997).

environmental characteristics of the areas opened to agriculture, and their reciprocal evolutionary dynamics are all important features in understanding the evolution of collective rights.

Of lesser importance in the book, the communal, i.e. the common property of rural communities, not appropriated by private individuals, is presented in the chapter devoted to social groups: according to Marc Bloch, the communal is above all part of the definition, not to say the identity, of the rural community. He points to its many uses for communities, which can rely on the many natural resources they lack on their lands.<sup>19</sup> Above all, he questions their legal status: they may belong to several communities in indivision, and most of them are the subject of entangled property rights, established progressively over long procedures, and legal battles. The parts that are not exploited are considered usable, or even appropriable, in other words, *res nullius*.<sup>20</sup>

Later generations of the *Ecole des Annales* did not ignore the problem either: communes were studied from the angle of rural history. Communes are primarily concerned with grazing, as well as the extraction of resources from forests.

Throughout his work, Georges Duby's analysis of commons is rooted in the theme of seigneurial domination, especially in the late Middle Ages, in the context of social differentiation resulting from economic growth and demographic pressure. In the twelfth-thirteenth centuries, the local lord-controlled commons, "strove above all to divert collective agrarian constraints and the use of communal land to his benefit".<sup>21</sup> This inequality of position and power is fundamental to understanding the evolution of commons and continues Marc Bloch's analyses: members of the same community have different relations to commons, depending on their activities and social position. Georges Duby extends these reflections with a more detailed approach to the partial reversal at the end of the Middle Ages, seen as the result of economic and demographic developments.

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<sup>19</sup> Bloch, *Les caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française*, p. 185.

<sup>20</sup> Bloch, *Les caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française*. Tome 1, p. 186-187. On this point, see in particular Yan Thomas, 'La valeur des choses. Le droit romain hors la religion,' *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 57e année/6 (2002), 1431-1462.

<sup>21</sup> Duby, *L'économie rurale et la vie des campagnes*, p. 483.

Rural economic dynamism had an impact on the use of collective rights. From the end of the thirteenth century onwards, social differentiation increased within villages, due to changes in land uses, particularly on seigneurial estates. Contrary to Marc Bloch's analysis, the richest peasant in the village "endeavoured, to extend his profits, to withdraw more and more of the fields and meadows of the estate from collective constraints, from idle grazing, from the obligations of the common herd. Closer to the land, less spendthrift than the nobleman, and more devious, he thus increased his fortune. In this way, [these transformations had] the main effect of loosening agrarian solidarities and accentuating tensions between rich and poor within peasant society".<sup>22</sup>

At the beginning of the fourteenth century, the poorest peasants were excluded from the communals in France, Germany and England. Exclusion could come from the richer peasants, the lords, or from the community itself, as in England. For the latter, the excluded provided rural labourers employed as day labourers for low wages.<sup>23</sup> At the beginning of the fourteenth century, collective and communal rights were more difficult to access or exercise. The root of the problem was the demographic and agricultural growth of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, which led to accelerated social differentiation. The Black Death, on the other hand, reduced demographic pressure and, according to Duby, reorganised and improved agricultural production, with the least fertile land, often communal, returning to grazing.

The more difficult economic context of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries did not hinder the development of livestock farming, a source of great profit not only in the urban environment but also in the high mountain countries:<sup>24</sup> the opening of open spaces and the shortage of manpower favoured the orientation towards pastoral economy, based either on grazing or leasing grassland.<sup>25</sup> The development of these activities has had the effect of reviving conflicts over communal land.

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<sup>22</sup> Duby, *L'économie rurale et la vie des campagnes*, p. 526.

<sup>23</sup> Duby, *L'économie rurale et la vie des campagnes*, pp. 506, 535.

<sup>24</sup> Georges Duby, 'La seigneurie et l'économie paysanne. Alpes du Sud, 1338,' *Études rurales* 2/1 (1961): 5-36, here 625.

<sup>25</sup> Duby, *L'économie rurale et la vie des campagnes*, p. 625.

Emmanuel Leroy-Ladurie's work devotes great attention to communal and collective rights in *Montaillou, village occitan*, first published in 1975, which quickly gained international success.<sup>26</sup> Located in the Midi, where collective rights were preserved with greater vigour, this village was the subject of a lengthy investigation by the Inquisition, led by Jacques Fournier. The usual scarcity of documentation is compensated here by a survey from 1672, that describes the registration of certain collective rights in the seigneurial rights of the kings of France, successors to the ancient counts of Foix.<sup>27</sup> The inhabitants could graze their flocks in the seigneurial forests and wastelands in exchange for fees, paid to the king's representative. Similar rights, as part of oral practices, probably already existed in late medieval times.

These collective rights are attached not to individuals, but to families: the "Pyrenean house is a legal entity, indivisible in property, and the holder of a certain number of rights: these are expressed in the ownership of land, and the use of forests and common mountain pastures".<sup>28</sup>

Eventually, widely present in the work of the Ecole des Annales, from one generation to another, commons are not necessarily common goods, but above all collective rights, whether exercised over the property of others – referred to as collective servitudes – or over spaces belonging to the community or a lord, the communal. These collective rights apply to individuals – the members of the community – whom they help to define, in areas of varying status, under varied and complex ownership relationships. Gradually fixed in writing, sometimes under the name of custom, they may seem to reflect immemorial and relatively unchanging rights in the image of the peasant community. This representation is erroneous: the peasantry has a history, and so do collective rights.

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<sup>26</sup> Le Roy Ladurie's work has been criticized, particularly in the way he considers the inquisitorial procedure and its effects on testimonies, see for example John H. Arnold, 'The Historian as Inquisitor: The Ethics of Interrogating Subaltern Voices,' *Rethinking History*, 2-3, 1998, 379.

<sup>27</sup> Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou, village occitan de 1294 à 1324* (Paris : Gallimard, 2008) chapter I. Environnement et pouvoirs.

<sup>28</sup> Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou, village occitan de 1294 à 1324*, chapter II. The family home: *domus, ostal*.



### *B. Collective rights at Saint-Rémy*

The origin of grazing rights at Saint-Rémy is not easy to determine. Ecclesiastical sources mainly mention churches and the *castrum* and its inhabitants, not the surrounding area. On the side of the secular seigneurie, i.e. the Counts of Provence, the status of wetlands before the end of the thirteenth century is not mentioned in royal surveys. Nevertheless, we know that in Tarascon, in 1236, the inhabitants obtained the right to graze in the marshes, granted by royal privilege.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, a letter from Charles II, dated March 24, 1289, mentions the *palud* located north-west of Saint-Rémy, granted to the community of Saint-Rémy in exchange for a cens: this was probably an emphyteutic lease, followed by a division, with the counts retaining eminent domain.<sup>30</sup> Following a flood, the inhabitants obtained a cens reduction. At the same time, the Count imposed – or ratified – the use of a third of the marsh as *patui*, i.e. common grazing land, for the *universitas* and the inhabitants.<sup>31</sup> Nothing is known about the cultivation of the remainder, the sharing of the land, or compliance with this request. Finally, a letter patent from 1307 explicitly defines the collective rights of the inhabitants to graze and cut wood, excluding strangers.<sup>32</sup>

The legal framework was therefore mainly set by the Counts of Provence. However, the geographical framework depended on the definition of the status of inhabitant, which was not clearly defined in the sources,<sup>33</sup> and above all on the geographical extension of the *territorium* over which these

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<sup>29</sup> Emeline Roucaute, 'Une Histoire des zones palustres en milieu méditerranéen entre Bas Rhône et Basse Durance (XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle-début XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle)'. PhD thesis, Manuscript, Prehistory, Archaeology, History and Civilizations from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, Aix Marseille Université, Marseille, 2008, p. 125.

<sup>30</sup> AD13 B. 262, f° 11, v°; AC Saint-Rémy, CC 1 e, in Edgar Leroy, *Les Archives Communales de Saint-Rémy de Provence Des Origines Au XVI<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (Saint-Rémy : Edition de la Municipalité, 1950), pp. 206-207.

<sup>31</sup> AD13 B. 262, f° 11, v° ; AC Saint-Rémy, CC 1 e : "*ad usum et patium universitatis et homini dicti castri debeat perpetuo remanere*".

<sup>32</sup> AC Saint-Rémy AA2, "*homines ipsi Sancti Remigii sint et fuerint a longis retro temporibus, in possessione vel communi lignarandi et pastorgandi, soli et in solidum, infra territorium memoratum et quoslibet extraneos id agere prohibendi*".

<sup>33</sup> See more generally Joseph Morsel, *Communautés d'habitants au Moyen Âge (XI-XV<sup>ee</sup> siècles)* (Paris : Editions de la Sorbonne, 2018).

rights applied, a constitutive element of the community.<sup>34</sup> The delimitation procedures were spread over several decades, from the first mention in 1266 to 1328. The longest were those of Lagoy (whose lords faced financial losses) and Mollégès, who held rights over the eastern *palud*. These deeds were an important part of the activity of the *universitas* during this period. In addition to delimiting territory, they also provided an opportunity to reaffirm collective rights. A 1296 lawsuit between the syndics of Saint-Rémy and the lord of Lagoy, Karleti Albe, tells us that the inhabitants of Saint-Rémy had identical rights over the territories of their *castrum* as they did over that of Lagoy, in particular concerning the right of way, the reciprocal being not verified, hence some of the tension surrounding the demarcation.<sup>35</sup> These procedures follow roughly the same pattern: the community appoints representatives, and syndics, who then take legal action, requesting a decision, arbitration, and not hesitating to appeal. In the 1316 demarcation with Romanin, the reciprocal right of way is specified, on condition that any damage to private property is paid for.

Within this legal framework, Saint-Rémy *universitas* intervened gradually in the fourteenth century to regulate usage conflicts linked to collective rights and communal land, and to defend its collective interests. Before the community was able to regulate certain uses, regulation was the jurisdiction of the judge and the *bayle*, i.e. the counts of Provence. In 1306, several inhabitants brought before the Tarascon judge a case against a landowner. He had had the *bayle* seize the cows of Guillelmus Blanchi, notary, which were grazing on a private area after the harvest. In other words, he was trying to restrict the right to graze,<sup>36</sup> and his complaints were taken up by the *bayle*: the victim had to complain with the judge of Tarascon, i.e. a higher authority, who asked the *bayle* to investigate. Guillelmus Blanchi had to produce witnesses, and the questioning focused on the customary practice of “vaine pâture” in this place: oral confirmation was enough for the *bayle*. The inhabitants probably acted collectively, and those who regularly grazed in this area have probably gathered to testify. Nor can we rule out the possibility that they were the shepherds of Guillelmus Blanchi’s herd, the

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<sup>34</sup> Marc Bloch, *Les caractères originaux de l’histoire rurale française. Tome 1*, 2nd edition (1st ed. 1931) (Paris: Armand Colin, 1968), 173.

<sup>35</sup> AD13, B.84, f° 255 et seq.

<sup>36</sup> AC Saint-Rémy FF 2 F.

complainant: we know nothing of their respective links. Ultimately, this first way of defending collective rights is based on practice and customs and took place before the law.

Besides, keeping a copy of these proceedings is a way of defending these collective rights and inscribing them in the long term: two representatives of the community asked a notary, Egidius Porcelli, one of Saint-Rémy's leading notables, to copy the contents of these proceedings and give them a public form.<sup>37</sup> Such a request, common in manuscripts kept by the community between the 1290s-1300s, shows the importance attached by the *universitas* and its representatives to keep a record of these proceedings, and to register themselves in action. For the community, the stakes are perhaps as much social – ensuring the community's equilibrium – as they are social-political – maintaining a certain identity, associated with collective rights, against individuals who wish to restrict or detach themselves from them.

The first regulatory interventions of which we have any trace are the statutes of 1323; the content is only known by modern inventories. For subsequent statutes of 1335 and 1337, the communal and departmental archives have preserved the originals. Reviewing their whole content and the deliberations preserved episodically for the fourteenth century would be tedious. The following table summarises collective rights.

Themes	Deliberations	Statutes
Collective easements (grazing and grass-cutting)	-	March 1335 (art. 1), May 1335 (art. 3, 6, 12) Feb 1337 (art 3, 9)
Collective grazing rights on common land	-	May 1335 (art. 1, 2, 14)
Other easements and collective rights	-	May 1335 (art. 4, 5, 11); Feb 1337 (art. 17)

*Figure 2. Collective rights in the communal statutes and deliberations of Saint-Rémy*

<sup>37</sup> AC Saint-Rémy, FF 2 F : “*ad quadam cartulario Johannis Garantonis notarium publicum [...] ad requisitatem Johannis [Robertis] et Isnardi Garantoni, hac instrumentum signo meo signavi et in formam publicam redegi*”.

Overall, collective rights are mostly defined by statutes, and very little in the deliberations, as shown by the detailed record of decisions over time (see Figure 2). The two deliberations concerning collective rights in 1344 involved the appointment of vine guards. This clear dichotomy between the content of the statutes and the deliberations can be explained quite logically: the purpose of the statutes is to define collective rights, within the framework defined by the Counts of Provence and their representatives, while the deliberations concern day-to-day management.

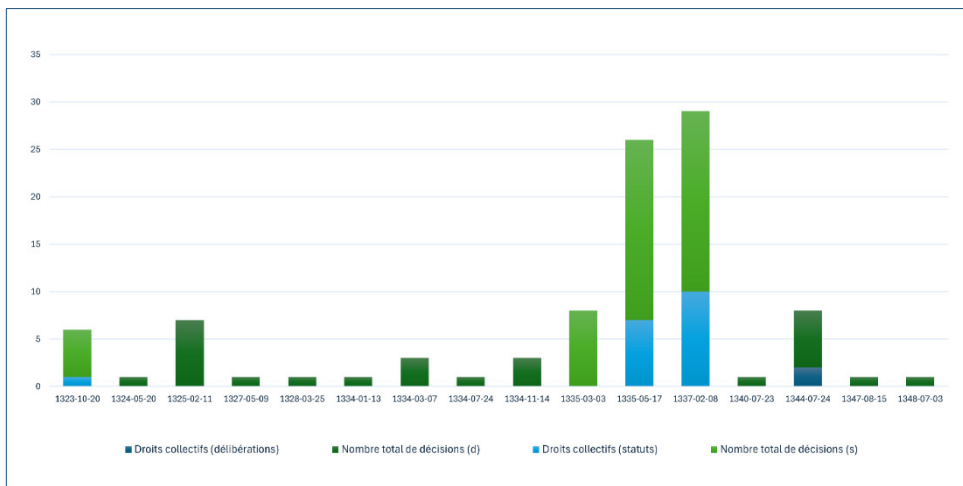


Figure 3. Chronology of collective rights in Saint-Rémy's deliberations

The evolution of statutes provides a clearer picture of how content is constructed. Decisions may follow on from conflicts, of which they keep a record. For example, the first article of the statutes of March 1335 specifically mentions a dispute with a nobleman from outside the commune, Francescus Raymundi, who was grazing his flocks in the *défens* or pastures and whose animals were seized, which seems to lead to a trial. The *universitas* generalises the procedure and plans to finance it, a sign of the importance of the case, but also their cost. The status of grazing land is not specified, whether communal or open to free grazing. The problem here is not the right to graze or the right to graze per se, but how to limit it to members of the community.

These statutes were probably confirmed from year to year,<sup>38</sup> without being reproduced in the new statutes. For example, the 1335 ban was extended in the 1337 statutes: the prohibition on outside herds in the *défens* and pastures was extended to include a ban on livestock rearing by outsiders<sup>39</sup> – which may well have been a way of circumventing the first ban.

The problem posed by Franciscus Raymundi seems to be linked to a shift from subsistence pastoralism to lucrative pastoralism, corresponding to much larger herds. Such practices can lead to over-grazing, endangering the very existence of some rural communities, as was the case for certain villages in Provence in the mid-fourteenth century.<sup>40</sup> At first glance, this situation echoes the “Tragedy of the Commons”: but, contrary to what Hardin writes, the communities and the administration of the Counts of Provence sought to regulate access, in this case by excluding outside herds.

More broadly, the articles of the 1335 statutes, for those of interest to us here, regulate access to the community’s natural resources, i.e. those taken from nature on the community’s territory. *The sine qua non* for the exercise of collective rights is the existence of a material base. Against a backdrop of strong demographic growth and increasing pressure on harvests, the community is seeking to protect its collective rights. The second article of March 1335 lifted the ban imposed a year earlier by the *bayle* of Saint-Rémy on taking timber from other people’s property. The statutes of March 1335 can be read as an organisation of the *universitas*, its council, and the relations they maintain with the *bayle*, i.e. with the administration of the counts of Provence: this codification also concerns collective rights. These statutes therefore help to define a collective identity, associated with collective rights, certain forms of political and legal relations with the authorities, and a particular role for the notables at the head of the political community in this scheme. In this way, the notables can claim to be defending a collective right.

Two months later, the focus of the statutes of May 1335 was no longer the organisation of the *universitas* and its council, but rather the defence of

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<sup>38</sup> Didier Lett, ed. *Statuts, écritures et pratiques sociales dans les sociétés de l’Italie communale et du Midi de la France (xii -xv<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Rome : Publications de l’École française de Rome, 2021).

<sup>39</sup> AD13, B 507: “Item quod nullus cuiuscumque status et conditionis existat audeat tenere in territorio Sancti Remigii ab aliquo extraneo aliqua animalia grossa vel minuta ad medium incrementum, vel alias”.

<sup>40</sup> Pierre Coste, ‘La vie pastorale en Provence au milieu du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle’. *Études rurales* 46/1 (1972): 61-75.

property, whether individual or collective. Without calling into question collective servitudes, the community regulates them for the cultivation and harvesting periods: mowing grass (art. 3) and gathering and harvesting fruit (art. 4 and 5) are forbidden on the property of others. Article 6 prohibits the keeping of animals on cultivated land.<sup>41</sup> The statutes are valid until mid-October, until the end of the harvest. Cultivation and grazing activities must be kept separate, a sign of encroachment, not to say conflict, between one and the other. Such provisions, which take up the general operation of collective servitudes, are part of a form of defence, or at least regulation, of property. Politically speaking, they also reflect the desire of the *universitas* or its representatives to play a role in their regulation.

Associated with the supervision and protection of property rights, other mentions of collective rights include the management of damage caused by unidentified animals in 1335 (art. 12) and 1337 (art. 11). Such damage is probably related to grazing, or if the animals escape the surveillance of their keepers or their enclosure. The first version explicitly excludes nobles from any responsibility, and animals guilty of damage are to be sought among neighbouring non-nobles unless their herds can be explicitly accused. This statutory distinction was abolished in 1337. This evolution bears witness to the socio-political tensions within the community of Saint-Rémy, and how they are or are not reflected in the regulations of the *universitas*, including in terms of collective rights. The complexity of the 1335 article, and its subsequent deletion, lead us to believe that a particular case was ratified by the *universitas*, a regulation that was probably subsequently rendered null and void or contested.

The royal swamps are the only area for which the *universitas* precisely regulates collective rights. They have been owned under emphyteutic leases since 1324 and divided up in 1337. Between the two, usage seems unclear: if the swamp is not drained, collective rights seem to apply without restriction. By 1335, on the other hand, drainage was well underway and sharing was being actively prepared: the community restricted access. Failure to comply with the regulations resulted in fines, part of which were paid to the *universitas*: these are the only documented cases where the community receives part of

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<sup>41</sup> AC Saint-Rémy, FF 2 F: “Item quod nulla persona ut supra, audeat ponere aliqua animalia grossa vel minuta in [121] alieno prato, blado vel deffenduta nec vineis, nec inter garbas”.

the proceeds. In detail, the first article prohibits all community members from grazing in the *palud*,<sup>42</sup> and the second from mowing grass,<sup>43</sup> except by agreement with the council in both cases. The aim is therefore to control access to a limited resource, to prevent over-grazing that would excessively damage this largely drained but not yet shared area, or to generate income. The thirteenth and fourteenth articles specify the nature of the agreement to be entered into with the designated council: an entry fee, distinguished between natives and non-natives, and according to the type of animal (figure 4). The much higher fees for large livestock may aim at restricting profit-making grazing practices. This provision was not renewed in 1337: the *palud* was divided up and grazing was largely excluded. The 6th, 7th and 18th articles forbid access to the *palud* for grazing; only ploughing and pack animals are allowed,<sup>44</sup> except for harvest restrictions.<sup>45</sup> Intensive grazing for profit is excluded and it is only possible to feed animals useful for cultivation.

Inhabitants	small animals	large animals
Native	2 denarii	16 denarii
Non-native	3 denarii	25 denarii

*Figure 4. Grazing rates in the royal palud of Saint-Rémy in 1335*

Except for the royal *palud*, the actual management of these regulations is the responsibility of the *bayle*, who designates the *banniers*. Indeed, the rights of justice depend on the local lord, in this case, the Counts of Provence. At most, the community can grant the banners a share of the fines for illegal mowing. In other words, regulation by the community fell within the very limited framework of the counts' power and their representatives.

<sup>42</sup> AC Saint-Rémy, FF 1G, translated in Edgar Leroy, '*Les archives communales de Saint-Rémy de Provence. Des origines au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*' (Saint-Rémy : Edition de la Municipalité, 1950), 186-93.

<sup>43</sup> *idem*.

<sup>44</sup> AD13, B 507: "*Item fuit ordinatum et statutum quod nulla animalia audeant intrare dictam paludem divisam nisi animalia aratoria et animalia basti*".

<sup>45</sup> AD13, B 507: "*intrare infra duas robinas medietarum a quindena Sancti Michaelis usque ac festum natalis domini, sub pena banni consueti cum animalibus aratoriis basti, et equabus quantum messes durabunt pro pastergagio assignato*".

Overall, the community's collective rights are a tangle of rights and practices, complex to regulate, that evolve in line with economic and socio-political dynamics. The community, or its representatives, are gradually taking over part of their management. *Vaine pâture* (grazing) was increasingly restricted to local inhabitants and subsistence use, although noble and non-noble, natives and non-natives were treated differently by the royal *palud* in 1335. The *universitas* intervened mainly in the areas it owned, i.e. the royal *palud* to the east. For the rest, the provisions are a mixture of measures aimed at achieving a certain social balance between owners, particularly of vineyards, and those who graze their livestock. Some measures seem to have been requested by the administration. Finally, the set of statutes from the 1330s appears to be a means for the council to play an increasing role in the social life of the community and to find new temporary revenues. In other words, it sought to justify its existence, since it was unable to regulate all collective rights. Indeed, anything not mentioned in these statutes is subject to regulation by the *bayle* and the judge of Tarascon, i.e. the Counts of Provence, lords of the town.

## II. Commons goods

### A. The Italian revival of commons

While the French historiography of the *Annales* has tended to focus on the study of collective rights, more recent historiography uses the term *common*, mainly in the sense of common goods and collective property. The boom in Italian work on this subject over the past two decades or more has led to the publication of several high-quality historiographical reviews.<sup>46</sup> As in France, the historiography of commons is rooted in the long-term and the socio-political changes that have taken place in Italy.

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<sup>46</sup> See in particular Emanuele Conte, 'Comune proprietario o comune rappresentante? La titolarità dei beni collettivi tra dogmatica e storiografia,' *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome* 114/1 (2002): 73-94; Emanuele Conte, 'Beni comuni e domini collettivi tra storia e diritto,' in *Oltre il pubblico e il privato. Per un diritto dei beni comuni* (Rome: Ombre Corte, 2012), pp. 43-59; Giacomo Bonan, 'Beni Comuni: Alcuni Percorsi Storiografici,' *Passato e Presente* 196 (2015): 97-115; and Davide Cristoferi, 'Da Usi Civici a Beni Comuni. Gli Studi Sulla Proprietà Collettiva Nella Medievistica e Nella Modernistica Italiana e Le Principali Tendenze Internazionali,' *Studi Storici* 57/3 (2016): 577-604.



Against the backdrop of the Industrial Revolution and the socio-political transformations it spawned, bourgeois law and “individual statism”<sup>47</sup> developed, based on free individual initiative as the sole and full manifestation of man, and a source of benefits for the community and the state. For the bourgeoisie and academics alike, these political currents had a negative interpretation of collective property, which had to be abolished. However, from the nineteenth century onwards, Positivism, Romanticism and then Socialist currents were critical of bourgeois property and turned their attention to collective property and its origins. The context was that of the transformation of the countryside: Italian parliamentary surveys and debates after unification showed the impoverishment resulting from the disappearance of common property in the villages concerned.

However, until the 1960s, collective property was confused with private property and dealt with under private law, i.e. as a particular relationship between a private subject and an object.<sup>48</sup> On the contrary, from this decade onwards, commons are studied from the angle of public law, as a modality of possession and management by the state or public power. For the Carolingian period, Ennio Cortese studied how “strategic” public goods, such as roads, bridges, ports and saltworks, gradually came under the authority and ownership of the king. These assets became *regalia* under Frederick I.<sup>49</sup> Paolo Grossi’s work marks a turning point in this respect, for while he takes up the public law approach, he introduces the distinction between collective and public property. More recent work by legal scholars includes that of Emmanuel Conte: in particular, he has studied the problems of ownership of the collective rights of communities over the feudal domain, i.e. the relationship between these collective rights and the feudal domain of the lords, where most of these rights are exercised. Since the 1990s, legal debates have extended to the relationship between legal forms of ownership and economic, social and environmental factors,<sup>50</sup> in parallel with the development of these historical fields.

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<sup>47</sup> Paolo Grossi, *Un altro modo di possedere* (Milano: A. Giuffrè, 1977). in Cristoferi, ‘Da Usi Civici a Beni Comuni: Gli Studi Sulla Proprietà Collettiva,’ 580.

<sup>48</sup> Cristoferi, ‘Da Usi Civici a Beni Comuni: Gli Studi Sulla Proprietà Collettiva,’ 580, 584.

<sup>49</sup> E. Cortese, *Il Problema Della Sovranità Nel Pensiero Giuridico Medioevale* (Bulzoni Editore, 1966), in Cristoferi, ‘Da Usi Civici a Beni Comuni: Gli Studi Sulla Proprietà Collettiva,’ 582-84). See also Pierre Racine, ‘Aux origines du droit public : la législation de Frédéric Barberousse à la Diète de Roncaglia (1158),’ *Le Moyen Age* CXIV/2 (2008): 361-368).

<sup>50</sup> Cristoferi, ‘Da Usi Civici a Beni Comuni: Gli Studi Sulla Proprietà Collettiva,’ 584-585.

Outside the field of legal history, the study of commons underwent a revival in the late 1980s, with two major colloquia on collective property and commons. In 1987, Jean-Claude Maire-Vigueur introduced the colloquium at the Ecole Française de Rome, deploring the overly strong influence of legal formalism, which had prevented the development of other forms of analysis, whether of the economic role of commons in communes, the nature of collective ownership or the political struggles linked to their control.<sup>51</sup> His work has demonstrated that commons were a central element of communal finances in the twelfth-thirteenth centuries, at the heart of the confrontation between *milites* and *popolo*. In particular, he has highlighted the trajectories of appropriation of communal property by the first communal elites of the tenth-eleventh centuries, and their relative distribution (comtadine, parochial, centralised), achieved under the growing power of the bourgeois classes during the thirteenth century. Collective property thus appeared to be made up not only of fields but also of cultivated land, mines, castles and mills – in other words, much more extensive than had previously been thought.<sup>52</sup>

The 1990s saw the emergence of environmental studies outside the Anglo-American world. In 1992, the *Quaderni Storici*, edited by Diego Moreno and Osvaldo Raggio, studied commons, admittedly mainly in the modern era, from the perspective of environmental micro-history. They are defined as spaces and resources that occupy a crucial and ambiguous position in the organisation of the territory and the structure of an economic system, and for these reasons are at the centre of conflicts.<sup>53</sup> The 1990s also saw the development of commons studies from an agrarian history perspective. François Menant<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur, 'Premessa,' *Mélanges de l'Ecole Française de Rome. Moyen-Age, Temps Modernes* 99/2 (1987): 553-554, Cristoferi, 'Da Usi Civici a Beni Comuni: Gli Studi Sulla Proprietà Collettiva,' 587-588).

<sup>52</sup> Cristoferi, 'Da Usi Civici a Beni Comuni: Gli Studi Sulla Proprietà Collettiva,' 592-594.

<sup>53</sup> Osvaldo Raggio and Diego Moreno, eds. *Risorse Collettive*, *Quaderni Storici* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1992), Cristoferi, 'Da Usi Civici a Beni Comuni: Gli Studi Sulla Proprietà Collettiva,' 593.

<sup>54</sup> François Menant, *Campagnes lombardes du Moyen Âge. L'économie et la société rurales dans la région de Bergame, de Crémone et de Brescia du X<sup>e</sup> au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (, 1993), François Menant, 'Les chartes de franchise de l'Italie communale : un tour d'horizon et quelques études de cas,' in *Pour Une Anthropologie Du Prélèvement Seigneurial Dans Les Campagnes Médiévales : XIe-XIVe Siècles : Réalités et Représentations Paysannes : Colloque Tenu à Medina del Campo du 31 Mai au 3 Juin 2000*, eds. Monique Bourin and Pascual Martínez Sopena (Paris : Publications de la Sorbonne, 2004).

and Gérard Rippe<sup>55</sup> demonstrate the important role of commons in the evolution of the companions of northern Italy between the tenth and thirteenth centuries.

Gradually, the disappearance of collective property, first through the reclamation and tilling of the soil by secular, ecclesiastical and community lords, and later through the arrival of urban landowners, led either to the proletarianization of peasants or to the development of a more modern and efficient form of agriculture geared to the urban market.<sup>56</sup>

Finally, in the wake of the neo-institutionalist perspectives opened up by Elinor Ostrom,<sup>57</sup> i.e. from the angle of transforming resource management, we should mention the work of Riccardo Rao. Picking up where Jean-Claude Maire-Vigueur left off, he brings together legal and socio-economic perspectives in a regional rather than local framework, using Piedmont and Lombardy as examples. It reconstructs the forms of management and ownership of these properties, the *comunìa*, fundamental to the study and understanding of community history. In this sense, it goes far beyond Ostrom's perspectives and opens a much broader field of research. The study of common property in Lombard villages enables him to show the role it played in the political affirmation of village communities, their gradual autonomy from the lordships, and the construction of local identity: from the twelfth century onwards, Italian communities became legal personalities and were able to exercise not only a right of regulation but also a right of alienation, if not exchange, in agreement or otherwise with the lords. In the thirteenth century, competition with the seigneuries became fiercer: communities were recognised as communes, with their governing bodies, which could cultivate, sell or lease common property. Not only the right to use was brought before the courts, but also the direct right. The regulation of all collective resources is reorganised, in the broader context of the extension of the prerogatives of the communes.<sup>58</sup> Rao shows that enforcing rights, particularly the rural police agents, is an important issue in determining the political role of village

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<sup>55</sup> Gérard Rippe, *Padoue et son contado (Xe-XIIIe siècle)*, Rome, Publications de l'École française de Rome, 2003.

<sup>56</sup> Cristoferi, 'Da Usi Civici a Beni Comuni: Gli Studi Sulla Proprietà Collettiva,' 594.

<sup>57</sup> Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

<sup>58</sup> Rao, 'I beni comuni nel Piemonte bassomedievale,' pp. 332-334.

communities. However, these communities do not always represent the entire population: changes in the use of common property did not satisfy all inhabitants. Indeed, these communities gradually simplified the stratification of seigneurial rights, reclaiming the useful domain and restricting the collective rights associated with these spaces, particularly for neighbouring communities. In doing so, they brought these commons into the land market, from which they had previously been excluded. Gradually, communal property could be cultivated, rented out and even alienated, with the proceeds financing communal institutions. Yet, one part of the community could legitimately ask for the preservation of public uses of these spaces, on which it might depend for its survival, while another demanded the economic valorisation of these same spaces. Schematically speaking, village communities in the mountains are more likely to preserve the collective uses of grazing and harvesting, while communities on the plains are more likely to cultivate these areas.

The Italian reflections should be seen in the broader context of the scientific revival of commons in Northern Europe. The simplified picture is that of a southern Europe that lost its commons much faster than in the north, due to the much stronger power of the lords: to show a plural and more nuanced reality, Riccardo Rao and Iñaki Martín Viso<sup>59</sup> have carried out comparative work between their two respective work areas, northern Italy and the Duero plateau, in the north-west of the Iberian Peninsula. They proposed approaching commons as dynamic resources, i.e. “constantly in the process of being assimilated into public or private goods”;<sup>60</sup> above all, they advocated broadening the perspective to their non-economic functions, such as the search for internal social equilibrium, the construction of local identities and the involvement of external authorities. According to Rao, collective rights and common goods were encompassed by the term *communia*. Regulation was not only based on a definition of commons in terms of ownership by the community; rights of access to specific spaces were gradually formalised during the Middle Ages and played an essential role in the construction of the notion of the collective, a notion subsequently

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<sup>59</sup> Iñaki Martín Viso and Riccardo Rao, ‘Commons and power dynamics in medieval southern Europe. A comparison between Northern Italy and the Duero Plateau (VII -XV<sup>ee</sup> century),’ trans. Antoine Heudre, *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 77e année/3 (2022): 511-542.

<sup>60</sup> Viso and Rao, ‘Communs et dynamiques de pouvoir dans l’Europe du Sud médiévale,’ 5.

broadened to include the “common good” and moved into the political sphere.<sup>61</sup> However, Viso and Rao show that we should not oppose a public sphere, associated with the defence of commons, to a private sphere, which would aim to usurp and privatise them: communities themselves limited collective uses and were able to organise privatisation.<sup>62</sup>

During the twelfth century, local communities in northern Italy began to hold full rights over commons, while consulates were established and their institutions stabilised.<sup>63</sup> Conflicts between lords and communities led to partition in the form of fiefs; with the rise of the written word, rights were formalised and henceforth associated with residence. Commons were thus increasingly defined as linked to a territory and could be delimited by borders, and *termini*. “This evolution reflects the profound spatialisation of social relations that was taking place at the time, and the part that commons played in this process.”<sup>64</sup> Gradually, they were leased to private individuals, reinforcing inequalities within the community, between the richest who could pay, and the poorest who couldn’t, but also lost access to grazing lands.<sup>65</sup> One of the areas where commons remain is the wetlands, which have been drained.

### ***B. The role of common marshes in the community organisation***

Approaching common goods in terms of resources has been a long tradition, in legal history and outside it, whether in environmental history or Elinor Ostrom’s work. In particular, Fabienne Orsi summarised the bundle-of-rights approach, thus enabling to “conceive of property in terms of different independent rights whose distribution as well as composition can vary”.<sup>66</sup> The work of Elinor Ostrom and her team makes it possible to distinguish five rights associated with property: the right to access, to take (these first two form the right to use, which Ostrom describes as the operational level), the right to manage, to exclude and to alienate (which form the level of collective choice, where the rules that apply to the first level are defined).

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>66</sup> Fabienne Orsi, ‘Faisceau de droits,’ *Dictionnaire des biens communs*, Dictionnaires Quadriga, Paris, PUF, 2021.

Rights	Owner	Owner without right of alienation	Owners of use and management rights	Authorised user
Access and sampling	X	X	X	x
Management	X	X	X	
Exclusion	X	X		
Alienation	X			

*Figure 5. Bundles of rights*

Using a bundle-of-rights approach to analyse the common property of Saint-Rémy is not without complexity from a legal point of view, due to the superimposition of feudal forms of ownership and the appropriation of the land by private individuals in 1337. After this division, only drainage canals remained as common property: the inhabitants owned them in the form of emphyteusis,<sup>67</sup> without holding the eminent (or direct) domain.<sup>68</sup> This system is not specific to Saint-Rémy, nor to the county of Provence: Fabrice Mouthon's work on the Alps shows that it was widespread.<sup>69</sup> The *universitas* exercised most of the rights of use and management, almost from the outset, since in 1334 it was allowed to appoint *roubiniers*, responsible for maintaining the *roubines*, i.e. drainage canals.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>67</sup> AD13, B 507, l. 276-277: "*Constituerunt et assignaverunt emphiteosim perpetuam vice et nomine prefati domini nostri regis, et heredum suorum infrascriptis hominibus et personis castri de Sancto Remigio presentibus et requirentibus ac recipientibus pro se et heredibus suis quibuscumque predictam terram paludis dictamque paludem*".

<sup>68</sup> AD13, B 507, l. 279-280: "*sub maiori et directo domino et senhoria domini nostri regis et heredum suorum sit et taliter*". Regarding emphyteusis, see Jean-Michel Boehler, 'L'art d'être propriétaire sans l'être tout en l'étant. Pratiques emphytéotiques dans la campagne alsacienne aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles,' *Revue d'Alsace* /140 (2014): 79-96). On the operation of feudal seigneurie, see Romain Telliez, *Les institutions de la France médiévale : XI-XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 3rd edn, Collection Cursus (Malakoff: Armand Colin, 2022), 43-59).

<sup>69</sup> See, among others, Fabrice Mouthon, *La naissance des communs : Eaux, forêts, alpages dans les montagnes de Savoie : (XII -XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles)* (Chambéry: Société savoisienne d'histoire et d'archéologie, 2016); Fabrice Mouthon, 'XIII -XV<sup>e</sup> Siècles : La Naissance Des Communs Dans Les Alpes Françaises,' *Histoire Des Alpes - Storia Delle Alpi - Geschichte Der Alpen* /24 (2019): 23-42).

<sup>70</sup> Missing moose manuscript, analyzed and summarized in Edgar Leroy, *Les archives communales de Saint-Rémy de Provence. Des origines au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Saint-Rémy : Edition de la Municipalité, 1950), 177-78).

The following year, the statutes of 1335, and above all those of 1337, oriented activities towards cultivation rather than grazing.

The general pattern of drainage is the following. Secondary canals, or *vallati*, are used for drainage and to delimit plots, which drain into roubines, the main canals,<sup>71</sup> collecting the water to the Durance between Noves and Châteaurenard, to the north. The precise shape of these canals is difficult to estimate, given their variety,<sup>72</sup> but also due to subsequent abandonment and redevelopment in the 15th-16th centuries.<sup>73</sup> In 1327, the representatives reached an agreement with the bishop of Avignon, lord of Noves, to cross its territory.<sup>74</sup> The *universitas* contributed to purchasing a mill in Noves, that obstructed the<sup>75</sup> *roubine*, as well as to widening existing canals; finally, in the event of damage in Noves due to lack of maintenance in Saint-Rémy, the *universitas* was obliged to repair the damage. For the *vallati*, funding comes directly from the owners,<sup>76</sup> who pay *curatores*, entrusted by the *universitas* with the upkeep of roubines. Finally, the *universitas* paid the cens corresponding to the emphyteutic lease directly to the *bayle*, or the farmer of the cens, as it occurred in 1373,<sup>77</sup> financed by the inhabitants' regular contributions to the community.

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<sup>71</sup> Christine Portier-Martin et al, eds, *L'enquête générale de Leopardo da Foligno dans la viguerie de Tarascon : janvier - février 1332*, Collection de documents inédits sur l'histoire de France Série in-8o 51 (Paris : Éd. du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques, 2010), CXLII, see also Emeline Roucaute, *Une histoire des zones palustres en milieu méditerranéen entre bas Rhône et basse Durance (XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle-début XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, p. 184.

<sup>72</sup> See Jean-Loup Abbé, *À la conquête des étangs : L'aménagement de l'espace en Languedoc méditerranéen (XII -XV<sup>ee</sup> siècle)* (Toulouse : Presses universitaires du Midi, 2006).

<sup>73</sup> Roucaute, *Une histoire des zones palustres en milieu méditerranéen entre bas Rhône et basse Durance (XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle-début XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, pp. 192-195.

<sup>74</sup> ADV, G 249, n° 29 (*Diversorum Sancti Remigii*), analyzed in Edgar Leroy, *Les archives communales de Saint-Rémy de Provence des origines au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Saint-Rémy : Edition de la Municipalité, 1953), 562-569.

<sup>75</sup> Purchase probably financed by a loan the following autumn, see AC Saint-Rémy, CC IIIa, translation in Leroy, *Les archives communales de Saint-Rémy (II)*, 163-64.

<sup>76</sup> AC Saint-Rémy CC IIo, quoted and analyzed in Leroy, *Les archives communales de Saint-Rémy (II)*, pp. 218-220: "*solvantur per omnes et singulas personal qua possessiones seu possessionem in dicta palude [habent] prorata portione, secundum que servicium dicte paludis ut eis melius debitor expedire*".

<sup>77</sup> AC Saint-Rémy CC 1 h, summarized in Edgar Leroy, *Les Archives Communales de Saint-Rémy de Provence Des Origines Au XVI<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (Saint-Rémy : Edition de la Municipalité, 1952), pp. 279-280.



Figure 6. The royal marsh of Saint-Rémy

Since the 1335 statutes, the community has exercised the right of exclusion for collective rights, mainly grazing rights, against people outside the community, but also against members. After the 1337 division, the right to exclude common property was limited to that associated with the canals. It is difficult to see how this right could be exercised: penalties for non-participation are not specified, nor are the possibilities for exclusion. In societies where village solidarity is relatively strong, offenders may face strong pressure. Nevertheless, this may have encouraged lone-rider behaviour. Ostrom identifies poorly defined rights and sanctions as one of the causes of the failure of the commons.

Finally, the right of alienation is not very explicit concerning canals. Necessary to drain marshlands and to demarcate plots, they are delegated to the *universitas*, which manages them. Their proper operation and upkeep imply forms of collective organisation. However, legally speaking, the *universitas* is not the owner; the emphyteutic lease concerns the inhabitants, and the community acts as an intermediary between them and the authorities and for the organisation of common space.



The rights associated with the lots allocated in 1337 are much more precisely defined. Community members took ownership of most of the common property. The right of alienation was recognised, subject to payment of *lods* and *trezains*, i.e. sales duties levied by the lord, and above all to the exclusion of ecclesiastical owners. The terms in which this restriction is formulated evolve between the agreement reached in 1324<sup>78</sup> between the syndics, mandated by the community to apply for the Aiguillons marsh in the form of emphyteutic leases and the division between the members in 1337.<sup>79</sup> The prohibition of 1324 seemed above all to restrict the prohibition of sale to religious, and the exclusion then extended to religious communities and persons incapable by law or custom.

In a recent article, Gérard Chouquer calls into question a paradigm founded on a resource-based approach: “the realities are first and foremost those of land and territories, in other words, of the relationship between powers and the relationship between populations and space”.<sup>80</sup> Whether we’re talking about certain approaches to environmental history or a more legal approach, the angle remains the same: resources taken or to preserve, and their regulation. However, and this is an essential contribution of Italian historiography, understanding commons in the Middle Ages requires a socio-political approach. For Saint-Rémy, the issues at stake are already apparent when examining bundles of rights: understanding legal and economic dynamics refers to an explicit socio-political background.

The Aiguillons marsh was quite complex to develop, for both physical reasons, linked to the wetland environment, and political reasons, delimiting the marsh surface between the various neighbouring communities. At the beginning of the fourteenth century, the marsh was used for grazing and was the subject of conflicts with the neighbouring communities of Lagoy

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<sup>78</sup> AD13 B2, f. 122: “*exceptis ecclesis militibus et religiosis personis*”.

<sup>79</sup> AD13, B 507, l. 284-285: “*in militares seu ecclasticas personas universitatem et collegium seu alias quascumque inhabiles et a jure prohibitas tam de consuetudine quam de jure*”.

<sup>80</sup> Gérard Chouquer, 2023 ‘Le rôle du récit historique dans la définition du statut juridique des communs fonciers,’ ([https://www.academia.edu/110945455/Le\\_r%C3%B4le\\_du\\_r%C3%A9cit\\_historique\\_dans\\_la\\_d%C3%A9finition\\_du\\_statut\\_juridique\\_des\\_communs\\_fonciers](https://www.academia.edu/110945455/Le_r%C3%B4le_du_r%C3%A9cit_historique_dans_la_d%C3%A9finition_du_statut_juridique_des_communs_fonciers)), accessed December 2023, 29<sup>th</sup>, p. 5.

and Romanin,<sup>81</sup> two small seigneuries. The marsh was gradually demarcated with neighbouring communities: Romanin to the southeast, Mollégès and Saint-Andiol to the east and, albeit less conflictually, Noves to the north. The boundaries between Romanin and Saint-Rémy were established in 1315, following a procedure that had been underway since 1292: the procedure thus spanned almost 23 years, although conflicts were older, dating back to 1263.<sup>82</sup> The duration of demarcation procedures with Mollégès is roughly the same, 22 years, between 1306 and 1328. Mollégès was an abbey, and there do not appear to have been any previous conflicts of use, or at least no proof left. Until 1324, these proceedings mainly concerned the *saltus*, in this case, a seasonal wetland, for the Aiguillon marsh. Once boundaries have been established, the community can buy it. The interest is older since in 1308 the *universitas* delegated two syndics to negotiate an agreement with Romanin for the *palud*, outside administrative framework, which led the seneschal to pronounce the nullity of the division and to remove a milestone planted in the soil.<sup>83</sup>

In 1324, an agreement was reached with the royal court, in the form of emphyteutic leases.<sup>84</sup> The first two years were exempt, after which the swamp was to be cultivated and shared. In 1326, the syndics, representatives of the *universitas*, negotiated with representatives of the bishop of Avignon – Pope Jean XXII – on the tithe rate and the construction of a drainage canal passing through Noves, of which the bishop was lord. This canal was necessary for drainage, so the work was delayed, perhaps due to a poor estimate of its scope, or more likely due to negotiations with the bishop over tithes and the assumption of the cost of the drainage canal in Noves.

Subsequently, the division between the community members stretched over almost a decade, due to the difficulties in reaching an agreement. In terms of chronology, in 1328, John XXII united the tithes of the *palud* with the episcopal *mense* of Avignon, justifying this by the progress of drainage

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<sup>81</sup> Yves Grava, 'Vivre Au Village,' in *Saint-Rémy-de-Provence : Son Histoire*, ed. Société d'histoire et d'archéologie de Saint-Rémy-de-Provence (Aix-en-Provence : REF.2C éditions, 2014), pp. 177-181.

<sup>82</sup> AC Saint-Rémy, FF 2A.

<sup>83</sup> A13, B436.

<sup>84</sup> AD13, B2, fol. 121v-124.

works that made agriculture possible,<sup>85</sup> and the letters patent of the seneschal of Provence in 1337, authorising the meeting of the *universitas* to proceed with the sharing, mention an earlier unfinished sharing,<sup>86</sup> probably in 1328 given the bull fulminated by John XXII. As a further indication of the difficulty of sharing, the parcels were drawn by lot.<sup>87</sup> This division altered the social balance, favouring cultivation in general and reducing the space available for grazing: it's easy to imagine that this could have led to tensions and difficulties. In the absence of agreement, the drawing of lots is seen as an external arbiter, allowing the balance of power within the community to be clarified, and avoiding a *posteriori* criticism.<sup>88</sup> The stakes are therefore eminently political, respecting internal balances to reach a viable agreement. While the manuscript describes the drawing of lots procedure in detail, the council elected to head the *universitas* specifies that some plots have been sold by owners to people who did not have the right to own tenure there and are seeking legal nullity: the effects of the drawing of lots may have been "rectified" by dissatisfied parties, or those who wanted to sell. However, the manuscript does not specify whether the sales were actually cancelled.

The division is based on a meticulous description, with the total shared surface area ranging from 4 to 8 km<sup>2</sup>. The 98 parcels, or *faysses*, are 60% "useful" land (*utili*), suitable for cultivation, and 40% "useless" land (*inutili*), divided equally between each lot. *Faysses* may be split between different owners.

Over thirteen years, this agreement and sharing gradually brought the uncultivated *saltus*, part of the royal estate, onto the agricultural land market.<sup>89</sup> This development was part of a regional movement to transform

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<sup>85</sup> ADV, 1G 7, n° 22, Edgar Leroy, *Les Archives Communales de Saint-Rémy de Provence Des Origines Au XVIe Siècle* (Saint-Rémy: Edition de la Municipalité, 1950), pp. 166-167: "*ad agriculturam pro magna parte inde aquis humanum expulsis ingeniu*".

<sup>86</sup> AD13, B 507, "*cumque de ipsa palude certa pars remanserit dividenda que tunc dividi non potuit bono modo*".

<sup>87</sup> AD13, B 507, "*certas cedulas sive lotos [...] posuerunt et proiesserunt a fortuna et ipstis proiectis dictas cedulas aperiri mandaverunt publicando ibidem publice*".

<sup>88</sup> Bernard Manin, *Principes du gouvernement représentatif* (Paris: Flammarion 1995).

<sup>89</sup> See Riccardo Rao, 'I beni comuni nel Piemonte bassomedievale,' in *Propriété individuelle et collective dans les États de Savoie : actes du colloque international de Turin, 9-10 octobre 2009*, (Nice: Serre, 2012), pp. 169-83.

marshlands and bring them under cultivation, which was intensifying.<sup>90</sup> Above all, it helped transform the community of Saint-Rémy. On the one hand, the organisation of sharing and the regulation of access and activities provided an opportunity for the *universitas* to structure itself further, by creating a twelve-member council and developing new tasks to manage, accompanied by new inflows and outflows of money, which also had to be organised – even if no accounting records were kept. On the other hand, it is taking greater ownership of its territory, even though the members were already roaming it. This appropriation is first and foremost legal, by the community members rather than by the community itself, whose role is merely to organise sharing and regulate conflicts, but not to own the land. It is also physical, since the commissioners representing the Count of Provence surveyed the *palud*, accompanied by the representatives and numerous witnesses, to share the territory. Finally, ownership is also symbolic, as each *faysse* is named after one or other of the owners.

## Conclusion

After a strong interest in the history of law and the Annales school at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, the renewed interest in commons in other disciplines of the humanities and social sciences, around the neo-institutionalist approach of Elinor Ostrom, has opened up new and fertile fields for history provided, however, as Riccardo Rao invites us to do, that we do not limit ourselves to them. Open to other, more socio-political angles of analysis, this renewal is also part of the rise of environmental history. All these approaches study, from one angle or another, the history of relations between human societies – in this case, a community of inhabitants – and their environment, whether they appropriate it or exploit it, the two not necessarily going hand in hand.

Collective rights and common property form a certain continuity in practice, except between 1330 and 1340 when the shared marshland was taken out of use and restricted to cultivation. The community progressively

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<sup>90</sup> See the in-depth study for Languedoc : Jean-Loup Abbé, *À la conquête des étangs : L'aménagement de l'espace en Languedoc méditerranéen (XII<sup>e</sup>-XV<sup>ee</sup> siècle)* (Toulouse : Presses universitaires du Midi, 2006).

restricted access to collective goods and rights, and managed more and more aspects of them, principally their regulation. The *universitas*, the political form of the community, thus acquired new prerogatives and a more elaborate organisation on this occasion, although the scope of its action was limited. The definition of the territory and the status of Saint-Rémy's inhabitants was also completed in the 1330s. Therefore, commons not only had an economic role but were also at the heart of the community's social and political life, and their control by its members transformed the fragile internal equilibrium. The appropriation of space by its members, and the definition, or at least the clarification, of collective operating rules solve conflicts between neighbours and within the community.

As far as collective rights and grazing are concerned, exploitation may have taken place within the framework of county rights. On the contrary, collective appropriation, which aims at sharing, i.e. appropriation by individuals, puts an end to these collective harvesting practices. The Black Death of 1348, periods of heavy flooding in the early 1360s, and perhaps also a lack of canal maintenance due to poorly organised financing, led to the abandonment of cultivation,<sup>91</sup> and a return to harvesting practices.<sup>92</sup> The history of the marshes is therefore not linear either, from *saltus* to cultivation. On the contrary, the reversibility of land development is entirely possible, albeit under very specific circumstances.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> AC Saint-Rémy, CC 1 f. See Edgar Leroy, *Les Archives Communales de Saint-Rémy de Provence Des Origines Au XVIe Siècle* (Saint-Rémy : Edition de la Municipalité, 1950), pp. 255-256.

<sup>92</sup> Attested in AC Saint-Rémy FF 6 E, summarized in Edgar Leroy, *Les Archives Communales de Saint-Rémy de Provence Des Origines Au XVIe Siècle* (Saint-Rémy : Edition de la Municipalité, 1952), pp. 362-369.

<sup>93</sup> Gérard Béaur, 'En un débat douteux. Les communaux, quels enjeux dans la France des XVIII-XIX<sup>es</sup> siècles?' *Revue d'histoire moderne & contemporaine* 53-1/1 (2006): 89-114, here 97.

# Revolution and Crisis: 1383-85 in the Portuguese Historiography During the Fascist Dictatorship (1926-1974)\*

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**Abstract:** Contrary to the false idea that History is an exercise free from any ideological questions of those who write it, this study aims to demonstrate how Portuguese historiography dealt with a specific theme of Portugal's medieval past throughout the twentieth century. Picking a key-social group and its role in 1383-85 - the artisans - I seek to understand how the Portuguese historians used these agents throughout the fascist dictatorship (1926-1974) to portray this historical moment. This period is an important milestone at the end of the Middle Ages in Portugal, and the historiographical discussions around it have been a constant battle between the use of concepts such as *Revolution* and *Crisis*. Using the works of six relevant authors - António Sérgio, António Borges Coelho, Joel Serrão, Jaime Cortesão, Marcello Caetano, and Franz-Paul Almeida Langhans - I seek to understand the evolution of the historical-philosophical thought of Portuguese intellectual elites, how the social and political environment influenced their study of the past, and how the historical knowledge answered to the material needs of its authors' present and helped to shape our image of that same past, regarding specifically the medieval artisans.

**Keywords:** Historiography; Gnoseology; Fascism; Antifascism; Medievalism.

**Rezumat:** Contrar ideii false că istoria este un exercițiu lipsit de orice interferențe ideologice ale celor care o scriu, acest studiu își propune să demonstreze modul în care istoriografia portugheză a abordat o temă specifică a trecutului medieval al Portugaliei de-a lungul secolului al XX-lea. Alegând un grup social cheie și rolul său în perioada 1383-1385 – meșteșugarii –, încerc să înțeleg modul în care istoricii portughezi au folosit acești agenți pe parcursul dictaturii fasciste (1926-1974) pentru

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a descrie acest moment istoric. Această perioadă reprezintă o etapă importantă la sfârșitul Evului Mediu în Portugalia, iar discuțiile istoriografice din jurul ei au fost o luptă constantă între utilizarea conceptelor precum Revoluție și Criză. Folosind lucrările a șase autori relevanți – António Sérgio, António Borges Coelho, Joel Serrão, Jaime Cortesão, Marcello Caetano și Franz-Paul Almeida Langhans - încerc să înțeleg evoluția gândirii istorico-filozofice a elitelor intelectuale portugheze, modul în care mediul social și politic a influențat studiul lor asupra trecutului și modul în care cunoștințele istorice au răspuns nevoilor materiale ale prezentului autorilor și au contribuit la formarea imaginii noastre asupra aceluiași trecut, în special în ceea ce privește meșteșugarii medievali.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** Istoriografie; Gnoseologie; Fascism; Antifascism; Medievalism.

## History is ideological

How the past, and more particularly the Middle Ages, was used by European intellectual elites throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been the subject of several studies, which have been concerned with reading the contributions of this elite and, more specifically, of historians, as what they are: a portrait of the times and ideological systems of their authors. All History is ideological because every historian is an ideological being, no matter how invested they might be in appearing “impartial”. In this context, the historiography of the nineteenth century has been the most deeply studied, evaluating the role of its most varied ideological currents in the study of the past. For the medieval period, more specifically, it will not surprise anyone, the relevance of *Romanticism* and its attempts to recover from the past (artificially, of course) an idea of *Nation* (or its historical roots), which intended to, more than evaluating this past, answer emerging needs. The processes of affirmation of *Nation-States* throughout the nineteenth century created a historical-philosophical need to support these material projects, with the study of the medieval past playing a central role here.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On this topic, we should refer to some works by Stefan Berger: Stefan Berger, ‘The Invention of European National Traditions in European Romanticism,’ in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing: Volume 4: 1800-1945*, ed. Stuart Macintyre, Juan Maiguashca, and Attila Pók (Oxford University Press, 2011), 0, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:osobl/9780199533091.003.0002>; Stefan Berger, *History and Identity*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1017/9780511984525>.

On other occasions, I have focused on how Portuguese historiography, particularly at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, dealt with the study of its past, with a particular focus on the medieval period, in general terms.<sup>2</sup> More recently, I have considered relevant to add to these approaches other analyses that could understand how the Portuguese historiography observed the artisans from the late Middle Ages. This interest, deeply rooted in the particular interests that arose from my ongoing doctoral research project,<sup>3</sup> is due to the realization of the centrality of these historical agents in the development of the historical past, but mostly because it became more and more evident that the image we have of these agents has been shaped in the last two centuries according to different ideological contexts, which influences the way we perceive them nowadays. In the Portuguese context, this centrality materialized in historiographical discourse to a greater extent throughout the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, as well as throughout the Portuguese fascist dictatorial period (between 1926 and 1974), due to their instrumentalization by the different ideological currents and, in the case of the *Estado Novo*, by the regime itself. The Portuguese medieval artisans emerge here as excellent historical agents for understanding contemporary ethical-philosophical thought and the dynamics of instrumentalization of the past verifiable throughout the twentieth century, seeking to answer contemporary needs and questions.

The use of the past is a recurring theme in Portuguese historiography, which has been presenting various approaches to the way, above all, that the *Estado Novo* promoted new readings of the past to build and strengthen the regime. The Middle Ages were not the exclusive time used to promote these

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<sup>2</sup> One study concerning the image of the Portuguese medieval king João II (1455-1495), as the *perfect prince*, with a dialogue with the work of Niccolò Machiavelli - Marco Alexandre Ribeiro, 'O Príncipe Perfeito: a figura de D. João II à luz da historiografia liberal portuguesa,' *História: revista da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto* 10, no. 1 (7 July 2020), <https://ojs.letras.up.pt/index.php/historia/article/view/8278>. - And another study focused of the impact of Liberalism and Socialism in the Portuguese historiography throughout the nineteenth-century, with special emphasis on the Middle Ages - Marco Alexandre Ribeiro, 'O projeto liberal na historiografia portuguesa,' in *A Revolução Liberal, 200 anos depois* (Porto: Zéfiro, 2021), 64-78, <https://ler.letras.up.pt/uploads/ficheiros/18848.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> About the processes of building a political consciousness among Portuguese artisans in the late Middle Ages (from the second half of the fourteenth century until the first decades of the sixteenth) - DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.54499/UI/BD/152205/2021>>.



objectives, but they were probably one of the most striking, along with the history of Portuguese colonial expansion.<sup>4</sup> Several authors in Portugal have worked on these themes, such as Alicia Miguélez and Pedro Martins,<sup>5</sup> which align with what has also been developing in the historiographic contexts of other regions.<sup>6</sup> In any case, the practice of writing history in Portugal still

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<sup>4</sup> The myths surrounding Portuguese colonial history have also been a frequent topic of debate in Portuguese historiography, especially from the perspective of the cultural heritage left by the Estado Novo and how that regime dealt with this topic through historiography and the use of public space. Two exhibitions stand out in this context: the *First Portuguese Colonial Exhibition* (in Portuguese, *I Exposição Colonial Portuguesa*), held in 1936, in Porto, where the aim was to make known the cultures of the Portuguese Empire and, to this end, “human zoos” were organized, inserted in staged contexts that sought to portray the lives of the most varied Indigenous people; and the *Portuguese World Exhibition* (in Portuguese, *Exposição do Mundo Português*) of 1940 (double centenary of the “foundation” of Portugal - 1140 - and the Restoration of independence - 1640), which promoted the reconstruction of the entire neighbourhood in which it was hosted (Belém) and the construction of some public spaces and monuments (namely *Praça do Império* and *Padrão dos Descobrimentos*). This international exhibition sought to make the so-called “Portuguese world” known to the world and aimed to legitimize the regime in a context disturbed by the course of the Second World War.

<sup>5</sup> Alicia Miguélez, ‘Riding Across Time and Space: A Case Study of the Political Uses of Medieval Images in Portugal during the Estado Novo,’ *Visual Resources* 32, no. 1–2 (2016): 124–44, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01973762.2015.1130934>; Pedro Alexandre Guerreiro Martins, ‘History, Nation and Politics: The Middle Ages in Modern Portugal (1890–1947)’ (doctoralThesis, 2016), <https://run.unl.pt/handle/10362/19092>; Pedro Alexandre Guerreiro Martins, ‘Uma época de grandeza: Idade Média, decadência e regeneração na historiografia portuguesa (1842–1942),’ *Revista de Teoria da História* 17, no. 1 (27 July 2017): 30–69; Pedro Martins, ‘De Afonso Henriques a Vasco Da Gama: Representações Da História de Portugal Na Exposição Do Mundo Português (1940) e Na Expo’98,’ *Língua-Lugar : Literatura, História, Estudos Culturais*, no. 1 (29 June 2020): 44–65, <https://doi.org/10.34913/journals/lingua-lugar.2020.e205>; Alicia Miguélez and Pedro Martins, ‘The Uses of the Medieval Past in Contemporary European Political Discourse: Some Reflections Arising from the Portuguese Case,’ *E-Journal of Portuguese History* 21 (2023): 73–102, <https://doi.org/10.26300/0S30-CD74>.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew B. R. Elliott, *Medievalism, Politics and Mass Media: Appropriating the Middle Ages in the Twenty-First Century* (Martlesham: Boydell & Brewer, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvc16jn7>; Alejandro García-Sanjuán, ‘Rejecting Al-Andalus, Exalting the Reconquista: Historical Memory in Contemporary Spain,’ *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 10, no. 1 (2 January 2018): 127–45, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17546559.2016.1268263>; Andrew Albin et al., eds., *Whose Middle Ages? Teachable Moments for an Ill-Used Past*, First Edition, Fordham Series in Medieval Studies (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019); Christian Amalvi, ‘Chapter 19. The Middle Ages: Support for a Counter-Revolutionary and Reactionary Ideology, 1830–1944,’ in *Ideology in the Middle Ages*, ed. Flocel Sabaté (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 413–22, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781641892612-022>; Antonio de Murcia Conesa, ‘Chapter 20. The Middle

seems to be deeply marked by some cultural inheritances from the historiography of fascist Portugal, particularly about the use of some concepts and even analytical perspectives on the Middle Ages, and more specifically, about the history of artisans in the Portuguese urban contexts of this specific period. It is precisely about these analyses that we intend to talk about!

However, given the impossibility of analyzing all the historiographical productions in the selected period, we have chosen a group of historians who seemed significant in this context: António Sérgio (1883-1969), Jaime Cortesão (1884-1960), Joel Serrão (1919-2008), António Borges Coelho (1928-), Marcello Caetano (1906-1980) and Franz-Paul de Almeida Langhans (1908-1986). The first four are prominent figures in the anti-fascist resistance among the Portuguese intellectual elite.<sup>7</sup> The last two represent the historiographical discourse of the fascist regime.<sup>8</sup> Many others could undoubtedly be added to these names,<sup>9</sup> however, to save time and space, but above all for the sake

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Ages among Spanish Intellectuals of the First Half of the Twentieth Century,' in *Ideology in the Middle Ages. Approaches from the Southwestern Europe*, ed. Flocel Sabaté (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 20, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781641892612-023>; Karl Fugelso, ed., *Studies in Medievalism XXIX: Politics and Medievalism (Studies)* (Martlesham: Boydell & Brewer, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvxhrjqn>; Andrew B. R. Elliott, 'Medievalism, Brexit, and the Myth of Nations,' in *Studies in Medievalism XXIX*, ed. Karl Fugelso, 1st ed. (Boydell and Brewer Limited, 2020), 31–38, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781787448957.005>.

<sup>7</sup> Three of them were arrested and/or lived in exile during some period of the fascist dictatorship (António Sérgio, Jaime Cortesão and António Borges Coelho). Joel Serrão lived under constant surveillance by the political police of the fascist regime (PIDE – Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado, in English: International and State Defense Police).

<sup>8</sup> The first was a professor at the Faculty of Law of the University of Lisbon, later Rector of this public education institution, notable for his works on the history of Portuguese law since the Middle Ages, and some works focused on the organization of late medieval labor in Portugal. Shortly before the death of the dictator Oliveira Salazar (in 1970), he was appointed by the then President of the Portuguese Republic, Américo Tomás, President of the Council of Ministers of the fascist regime, remaining in office between 1968 and 1974. The second, private secretary of Oliveira Salazar, was a renowned Portuguese historian during the fascist regime, also developing several works on the history of Portuguese law and several studies on the Portuguese urban labor world of the late Middle Ages, highlighting his corporatist perspective (in line with the ideological project of the Estado Novo, fascist and corporatist).

<sup>9</sup> Such is the case of authors like: Salvador Dias Arnaut (1913-1995), with a PhD thesis on the "national crisis" of 1383-85, and Professor at the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon until 1974, when he was removed for affiliations with the fascist regime (he would return to this faculty in 1978) - Salvador Manuel Dias dos Santos Arnaut, 'A crise nacional dos fins do século XIV : I - a sucessão de D. Fernando' (doctoral Thesis, Coimbra, Faculdade

of focus, I decided to choose names capable of successfully illustrating the representation I am trying to elaborate here. This does not mean that, in case of need or relevance, other names cannot be mentioned at an opportune moment, as we shall see.

The historical time on which our analysis will focus falls precisely on the military dictatorship (1926-1933) and the fascist *Estado Novo* (1933-1974). The analysis of a previous time would, perhaps, be of great interest and usefulness but would lose the focus of this analytical exercise: the fascist and opposition historiographical discourses. For this reason, and to better frame the work of some of the selected authors, I chose a chronological frame that could include the military dictatorship initiated by the military coup of May 28, 1926, which established in Portugal a conservative dictatorship inspired by Italian fascism (although with its specific characteristics), and which would give place, in 1933, with the approval of a new Constitution, to *Estado Novo*, one of the longest fascist dictatorships in all of European contemporary history, which would be overthrown in 1974 by a military coup, transformed by the Portuguese people in a Revolution.

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de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra, 1960), <https://estudogeral.uc.pt/handle/10316/12536>; Álvaro Cunhal (1913-2005), leader of the Portuguese Communist Party between 1961 (when the party was still illegal) and 1992. Was a prominent antifascist throughout the entirety of the fascist regime in Portugal and published some historical analysis on Portuguese history, namely one concerning the 1383-85 revolution, an expression of the *class struggle* in the late Middle Ages, according to him (first written in 1950, but only published in 1975, after the Carnation Revolution, for obvious reasons) - Álvaro Cunhal, *As Lutas de Classes Em Portugal Nos Fins Da Idade Média* (Lisboa: Caminho, 1997); Damião Peres (1889-1976), a renowned Portuguese historian with a vast list of published works on distinct topics, with a clear emphasis on the colonial history - Damião Peres, 'A Crise Política de 1383,' in *História Da Expansão Portuguesa No Mundo*, ed. António Baião, Hernani Cidade, and Manuel Múrias, vol. I (Lisboa: Ática, 1937), 113-20; and Alfredo Pimenta (1882-1950), assumed fascist, supporter of Salazar (the Portuguese dictator) and with declared sympathies for the international fascist and nazi movements. He was the director of the Portuguese national archive between 1949 and 1951, and published many works on Portuguese medieval history, some of them regarding the revolution of 1383-85 (which he portrays as a crisis) - Alfredo Pimenta, 'A Crise de 1383-85. Robustecimento Do Espírito Nacional, Consolidação Da Independência,' in *Congresso Do Mundo Português (Publicações)*, vol. II (Memórias e Comunicações apresentadas ao Congresso de História Medieval-II Congresso) (Lisboa: Bertrand, 1940), 221-46. On this last author's considerations on the alleged *crisis* of 1383-85 see also the work published in 1987 by Paulo Drumond Braga: Paulo César Drumond Braga, 'Alfredo Pimenta e 1383-1385,' *Boletim de Trabalhos Históricos XXXVIII* (1987): 48-60.

This work departs precisely from the premise of this introduction: *History is ideological*. As mentioned above, historians have recurrently looked at the past through the most varied lenses, each and every one of them *ideological* (consciously or not). In the following point of discussion, we analyze the specific case of the study of the medieval period, generally speaking, but first it seems relevant to reflect a bit more on the role played by *ideology* when writing history. And that seems important, first of all, precisely because *history* is not the same as the *past*. It might be, at best, an interpretation of that past, but never (because it cannot be) an exact description of what might have happened. *History* is, therefore, an *image* of the past. Most of the times the possible image.

This introduces a dual direction within the same discussion (that of history as ideological). The first one relates directly to the authors of history: the historians, those who interpret the past, who are influenced and limited by their contemporary contradictions and worldviews. To not consider this fact, is to believe that historians could, in a way, become ahistoric and erase themselves from their life experiences and from the society that surrounds them. Secondly, one has also to consider the tools available to write history: the sources. It seems equally complicated to believe that any document we, as historians, use to interpret the past is not itself a product of the *ideology* of that same past.

The significance of *ideology* used throughout this text is linked to its reliance on Marxist approaches, based on works by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, namely *The German Ideology*.<sup>10</sup> This is to say, then, that the concept used in our work is the notion that *ideology* is a false perception of reality, profoundly influenced by the most varied material conditions and contradictions, to which all members of human societies are subjected.<sup>11</sup> This false idea of reality has, in a Marxist approach, a political purpose for those who hold the power (the *bourgeoisie*), precisely to affirm and perpetuate it, through the dominance of those excluded from power (the *working class*, generally speaking). For that reason, the ideology of an epoch is frequently presented

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<sup>10</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology. Students Edition* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1974).

<sup>11</sup> And this does not exclude in any way the possibility of the appearance of different notions of reality, as Gramsci so well presented in his works on *counter-hegemony* - Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks, European Perspectives* (New York, NY: Columbia Univ. Press, 1992).

as *common sense*, not because it is “naturally” common, but because it is made, through social relations, common.<sup>12</sup>

This is an important notion to keep in mind when considering the second fact of the discussion presented above, related to the production of the historical sources. It is impossible, based on this notion of *ideology*, to understand these materials as something other than a product of the ideology of an epoch. In this sense, history is ideological “by nature” almost, since it cannot deal with facts, but it is, in reality, an interpretation - by the historians - of an interpretation of reality - by those who produced the sources, who cannot also universally comprehend the facts of their time; what they can offer us is a snapshot of their reality, influenced by the ideology of the time. It is precisely in this sense that we affirm that *History is ideological*, and that is the motto that guides the following analysis, where we try to move through the historians’ interpretations of a specific past and theme in dialogue with their present.

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<sup>12</sup> “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance. The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things consciousness and therefore think. Insofar, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in its whole range, hence among other things rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch. For instance, in an age and in a country where royal power, aristocracy, and bourgeoisie are contending for mastery and where, therefore, mastery is shared, the doctrine of this separation of powers proves to be the dominant idea and is expressed as an “eternal law.” Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology. Students Edition*, 64–65. The following pages of this chapter (until page 68) deal precisely with the concept of ideology and the social relations of production (the relationship between the *bourgeoisie* or the *ruling class* and *working class*). This is to say that we accept, in our work, a structuralist approach to *ideology*, which is not the only existent. About the understanding of this concept in Marxist tradition see the work by Mary E. Triece, published in 2018 - Mary E. Triece, ‘Ideology in Marxist Traditions,’ in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.557>.

### **The Middle Ages: a reactionary epoch?**

Diverse historiographical currents have studied the medieval past in profoundly different ways. This historical period served different ideological projects in various temporal realities from the nineteenth century to the present day, as it continues to mark its presence in current political discourse, as several of the studies previously presented show. However, an image seems to remain in the collective consciousness of our contemporary societies: that of the Middle Ages as a dark historical period (the so-called *Dark Ages*).<sup>13</sup> This image still seems to associate the Middle Ages with a time of famines, plagues, and wars (the Holy Trinity of medieval misfortune and three of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse), despite several attempts by historians dedicated to the study of this period in deconstructing such images.<sup>14</sup> This idea, notoriously mistaken, seems to persist in the collective mentality of our current societies, which generally assumes this long period as a civilizational setback in contrast with Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire. This image, which also influenced the academic community, persists in current discourse, specifically through using the medieval times in political discourse.

This persistent misconception seems to continue over time. Such an apparent reality leads one to wonder about possible justifications. Our approaches to contemporary medievalism in this and previous occasions, suggests two distinct reasons, perfectly debatable: the first concerns a relative

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<sup>13</sup> On this subject, we refer to a recent study by Andrew Elliott; an analysis on medievalism through the social media: Andrew B.R. Elliott, ‘#Medieval: “First World” Medievalism and Participatory Culture,’ in *Middle Ages without Borders: A Conversation on Medievalism : Medioevo Senza Frontiere : Una Conversazione Sul Medievalismo / Moyen Âge sans Frontières : Conversation Sur Le Médiévalisme*, ed. Pierre Savy, Lila Yawn, and Tommaso di Carpegna Falconieri, Collection de l’École Française de Rome (Rome: Publications de l’École française de Rome, 2021), 87–106, <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.efr.18532>.

<sup>14</sup> On this note, many works could be mentioned, as it is indeed an interest on the part of many medievalists (or at least should be). We would highlight a recent work with the provocative title *The Bright Ages*, by Matthew Gabriele and David M. Perry - Matthew Gabriele and David M. Perry, *The Bright Ages: A New History of Medieval Europe*, First Harper Perennial edition (New York London Toronto Sydney New Delhi Auckland: Harper Perennial, 2022). In this work, the authors defy this common notion of medieval times as a *dark* period, offering a popular history with the Middle Ages as a period of “brilliant reflection of humanity itself” to put it as the authors did, evaluating these centuries with all its contradictions, as any other period had their own.



attempt to “depoliticize” the writing of history that has been increasingly noticeable within academies, especially in the last four decades;<sup>15</sup> the second, possibly more notorious and more relevant, regards the perception of the Middle Ages by historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with different ideological outlooks, who either disregard this period (the left) or romanticize it (the right).

As will come as no surprise to anyone, the contemporary era, especially the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is highly discussed among academics from the most varied ideological backgrounds, who convey a profoundly different perspective on this historical time from each other. However, the medieval period does not seem to be (nowadays, and especially for the Portuguese case) so widely disputed in ideological terms and is studied (tendentially) from a conservative perspective, which claims a position of “ideological exemption” that is naturally false, and (because it is conservative) doesn’t propose any *revolutionary* way of looking to the past. With some exceptions, the medieval period is, for the majority of the “historiographic left”, a time of regression or social paralysis, which is why its absence from the study of this era is notable (generally speaking). In general terms, conservative sectors of society regard the Middle Ages with a certain nostalgia for a period where *order* prevailed, according to Christian values and ethics; progressive sectors see this historical time as a period of obscurantism. Such an interpretation of the medieval past, notoriously mistaken, translates into the level of appreciation that the left and right within the generality of civil society tend to attribute to this past, with a greater appreciation by the right-wing sectors, especially by a neo-fascist right, which has increasingly used a historical reading of this time to assert its projects of civilizational regression.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The fall of the USSR and the so-called “Soviet bloc” plays a fundamental role here, considering the relevance of Marxist dialectical materialism for the dominant historiographic approach within the Soviet Union. Equally important seems the affirmation of capitalism as a unique model of political, economic, and social organization and, above all, the victory of neoliberal regimes throughout the global West from the end of the 1980s, which naturally influenced societies and, consequently, those who dedicate themselves to the study of the past.

<sup>16</sup> “Indeed, and here we enter into some rather dark territory, a lot of politically-inclined groups really do seem to like the newfound flexibility of such a conception of the Middle Ages. In particular, as indicated above, the Middle Ages have become among the most favoured sites of identity among far-right, alt-right and overtly neo-Nazi groups. (...) Likewise, ideas about the Middle Ages have even been used in defence of mass murder in the case of Anders Behring

In terms of academic production, this gap in the appreciation of the medieval period is also notable. If we take as an example some authors, such as Eric Hobsbawm (1917-2012), a well-known Marxist historian, and his study of “pre-political”,<sup>17</sup> communities and social movements, or even the considerations about the medieval past by Jürgen Habermas (1929-), member of the *Frankfurt School*, namely on the non-existence of a “public sphere” in the medieval world,<sup>18</sup> we understand to a certain extent the devaluation of this historical time within the “academic left”. This situation might lead one to consider the Middle Ages, therefore, as a reactionary period, which can only be sustained not by an analysis of that time, but rather by the discourse of our contemporaneity, especially given the fact that this period has served multiple reactionary projects during the twentieth century, and it is still a recurring theme in political discourse (especially related to reactionary parties and organizations).

As Christian Amalvi presents in his chapter *The Middle Ages: support for a counter-revolutionary and reactionary ideology, 1830-1944*, the Middle Ages were widely used by right-wing and extreme-right political forces throughout the final period of the nineteenth century and until the puppet Republic of Vichy, led by Philippe Pétain, in France, occupied by Nazi Germany. The same can be said about the Nazi regime in Germany, in the 1930s and 40s, which supported some of their own nationalistic views and projects by resurrecting specific historical moments or figures, as suggested by William J. Diebold in his work *The Nazi Middle Ages*<sup>19</sup>.

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Breivik, the Norwegian who in 2011 launched what he called a new crusade, killing 77 unarmed people, mostly teenagers. The list goes on: the English Defence League, the True Finns, the Soldiers of Odin, and the so-called alt-right and neo-Nazis have all at some stage or another claimed legitimacy from medieval ideas” Elliott, ‘#Medieval’.

<sup>17</sup> Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, The Norton Library N328 (New York: W.W. Norton, 1965).

<sup>18</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Burgeois Society* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991).

<sup>19</sup> William J. Diebold, ‘The Nazi Middle Ages,’ in *Whose Middle Ages?* (Fordham University Press, 2019), 104–15, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780823285594-012>.



In a chronological arc divided into four distinct moments,<sup>20</sup> Amalvi identifies the main lines that guided modern<sup>21</sup> French thought about the medieval period in an intimate connection with the social and political developments that characterized *modernity*. In his study, we understand how the Middle Ages served counter-revolutionary and reactionary movements, from the advent of nationalist ideas in the nineteenth century to the period when France, occupied by the Nazis, promoted an attempt to restore Christian ethical and moral standards which meant the reversion of fundamental rights and freedoms, through persecution, imprisonment, and imposition of forced labor on various groups in French society.

The growth of antisemitism in Europe in the beginning of the twentieth century, well-known in Germany, but not exclusive to this region (in France as well, for instance), tried also to support itself by harbouring this reactionary view of the medieval past, resorting to multiple memorable historical personalities. This was the case, for instance, of Joan of Arc, captured by the conservative ideological currents in France, with straight ties to the Catholic Church (which canonized Joan of Arc in 1920 and she is currently one of France's patron saints). Reading this historical figure as some sort of "national

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<sup>20</sup> "In our contribution, we look at how and why Catholic elites used the idealized Middle Ages in this way, brandishing it as a weapon against revolutionary modern times accused, by smashing the social unity of the Ancien Régime, of having left the individual alone and isolated against an all-powerful State. We will analyse this veritable Catholic crusade against the France stemming from the Revolution in four successive sequences:

1. The period of nostalgia for the Middle Ages reconstructed in the colours of Romanticism, from about 1830 to 1860.
2. The time of Frédéric Le Play, from 1860 to 1890, when the Middle Ages was reclaimed by the social science developed by this former mining engineer.
3. The medieval crusade under the banner of Joan of Arc undertaken against the parliamentary, lay, masonic Republic of the years 1890 to 1940.
4. A dream of the restoration of Christianity under Vichy, which eventually became a nightmare." Amalvi, 'Chapter 19. The Middle Ages,' 413–14.

<sup>21</sup> Consider the philosophical definition of *modernity*, rather than the traditional historiographical barrier between the modern and the contemporary (the French Revolution of 1789), in obvious need of redefinition, as Reinhart Koselleck accurately presented. (Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society*, Reprint, Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2015). The concept of *modernity* presented here deals with the period of liberal revolutions from the end of the eighteenth century and the entire nineteenth century until the period of the rise of Nazi-fascism, in the 1930s.

hero", responsible for the expulsion of the "foreign scum", as it has been written by Charles Maurras (1868-1952),<sup>22</sup> among whom we could find Jews and the "enemies of religion and country".<sup>23</sup>

In Nazi Germany, the Middle Ages also played a fundamental role specifically in the building of its ideological project from a perspective that, according to William J. Diebold, transcended the academic limits.<sup>24</sup> In this geographical and historiographical context, the spotlight falls on Heinrich, Duke of the Saxons and later their king (after the year 919). Heinrich was perceived by the Nazis as the "first king of the Germans" or of "Germany". The rhetoric behind the use of this historical figure becomes, therefore, clear by "proving" the existence of some kind of "nation" or at least of "nationality" in this medieval past sought to, among other things, underline the excellence and racial superiority of the German people, as espoused by the Nazi regime. In the attempt to glorify this supposedly "national" figure, Himmler and the SS's agents promoted a series of re-readings of the medieval past to transform the image of duke Heinrich (and in doing so, they would also transform the collective image of their time concerning this medieval figure), namely by transforming the church where his tomb could be found. It was a Gothic church (which was a style associated with France) transformed into a building that should resemble the aesthetic lines of the Romanesque (a more austere

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<sup>22</sup> French poet, a known nationalist and one of the responsible for the foundation of *Action Française*, a counter-revolutionary movement that supported the restauration of the French monarchy and defended the integralist doctrine (political doctrine of catholic inspiration), which influenced several nationalist movements throughout Europe, as it was the Portuguese case; Salazar (the Portuguese dictator) might have read and studied Maurras, according to a study presented by Marcos Pinho de Escobar- Marcos Pinho de Escobar, *Perfiles Maurrasianos en Oliveira Salazar* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Buen Combate, 2014).

<sup>23</sup> "[Joan of Arc] deals pitilessly with the Jews, the Freemasons, the English, enemies of her religion and her country, and (because) above all she stigmatizes the executioners, the judges of the heroine and, in particular, Bishop Cauchon, whom she declares was a converted Jew who sold out to the English" Charles Maurras cited in Amalvi, 'Chapter 19. The Middle Ages,' 417.

<sup>24</sup> "The very name of their regime evoked the medieval past because they believed their Third Reich ("Empire") was the rebirth of a first German Empire that originated in the tenth century. One sign of how important the Middle Ages were to the Nazis was how much time and money some leading Nazis put into medieval studies: Both Alfred Rosenberg, the Party's chief ideologist, and Heinrich Himmler, the head of the Schutzstaffel (the SS, the Nazi Party police and military) were devotees." Diebold, 'The Nazi Middle Ages,' 105.

and “simple” style, which was supposed to be better identifiable with their understanding of the “German”).<sup>25</sup>

Even among the Iberian fascist dictatorships throughout the twentieth century, the most recent studies make evident how the medieval past was constantly referred to when trying to build the nationalistic rhetoric inherent to these regimes. Looking at the Portuguese case, this becomes clear right from the start of the fascist dictatorship (in 1933), when Salazar (the dictator) was referred to as some kind of “national hero”, alongside other historical figures, such as king Afonso I.<sup>26</sup> One of the most well-known cases in this context is the portrait of Salazar as “saviour of the fatherland” in a propaganda campaign by the fascist regime, where the dictator is portrayed with a medieval armour, shield and sword (like the most famous statue of Afonso I), and on the shield one can read: “Tudo pela Nação, nada contra a Nação” (in English: “Everything for the Nation, Nothing against the Nation”); below this image one can read: “Ditosa Pátria que tais filhos tem” (in English: “Blessed Fatherland that has such children”).<sup>27</sup>

The same argument can be used to refer to the Spanish fascist dictatorship (1936-1975). Here, like in the previous cases, the Middle Ages played a central role in affirming the nationalistic view of *franquismo*, with clear purposes of state propaganda, like it has been pointed out by many scholars, such as Diego Vicente Sánchez.<sup>28</sup> In this context it becomes even more clear how central this

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<sup>25</sup> “The problem with the Gothic for Himmler and the SS was that they perceived it to be a “French” style (and the earliest Gothic buildings are, indeed, in what is modern-day France). For them, this made the Gothic totally inappropriate for a building housing the tomb of the first “German” king. The simplicity and strength of the Romanesque, by contrast, were perceived to be essentially German.” Diebold, 109.

<sup>26</sup> This king is usually referred to as the first king of Portugal, however recent studies have been indicating that his mother Teresa already used the title of *regina* (queen) of Portugal in several official documents of the time. About this historical figure, see a recent biography written by Luís Carlos Amaral and Mário Jorge Barroca, where the authors give a much clear image of her role as countess and queen: Luís Carlos Amaral and Mário Jorge Barroca, *Teresa: a condessa-rainha*, 1.a edição, Rainhas de Portugal (Lisboa: Temas e Debates, 2020).

<sup>27</sup> The book of João Medina, *Salazar, Hitler and Franco*, refers to this image as a postcard produced around 1935, used to portray the dictator as a national icon, in a mythical way, like it had been done in other European dictatorships at the time. João Medina, *Salazar, Hitler e Franco: estudos sobre Salazar e a ditadura*, Horizonte histórico (Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> Diego Vicente Sánchez, *La Edad Media franquista: el pasado medieval hispánico en la memoria histórica del franquismo y la legitimación del nuevo régimen*, 1a edición (Cáceres: Universidad de Extremadura, 2023).

discourse around the medieval “reconquest” and “crusades” in the Iberian Peninsula were for the fascist regime, in their fight against alleged “new infidels”,<sup>29</sup> much like the far-right and neofascist movements in current day Spain. In the same way, as Vicente Sánchez shows, the image of Francisco Franco (the dictator, or as he was called at the time, the *caudillo*) was built and emphasized in a historical perspective, based mainly on the Castilian warlords from the Middle Ages onward,<sup>30</sup> praising the “fatherland heroes” that preceded Franco.<sup>31</sup>

The question posed here is not, therefore, if the Middle Ages were or were not a *reactionary* period. That argument is purely based on a perception of this historical period throughout the late nineteenth century and almost the entire twentieth century, which was largely captured by specific political factions (with a special emphasis on the right-wing and Fascist/Nazi movements), as we have seen. This appropriation, nonetheless, seems to play an interesting role in the way society as a whole perceives the Middle Ages, whence we cannot exclude the historians or, more broadly, the academic community. This may help explain some sort of abandonment of the Middle Ages that can be noted among the “academic left”, even if this is not (at all) an absolute rule.

### 1383-85 in the twentieth-century Portuguese Historiography

#### *Medieval crises and revolutions in the twentieth century Western European historiography*

Western European historiography, or better said historiography about Western European history, was not immune to conceptual discussions regarding the late Middle Ages. Outside of Portugal, several authors clashed over the concept of *revolution* and its applicability to pre-modern periods, especially before the French Revolution in 1789. The main argument was that the concept of *revolution* was not equal throughout history, and it meant very

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<sup>29</sup> Sánchez, 53–74.

<sup>30</sup> The very concept of *caudillo* has medieval origins, meaning “the head”, which could be referred to political or military leaders. It was even used by other twentieth-century dictators all over the Latin America, as was the case of Fulgencio Batista (Cuba), Getúlio Vargas (Brazil), or Augusto Pinochet (Chile), just to mention the most well-known.

<sup>31</sup> Sánchez, *La Edad Media franquista*, 99–112.

different things for distinct civilizations. It referred to the movements of change in political regimes for the Greeks,<sup>32</sup> and a moment of return for the Romans,<sup>33</sup> it was used (the concept of *revolutio*, in Latin) by some authors in the Middle Ages and the so-called Renaissance to refer to the movement of celestial bodies.<sup>34</sup> And it became largely known as a moment of violent rupture with the past after the Industrial Revolution, and especially after the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, with all the revolutionary movements that swept the globe. The latter conception of *revolution* is highly marked by the Marxist school of thought and its way of analyzing the past, and for that reason, it is not strange that among the two main lines of thought that divided the conceptual discussions regarding the late Middle Ages, one of them had a clear influence of this historiographical school, where we should highlight the role played by the *Communist Party Historians' Group* (British)<sup>35</sup>. In any case, it must be said that until the 1970s

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<sup>32</sup> Considering, for example, its use by Aristotle, in *Politics* - Aristotle, *Politics*, Loeb Classical Library 264 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1944).

<sup>33</sup> As stated in the work of Reinhart Koselleck: "In 1842, a French scholar made a historically instructive observation. Haréau recalled what had at the time been forgotten: that our expression actually signified a return, a rotation of movement back to a point of departure, as in the original Latin usage. In keeping with its lexical sense, revolution initially signified circulation." (Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2004), 45.

<sup>34</sup> As is the case in Copernicus book *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*. In this case, we can notice as well the relation between *revolutio* and the circular movement presented above.

<sup>35</sup> This group included many renowned British historians who helped shape not only Anglophone historiography, but also influenced other historiographical schools across Europe and beyond. Among its key figures were Eric Hobsbawm (1917-2012), Maurice Dobb (1900-1976), Christopher Hill (1912-2003), Edward Palmer Thompson (1924-1993), Dona Torr (1883-1957), Raphael Samuel (1934-1996), Rodney Hilton (1916-2002), George Rudé (1910-1993) and Dorothy Thompson (1923-2011). Their extensive contributions advanced the field of social history, particularly the so-called "history from below", which centred on marginalized and lower-class perspectives, often neglected in traditional historiography. The influence of Marxist thought on their work was undeniable (after all, they were members of the British Communist Party). However, while groundbreaking, their framework drew criticism for overemphasizing *class struggle* at the expense of cultural or gendered analyses, a gap later addressed by *New Left* historians. Among their most enduring legacies is the founding of the journal *Past & Present* (1952), still published today by Oxford Academic. However, the Soviet invasion of Hungary (1956) and the revelations about Joseph Stalin's authoritarian rule led most members to leave the Communist Party of Great Britain. This marked the group's gradual decline, though their impact endured long after the CPGB's dissolution in 1991. A testament to their legacy, Eric Hobsbawm reflected on the group's spirit in a 1978 essay, published in *Rebels and Their Causes: Essays in Honour of A.L. Morton* (also member

and 80s, it was common and somehow accepted to refer to medieval and early-modern *revolutions*, however, in the last decades this use seems to have been abandoned by historians who analyze this historical past, largely due to the influence of the development and influence of the cultural history and the history of the concepts and language.<sup>36</sup> Here, we tried to analyze the main discussions among some historians in the last decades of the twentieth century, focusing only on the west-European historiography and, obviously, on a handful of scholars.

In any case, we must make clear our position in this debate. It is, for us, undoubtedly possible (and we should also say necessary) to apply the concept of *revolution* to pre-modern societies and revolutionary experiences, some of them taking place in the late Middle Ages. However, this argument must be accompanied by a definition of the concept, for us to make clear what we mean by *revolution*. In this sense, we follow the Marxist understanding of the concept, that of a moment when a tension becomes evident, or to use a Marxist concept, a *contradiction* between the *forces of production* (the processes of labour) and the *social relations of production* (the relationship between the workers and the capitalists, or the bourgeoisie).<sup>37</sup> From a Marxist

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of this group): Eric Hobsbawm, 'The Historians' Group of the Communist Party,' in *Rebels and Their Causes: Essays in Honour of A.L. Morton*, ed. Maurice Cornforth (New York: Humanities Press, 1979), 21–48, <http://archive.org/details/rebelstheircause0000unse>. This essay, later made available online by Verso, offers a firsthand account of their influence and can be accessed here as well: [https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/news/the-historians-group-of-the-communist-party?srltid=AfmBOoqlkfuW3OrPfHVRINFnHigDWd0mjerW043Cp-\\_BxAggPD7kIID](https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/news/the-historians-group-of-the-communist-party?srltid=AfmBOoqlkfuW3OrPfHVRINFnHigDWd0mjerW043Cp-_BxAggPD7kIID).

<sup>36</sup> This has been pointed out by many scholars, among whom we should highlight Reinhart Koselleck, particularly in his book *Future Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*. Here the author provides us a reflection on the use of the concept of *revolution* and the historical criteria of its modern meaning. From the same author we should highlight his work *The Practice of Conceptual History. Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, where he dedicates a chapter to the conceptual history of *crisis* as well (Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781503619104>). It is his opinion that “the concept *revolution* is itself a linguistic product of our modernity”, and “that it is possible to distinguish political, social, technological, and industrial revolution has been accepted since the last century. Only since the French Revolution has the term *revolution*, of a “revolution” – or indeed whichever language one employs – assumed the kind of ambivalent and ubiquitous semantic potential outlined above.” Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 44.

<sup>37</sup> This theory is based on the interpretation of *social relations* by a structuralist school of thought (as is the Marxist school), and these have been interpreted in many different ways by other authors who followed a more individualist approach or an institutionalist one. On the subject of the

perspective (with which we agree), when these two forces become seriously disjointed, a revolution occurs and a new *system of production* is created, with different *social relations of production*. That is, in our view, what might have happened for instance in the late Middle Ages, which we consider to be a revolutionary period that marked the beginning of the fall of feudalism and the rise of a new social, political and economic order that we know today by the name of capitalism (obviously in a long historical development until our contemporaneity).<sup>38</sup>

Back to the Western European historiography, in 1972, Guy Fourquin (1923-1988) published his work *Les soulèvements populaires au Moyen Âge*.<sup>39</sup> Right from the title, the author indicates his refusal to call these popular movements *revolutions*, as do, for example, Michel Mollat and Philippe Wolff in their 1970 work.<sup>40</sup> However, if there were any doubts about such refusal, the author quickly clarified it in the first lines of the introduction to this book. He states: "It was deliberately that I chose the term uprising and rejected the term *revolution*. For the latter, whose meaning has changed since the eighteenth century, currently carries a meaning that is in no way suitable for the Middle Ages, nor even for modern times".<sup>41</sup> And also: "Everything changed with the Revolution of 1789, and then with Marxism. From then on, the term came to imply a value judgment: the French Revolution, the revolution predicted by Marx, were good events in themselves".<sup>42</sup> From this, we understand the clear

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concept of *revolution* in the Marxist thought, we should highlight the work of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1907), and also an analysis of the theory of revolution by Hal Draper, in a work published in five volumes (Hal Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*, 5 vols (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977).

<sup>38</sup> This is an argument we do not expect to prove in this small and limited study, but it is something we consider to address in our PhD thesis, that should become public in the next years.

<sup>39</sup> Guy Fourquin, *Les Soulèvements Populaires Au Moyen Âge* (Paris : Presses universitaires de France, 1972).

<sup>40</sup> Michel Mollat and Philippe Wolff, *The Popular Revolutions of the Late Middle Ages* (London; New York: Routledge, 2022).

<sup>41</sup> (our translation) Original text: "C'est à dessein qu'a été choisi le terme de soulèvement et rejeté celui de révolution. Car ce dernier mot, dont le sens s'est modifié depuis le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, est maintenant porteur d'une signification qui ne convient aucunement pour le Moyen Âge ni, même, pour les Temps modernes." Fourquin, *Les Soulèvements Populaires Au Moyen Âge*, 5.

<sup>42</sup> (our translation) Original text: "Tout a changé avec la Révolution de 1789, puis avec le marxisme. Dorénavant, le terme a impliqué un jugement de valeur : la Révolution française, la révolution prédite par Marx étaient des événements bons en soi." Fourquin, 6.

perception of the influence of the French Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century and Marxist ideology on the way of understanding *revolution* in a conceptual model (based on historical practice) that necessarily prevents us from applying such a concept to any time before 1789.

Along with Fourquin, we can find other authors not necessarily linked exclusively to the study of the Middle Ages but with relevant considerations about the applicability of the concept of *revolution* to times before 1789, such as Yves-Marie Bercé (1936-), a prominent French historian and auto proclaimed “right-wing anarchist”. Specializing his research in the history of popular movements and their mentalities, between 1974 and 1980 he released two works that seem to us to be the most relevant to the issue at hand.<sup>43</sup> Bercé also rejects, in the last work, the theoretical or legal notion of *revolution* for the historical times he deals with, affirming the possibility of formulating a typology of political violence, even though, according to Perez Zagorin, he does not do so in a clear way.<sup>44</sup>

In direct opposition to Marxist thought and the method of historical analysis of Marxist historians, Alfred Cobban (1901-1968) also appears as a relevant reference in this context of *conservative* historiography, favoring a vision ideologically closer to classical liberalism. In his publication *The Myth of the French Revolution*,<sup>45</sup> Cobban opposes the Marxist vision of profound social transformation after the Revolution of 1789, defending a notion of little or no transformation, a vision repeated in other works.<sup>46</sup> Cobban, although he is not a medievalist or deals in any way with the history of medieval

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<sup>43</sup> Yves-Marie Bercé, *Croquants et Nu-Pieds. Les Soulèvements Paysans En France Du XVIe Au XIXe Siècle* (Paris : Gallimard, 1974); Yves-Marie Bercé, *Révoltes et Révolutions Dans l'Europe Moderne* (Paris : Presses universitaires de France, 1980).

<sup>44</sup> “Bercé disdains the notion of a theory or laws of revolution but believes it possible to formulate a typology of political violence. If so, this typology does not appear clearly, nor are its principles explained in this book. Two chapters are given over to peasant wars, although these refer to other types of events as well. The remaining chapters deal with many sorts of revolts without regard to typological distinction.” Perez Zagorin, ‘[Review of Revolt and Revolution in Early Modern Europe: An Essay on the History of Political Violence, by Yves-Marie Bercé],’ *The American Historical Review* 94, no. 1 (1989): 120–21.

<sup>45</sup> Alfred Cobban, *The Myth of the French Revolution* (Folcroft: Folcroft Library Editions, 1970).

<sup>46</sup> Alfred Cobban, *Historians and the Causes of the French Revolution* (London: Historical Association, 1958); Alfred Cobban, *The Debate on the French Revolution, 1789-1800* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1961); Alfred Cobban, *The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).



Europe, presents nevertheless a relevant contribution to the discussion on the applicability of the concept of *revolution* to realities before 1789 due to his critical position on the dominant thought among Marxist historiography of his time, with a focus on the treatment of the contours of the French Revolution.

This author is also relevant in another historian's work, placed in the opposite line to those mentioned until now. It is the case of Georges Rudé (1910-1993), a British historian and a member of the *Communist Party Historians' Group*.<sup>47</sup> His work is fundamental to this discussion, especially his PhD thesis<sup>48</sup> and, released three years later, the work *The Crowd in the French Revolution*.<sup>49</sup> Throughout his work, the influence of the *Annales School* movement is notable due to his choice of writing a popular history, from the People's point of view and not the elites, a "history from below".<sup>50</sup> This is precisely the novelty of his work, and that is why it deserves to be highlighted. The light that Rudé offers to the role played by historical subjects often ignored by contemporary historiography allows us to broaden our understanding of *revolution*, discussing not only administrative structures and their members (and their change or permanence) but also popular participation in these revolutionary movements, which would not necessarily be dictated by adherence to an ideological vision, but rather based on their material living conditions and the needs that, as part

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<sup>47</sup> In his study of the work of George Rudé as a historian of Australia, James Friguglietti reports on the obstacles encountered by Rudé within the British academy due to his activity in the Communist Party, referring to the accusations that were circulating at the time about the role of the supervisor of his PhD thesis (Alfred Cobban, known conservative) in blocking Rudé's access to a position at the University: "Some friends of Rudé have blamed his thesis advisor Alfred Cobban, a political conservative, for blocking any university appointment, but formal proof has never been offered." and "Eric Hobsbawm makes this accusation in Christopher Hill, George Rudé, 1910-1993: Marxist Historian (London, 1993). Rudé himself never publicly blamed Cobban and contributed an article, "The Growth of Cities and Popular Revolt, 1750-1859," to the Festschrift dedicated to him. See J. F. Bosher, ed. Essays in Memory of Alfred Cobban (London, 1973), 166-190" James Friguglietti, 'A Scholar "in Exile": George Rudé as a Historian of Australia,' *French History and Civilization: Papers from the George Rudé Seminar*, 2005.

<sup>48</sup> *The Parisian Wage-Earning Population and the Insurrectionary Movements of 1789-91*. Title collected from Friguglietti, 4.

<sup>49</sup> George Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).

<sup>50</sup> To understand this historiographical perspective, see the works developed by Edward Palmer Thompson - Edward Palmer Thompson, 'History from Below,' *The Times Literary Supplement*, 7 April 1966. -, Staughton Lynd - Staughton Lynd, *Doing History from the Bottom up: On E.P. Thompson, Howard Zinn, and Rebuilding the Labor Movement from Below* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014) - and Christopher Hill, as we shall see.

of a collective, they understood they had. In *Ideology and Popular Protest*,<sup>51</sup> Rudé presents and analyzes several popular revolt movements, starting from the Middle Ages to absolutist Europe. His analysis of the popular revolts of the Middle Ages, especially of its final period, identify some type of “protest ideology” in these movements, based on Antonio Gramsci’s texts on *counter-hegemony*.<sup>52</sup> However, the author dedicates special attention only to the English and German cases, although he does not forget other spaces, especially in Western Europe (like France or northern Italy).

Along with George Rudé, we can find other authors such as Christopher Hill, whose works focused on the historical investigation of the British seventeenth century, especially the 1640 Puritan Revolution. In his works, one can observe a historical analysis that follows the interpretative precepts of Marxism, considering the seventeenth century as a period of revolutionary transformation of English institutions, overthrowing what remained of the feudal regime and opening space for the assertion of capitalism in this region.<sup>53</sup> For the author, this century is remarkable for political, economic, and social development precisely due to the revolutionary character of the people of this territory at the time. As he warns us in his introduction to *The Century of Revolution, 1603-1714*,<sup>54</sup> not only a constitutional transformation or political forces would conflict, but rather two somewhat antagonistic visions of civilizational organization:

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<sup>51</sup> George Rudé, *Ideology and Popular Protest* (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

<sup>52</sup> Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*.

<sup>53</sup> The author himself states this position in his introduction to *The English Revolution 1640: an essay*, writing: “The object of this essay is to suggest an interpretation of the events of the seventeenth century different from that which most of us were taught at school. To summarise it briefly, this interpretation is that the English Revolution of 1640-60 was a great social movement like the French Revolution of 1789. (...) The Civil War was a class war, in which the despotism of Charles I was defended by the reactionary forces of the established Church and conservative landlords. Parliament beat the King because it could appeal to the enthusiastic support of the trading and industrial classes in town and countryside, to the yeomen and progressive gentry, and to wider masses of the population whenever they were able by free discussion to understand what the struggle was really about.” Christopher Hill, *The English Revolution 1640: An Essay* (Southampton: The Camelot Press, 1979), 6. Regarding the contours of the Revolution of 1640 and its interpretation by Christopher Hill, I also suggest the fifth chapter of his work *People and Ideas in 17th-century England*, the third volume of the collection *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill* - Christopher Hill, ‘A Bourgeois Revolution?’, in *People and Ideas in 17th-Century England* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1987), 94–124.

<sup>54</sup> Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution, 1603-1714* (London: Routledge, 2001).

one following the French absolutist model, the other following the model of the United Provinces of the Netherlands.<sup>55</sup>

One of the founders of the *Communist Party Historians' Group* and also a prominent figure in the present debate is Rodney Hilton, a British medievalist, who stood out for his various works on the English peasants throughout the Middle Ages, with a focus on the rising of 1381, often revisited by British historiography. His perspective, using a Marxist historical approach, allowed a renewed analysis of this historical moment, with a clear influence of other historians such as Marc Bloch and Georges Duby throughout his works.<sup>56</sup> Even though the work is considered somewhat dated, *Bond Men Made Free* continues to be one of the most relevant studies for understanding this historical moment, also standing out for its innovative perspective and considerations (namely regarding the existence of social classes in a pre-industrial society<sup>57</sup>). In his work, Hilton deals with the studies carried out up to that point, namely the work of Michel Mollat and Philippe Wolff, considering their conclusions somewhat insufficient. On the one hand, the general nature of the work, not focusing on any specific space but seeking to establish a general panorama of European medieval urban history, would, according to Rodney Hilton, make it hard to create an exercise sufficiently capable of understanding the various contours of popular movements analyzed by the two authors,

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<sup>55</sup> "The transformation that took place in the seventeenth century is then far more than merely a constitutional or political revolution, or a revolution in economics, religion, or taste. It embraces the whole of life. Two conceptions of civilisation were in conflict. One took French absolutism for its model, the other the Dutch Republic. The object of this book is to try to understand the changes which set England on the path of Parliamentary government, economic advance and imperialist foreign policy, of religious toleration and scientific progress." Hill, 4–5.

<sup>56</sup> This influence is mentioned by Christopher Dyer, responsible for writing the introduction to Rodney Hilton's work (in the 2003 edition). Dyer, who had been a student of Hilton, writes: "His work was informed by ideas such as class conflict and the transition from feudalism to capitalism, but his application of Marxism was not dogmatic, and he tested the theories by empirical research. He had an international outlook and was strongly influenced in particular by French historians such as Marc Bloch and Georges Duby." Christopher Dyer, 'A New Introduction,' in *Bond Men Made Free: Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2003), VIII.

<sup>57</sup> Regarding the definition of *social class* in Rodney Hilton's work and its applicability to the medieval peasants of the English kingdom, see the first chapter of the work *Bond Men Made Free*, entitled "The Nature of Medieval Peasant Economy": Rodney Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free: Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2003), 24–61.

resulting in vague conclusions. On the other hand, one must also consider a hypothesis launched by Hilton: dividing the medieval millennium into three distinct phases, assuming the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as the third phase of this period, characterized as a “breaking point” in the social tensions that had been occurring since the second phase of the Middle Ages (between eleventh and fourteenth centuries), exacerbated by the consequences of mortality caused by diseases and pestilences that devastated the European continent during this period.<sup>58</sup> Given his analysis of medieval documentation and popular involvement in the movements that led to the rising of 1381, Rodney Hilton does not classify it as a *revolution*, as he understands that the leaders of the movement may not have had a clear vision of a power structure with which they would replace the current structure. However, the author considers that they may have intended some transformations that, considering the *order* at the time, could in some way be seen as *revolutionary*.<sup>59</sup>

Another work by Rodney Hilton also seems relevant in this context since the author presents the decay of the feudal regime and its gradual replacement by capitalism, which undoubtedly constitutes a process of transformation of the social order, a *revolution*. In *Class Conflict and the Crisis of Feudalism: essays in Medieval Social History*,<sup>60</sup> Hilton exposes the class conflict between the peasant population and the property owners, who appropriated the agricultural

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<sup>58</sup> Hilton, XXIII–XXIV.

<sup>59</sup> “It cannot be said that the rebel leaders of 1381 had a sophisticated or elaborate or well worked out or (above all) realizable vision of what could be put in the place of the social order they were attacking. Nor can it be said that the mass of their followers shared more than some of their long-term ends, though this is true of rebellious and revolutionary movements at all times. Nevertheless, a not altogether incoherent picture emerges, simple though it is. They seem to have envisaged a people’s monarchy (or monarchies) in which there would be no intermediary between the king and his people, that is, no class of landowning nobles and gentry controlling law and administration. Similarly, there would be a people’s church whose basic unit would be the parish, again with no intermediate hierarchy between Christians and the single bishop or archbishop who, as head of the church was the ecclesiastical equivalent of the people’s king. Somehow the people would make the law and administer justice. In spite of Froissart’s version of John Ball’s sermon, it is unlikely that it was believed that all things should be held in common. A regime of family ownership of peasant holdings and artisan workshops, with the large scale landed property of the church and the aristocracy divided among the peasants, was probably envisaged. Little emerges as to a rebel programme for the towns. One suspects that it was thought by the rural element among the rebel leaders that they would continue an independent existence as self-governing corporations.” Hilton, 227.

<sup>60</sup> Rodney Hilton, *Class Conflict and the Crisis of Feudalism: Essays in Medieval Social History*, Rev. 2nd ed (London: The Hambledon Press, 1985).

surplus produced by the first class. Here, the author considers that we could perceive a revolutionary potential in medieval society, fundamentally led by the peasants, the “anti-feudal class”. For Hilton, only this class could truly present itself as *revolutionary* since only their struggle could disturb the *order* of the entire society. According to the author, urban struggles (led by merchants and/or artisans) would not have such a far-reaching impact. Merchants would not represent any threat to the feudal order, and on the other hand, artisans would have a range of interests that were too divergent between the various artisanal crafts and between the hierarchical structure within the same crafts. This circumstance leads the author to reject their eventual *revolutionary* role within medieval feudal society.<sup>61</sup> His approach, however, is limited by his interpretation of historical events that took place in the English medieval kingdom.

Finally, it seems also relevant to mention the works of Jacques Le Goff (1924-2014), a prominent French medievalist, and member of the *Annales School*, particularly significant in its third phase or generation (alongside Pierre Nora). In 1977, Le Goff published a brilliant reflection on the social construction and understanding of *time*, based on the social relations of production and mostly on the division of labour.<sup>62</sup> In this work, the author deals with the social notion of *time* and how it transformed during the Middle Ages (from a Christian notion to a more secular one), to reach several conclusions, namely his considerations on the beginning of the fourteenth century *crisis*. In his interpretation, this moment is a reflection of the social tension accumulated around the labour journey: workers were asking for more hours of labour (the only way of increasing their wages), but the *bourgeois* (or in other words, the employers, the ones who controlled the means of production) wanted the exact opposite.<sup>63</sup> From this social contradiction, occurs

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<sup>61</sup> Hilton, 155–58.

<sup>62</sup> Jacques le Goff, *Time, Work, & Culture in the Middle Ages*, Nachdr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

<sup>63</sup> “From the end of the thirteenth century, this system of labor time found itself under challenge and entered upon a crisis: an emphasis on night work and, most important, harshness in the definition, measurement, and use of the working day, as well as social conflicts over the duration of work—such was the form taken by the general crisis of the fourteenth century in this particular domain. Here as elsewhere, general progress went hand in hand with serious difficulties of adaptation. Labor time was transformed along with most other social conditions; it was made more precise and efficient, but the change was not a painless one. Curiously, it was at first the

a wage crisis, which meant the rising of the living cost (higher prices and lower real wages). That situation led eventually to a new *time*, highly marked by the social tensions that characterized the final centuries of the Middle Ages.<sup>64</sup> In the fifteenth century it becomes evident, for the author, that the workers' struggle motif resides precisely in the duration of a work day.<sup>65</sup>

### *The Revolution of 1383-85 in the twentieth-century Portuguese historiography*

As one might understand, this conceptual debate also reperculated in the Portuguese academic community. Even considering the fascist dictatorship (and all that meant to the Portuguese academic life), it was not impossible to be aware of what was being discussed outside of the Portuguese borders. This reflection departs precisely from our understanding that the majority of Portuguese historiography seems to have found a relative consensus in the use of terms that do not seem to be the most appropriate for medieval analysis: that of *crisis*. Nonetheless, this apparent common conceptual choice deserves our attention, above all to explain the reasons for the disagreement and present, based on the work of other historians, the concepts considered to be most appropriate and their significance for the study of the late medieval period, with emphasis on the revolution of 1383-85. As one can understand, therefore, it is our understanding that this specific moment was, indeed, a *revolution* rather than a *crisis*.<sup>66</sup>

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workers themselves who asked that the working day be lengthened. In fact, this was a way of increasing wages, what we would today call a demand for overtime. (...) Before long, however, a contrary sort of demand arose. In response to the crisis, employers sought to regulate the working day more closely and to combat workers' cheating in this area. It was at this time that the proliferation of work bells noted by Bilfinger occurred." Goff, 45.

<sup>64</sup> "at least in the cloth manufacturing cities, the town was burdened with a new time, the time of the cloth makers. This time indicated the dominance of a social category. It was the time of the new masters. It was a time which belonged to a group hard hit by the crisis but in a period of progress for society as a whole. The new time soon became a stake in bitter social conflicts. Worker uprisings were subsequently aimed at silencing the *Werkglocke*." Goff, 46.

<sup>65</sup> "It is clear that in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, the duration of the working day rather than the salary itself was the stake in the workers' struggles." Goff, 47.

<sup>66</sup> Its contours, although relevant, will not be exhaustively analyzed in this study, for it is not its purpose, however we shall allude to some aspects of this historical moment (whenever

Several authors from the end of the nineteenth century analyzed this historical moment as a point of transformation in Portuguese political and social life, describing it as a *revolution*. It is the case, for example, of António Caetano do Amaral (1747-1819)<sup>67</sup> or Oliveira Martins (1845-1894),<sup>68</sup> whose

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necessary) to be able to understand the historiographical debate behind it. The death of King Fernando I (in 1383) and the struggle for dynastic succession that followed (1383-1385) has been a point of heated debate in Portuguese historiography over the twentieth century. The Portuguese historians have perceived it as a *revolution* and other times as a *crisis*. We must problematize both concepts to understand how to apply them to this historical reality.

<sup>67</sup> Using the study carried out by Ricardo de Brito (our translation): “In the *Project* [of *A Civil History of the Portuguese Monarchy*, speech given by António Caetano de Amaral in 1780] he divides the history of Portugal into “epochs”, understanding that what separates each one are “great revolutions”, the result of crises. In his view, the “epochs” in Portuguese history are easily identifiable, with the first revolution taking place at the death of D. Fernando, “the great revolution that occurs due to the death of Lord King Dom Fernando gives natural beginning to another epoch”; and the second as a consequence of the death of D. Sebastião, “another revolution greater than the previous one”. As Fátima Sá e Melo Ferreira noted, despite Caetano do Amaral’s unusual conception of national history, which divided it into revolutions that marked the end of eras but which, at the same time, gave rise to others, the use of revolution referred, tending towards a conceptual approach of “disturbance” in the life of the State, therefore, the semantic innovation that we will see later is still far away. However, this vision of Caetano do Amaral appears to be one of the first examples in Portugal of the possibility of extending the concept of revolution (beyond its political, astronomical meaning, etc.) to historiographical discourse, making it an operative concept for periods still in the past compared to the time when such a term did not exist or would not have such an understanding.” Ricardo de Brito, ‘Uma aproximação às inovações no léxico político e social em Portugal na transição do século XVIII para o XIX: o caso do conceito de Revolução,’ *História: revista da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto* 6 (2016): 202–3.

<sup>68</sup> “D. Fernando’s time was a series of wars with the neighboring kingdom of Castile. The many misfortunes of these crazy plans had the benefit of definitively affirming the formal and positive independence of the nation, as seen in the battle of Aljubarrota. Like certain acute illnesses, when they attack a man with an indecisive temperament and weak constitution, at the age at which he reaches virility, and determine an organic revolution, fixing and consolidating health – this is how D. Fernando’s Castilian wars are, for Portugal, a crisis. His wavering destiny, his barely outlined organs, suffer the test of a violent commotion. The old, now anachronistic, temptations of the conquest of Galicia wake up again; the kingdom is invaded more than once; misery, ruin, devastation, and penury afflict, like a burning fever, the body of the nation. It certainly lacks a king to direct it, a strong man to represent and guide it; but this very thing contributes to characterizing the crisis, demonstrating that collective vitality already existed and did not come only from the strong imposition of a warlike arm. In two centuries, Portugal had become an amalgam of rural populations, whose unity was only in the genius of its barons, into an organism whose consciousness of a collective life was



works and historical readings influenced future generations, such as those analyzed here. However, not ignoring the ideological motivations that we can find behind their works, it seems relevant to us that the approaches and concepts used by these authors have undergone a profound change, or at least a bigger ideological dispute among the historians during the twentieth century.

The victory of the military coup of 1926, which led to a military dictatorship that later became the Portuguese *Estado Novo* had as one of its consequences that historiography would focus not only on new themes but above all on new perspectives, which shaped the way of writing history until our contemporary times.

On the preface to the chronicle of king João I of Portugal,<sup>69</sup> António Sérgio proposes an analysis of 1383-85 from the perspective of a revolution that was, according to this author, already in motion long before the death of the king Fernando I.<sup>70</sup> His observations, based on the text written by the

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real and defined. Such, in our view, is the merit of this national revolution, whose supposed leader, the Master of Avis, is more the instrument than the hero." (our translation) J. P. de Oliveira Martins, *História de Portugal* (Guimarães: Guimarães editores, 2004), 87.

<sup>69</sup> This chronicle was written during the fifteenth century by Fernão Lopes and is the main source available in Portugal for the study of the Revolution of 1383, and for that reason it has been frequently used by many historians who wish to analyze this period. It is, as one would expect, a work paid by the Portuguese medieval Crown, and served specific purposes at the time, above all to bestow upon the new king (João I) and his new dynasty an unquestionable legitimacy, since the king was, after all, a bastard of the king Pedro I (1320-1367), and half-brother of the deceased king Fernando (1345-1383), who had a legitimate daughter, Beatriz of Portugal (1373-second decade of the 15<sup>th</sup> century), married to the Castilian king Juan I (1358-1390). Their marriage had been established by the peace treaty between the Portuguese and Castilian kingdoms in 1383, before Fernando's death, in Salvaterra de Magos (Portugal), ensuring, although, the succession of the Portuguese crown to the son who would be born out of this marriage. The study of this treaty is also possible mainly through the chronicle of king Fernando I, by the same author. António Sérgio addresses the issue of the revolution of 1383-85 in two distinct studies: the preface he wrote for this chronicle, first published between 1945 and 1949 - António Sérgio, 'Prefácio,' in *Crónica de D. João I* (Porto: Livraria Civilização, 1990) - and in a study entitled "Sobre a revolução de 1383-85" (in English, "On the 1383-85 revolution") - António Sérgio, 'Sobre a Revolução de 1383-85,' in *Obras Completas: Ensaios*, vol. VI, Clássicos Sá Da Costa - Nova Série (Lisboa: Sá da Costa, 1946), 123-42. His visions on this historical moment coincide in both texts.

<sup>70</sup> On the matter of the historical method of António Sérgio, he had clarified it in an article on one of the most famous journals in Portugal throughout the twentieth century, very relevant in the context of the ideological battle against the fascist regime - António Sérgio, 'Resposta a uma consulta,' *Seara Nova*, no. 466 (1936): 153-56.



chronicler, mention that the medieval text hints at a notion of a “new world” that was brought by the new Portuguese king (João I), strongly marked by the rise of a new generation, allegedly “low-born” people.<sup>71</sup> It is, of course, a clear exaggeration of what might have happened, since as we can expect, the kingdom and its ruling elite did not know such a drastic change, at least from the social-economic point of view. It gives us, however, an interesting idea on the perception that the chronicler tried to convey: that of a breaking point in this kingdom’s history; a rupture, if we want. Either way, Sérgio clarifies that this revolution, set in motion after the death of the king Fernando, was already being prepared, or at least it had a motif that went far beyond the change of a king or dynasty: it was, for António Sérgio, a moment of light that shed over the *class struggle* that laid underneath the apparent order of the time. This struggle was pushed by the effects of the Plague, leading to the lack of working force (manpower), and subsequent deterioration of the wages,<sup>72</sup> and at the same time the accumulation of wealth by *nouveau riche*: here lies the foundation for a labour crisis, for the contradiction between the *forces of production* and the *social relations of production*, ultimately, for a *revolution*.

But according to António Sérgio, who will find agreement among other historians, such as António Borges Coelho, we are not in the face of an essentially *popular* revolution. On the contrary, Sérgio argues that the revolutionary movement was in fact orchestrated by the bourgeoisie, the maritime bourgeoisie, who “in the shadow of the rights of the Master of Avis [later king João I]”, galvanized the *People* and led the political insurrection, seeking to control the political management of the realm, against the aristocratic political hegemony.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> (our translation) “sons of men of such low condition that is better not to be said, by their good service and work in this time were made knights, calling themselves of new lineages and surnames” Fernão Lopes, cited in Sérgio, ‘Prefácio,’ XI.

<sup>72</sup> (our translation) “As always happens, the largest proportion of victims was from the poorer layer of society: and to the diminishing of servants, in virtue of those who died, added those who got richer by the confluence of heritages due to them, and therefore abandoned the servant condition. The reader, that knows the law that correlates the prices with the intensity of supply and demand, easily foresees what came to happen: a wages revolution. There was a lack of manpower for working on the fields, and people tried to pay the old wage values. From this originates the economical conflict between the employers class and the workers class, – these demanding higher wages, or looking for more gratifying works; those trying to force the servants to serve for the payment imposed by the law.” Sérgio, XV.

<sup>73</sup> (our translation) “Such is (with or without reason) the hypothesis I propose to the interpretation of the phenomena: and if it is not too wrong, justifies the title of «bourgeois revolution» (the

This is actually a point of some disagreement among the historians who interpreted the historical moment of 1383-85 as a revolution. If on one hand both António Sérgio and António Borges Coelho perceive it as a *bourgeois* revolution, other historians have described it in different ways. Joel Serrão, for instance, understands this moment as divided into two: from 1383 to 1384 an essentially *popular* revolution, while from 1384 to 1385 the bourgeois capture of the revolutionary movement, transforming it into a *bourgeois* revolution in the end. Later, Jorge Borges de Macedo (1921-1996), in a very famous work regarding the alleged controversies of António Sérgio<sup>74</sup> also addresses this issue, criticising his approaches to the revolution of 1383. In other works, such as the one by Jaime Cortesão, we can understand a different perspective: that of a *national* revolution, which is, actually, the subtext of most of the historiographical approaches to this historical period, as we shall see.

First released in 1965, the work of António Borges Coelho,<sup>75</sup> generated a large discussion on this particular issue in the Portuguese historiography, being, until this day, one of the referential studies on the historical period it analyzes, even among those who do not agree with its author's interpretation.<sup>76</sup> In his work, the author starts by explaining the material conditions that laid the basis for the Revolution of 1383, with a thorough description of the Portuguese kingdom in the second half of the fourteenth century, considering what the author labelled it as "the agrarian Portugal" and "the maritime Portugal". In this section, the Marxist influence in Borges Coelho's method for

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*high* bourgeoisie, of course, in opposition to the nobility and the *small* bourgeoisie «good men» [those who controlled the local city councils, who, according to António Sérgio, sided with the nobility]) which I have been giving to that crisis of 1383-85, so gracefully described by Fernão Lopes." Sérgio, XIII.

<sup>74</sup> Jorge Borges de Macedo, 'Significado e Evolução Das Polémicas de António Sérgio: A Ideologia Da Razão 1912-1930,' *Revista de História Das Ideias* 5 (1983): 471-531.

<sup>75</sup> For the sake of interpretative justice, we have chosen to analyze here the text contained in the first edition of Borges Coelho's book. Between 1965 and 2018 (date of the last edition of this book), António Borges Coelho has revised the text several times and added some information on other editions, most of them after the chronological arch of this study, without although changing structurally the interpretation he has done over the historical period under analysis. António Borges Coelho, *A Revolução de 1383: tentativa de caracterização e importância histórica* (Lisboa: Portugalia Editora, 1965).

<sup>76</sup> This work has been edited in six different moments, the last one of them in 2018, proving not only the high value and interest of the study carried out by António Borges Coelho, but also its relevance even nowadays, more than 50 years after its first edition.

the analysis of the past becomes clear, taking into account the dominant model of production and consumption and of political, social and economic organization: Feudalism. For the author, in the dusk of the Medieval ages there were two different kingdoms: one mainly agrarian, where the social relations of production of Feudalism had a clear impact on the organization of social life, and the other already more developed, where one could notice the development and growth of a new social class (the bourgeoisie), enriched by the exploitation of labour and with growing desires of political and social ascension.<sup>77</sup> In this last scenario, two cities become clearly the most prominent: Lisbon and Porto, with their surrounding areas.

Recalling a famous phrase written by Oliveira Martins, António Borges Coelho argues that “as soon as the coffin lid fell on king Fernando’s corpse, the Revolution broke out”. In his interpretation, all the material conditions and requirements for a revolution were laid during this reign, strongly marked by the effects of war on the social and economic life of the kingdom, the pillage of the fields’ riches by rich peasants and the urban bourgeoisie, and several popular protests against the noblemen and clergy.<sup>78</sup> For this author,

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<sup>77</sup> (our translation) “It is through the hands of the bourgeoisie that the mainstay of economic life flows, the commodities created by the labour of peasants, artisans and workers. These create wealth and will lay the foundations for the triumph of the bourgeois revolution with their blood and lives, but the key to foreign and national markets is in the hands of the merchants. In their hands, too, are the treasures in which they accumulate extra labour and surplus value, treasures that drive much of social life. In their hands, finally, a large part of the arms of the manorial militias and the Lisbon garrison itself. (...) From the suburbs onwards, the labourers plough the fields and gardens with their arms. They build houses and walls, construct ships, barrels, weapons, weave coarse cloths, cut and sew suits, dresses and armour, coin coins and cut jewellery, weave reeds and fibres to make rope, kill and butcher cattle, load ships and move batels (ships) and sinister galleys across the waters. They sleep in the suburbs or huddle together in the narrow streets of the working class neighbourhoods. They get beaten in the pillory and through the streets wander madmen, cripples, dwarfs, cripples, paralysed, blind, men without hands, setting their eyes on fire and raising a fearful cry for justice from the alleys.” Coelho, *A Revolução de 1383: tentativa de caracterização e importância histórica*, 78–79.

<sup>78</sup> The two stronger examples might be the popular protest that followed the announcement of the marriage between the king and Leonor Teles (a vassal and previously married to a Portuguese nobleman). According to the chronicle written by Fernão Lopes, some three thousand men gathered in Lisbon and marched, led by a tailor and armed, to the king’s palace to protest against this union, blaming “the kingdom’s greats” (the noblemen and advisors of the king) for not advising the king accordingly. The second moment of tension is, according to Borges

the Revolution was essentially a bourgeois movement, which capitalized the alleged general popular discontent in the urban and rural towns and villages throughout the kingdom. It was in Lisbon, according to Borges Coelho, that the revolutionary movement began, by the hands of those who controlled the maritime commerce in the kingdom's capital, led by Álvaro Pais (vassal and Chancellor of the deceased king and his father before him). The national perspective in Borges Coelho's work is, therefore unquestionable: the discussion around the dynastic succession occupied a central role in the revolutionary movement. The peak of this situation occurred with the "election" of the new "regidor and defender of the realm", João (which would become king João I, after the 1384 *Cortes*) by the popular classes of Lisbon (where the artisans played a central role), which in the face of an "hesitant and cowed bourgeoisie", forced this election in 1383, but without ever disputing the lead of the revolution.<sup>79</sup> Nonetheless, this situation was not the only driving force of this movement, as Borges Coelho explains in his analysis of the aristocracy's reaction

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Coelho, the 1371-72 *Cortes* (the Portuguese medieval Parliament), where "the people raised voices and clamoured against the arrogance of the clergy and nobles, arrogated to themselves the right to proclaim peace and war, dared to refuse a monetary request from the king." (our translation) Coelho, 83. According to this author, the war with Castille also had a terrible outcome, considering the peace treaty of Salvaterra de Magos, "putting the Portuguese independence under the sword of the Castilian king". After Fernando's death, "the Portuguese refused to acclaim the foreign king" and "in the heart and squares of towns and villages, the flags were truly raised for the independence of Portugal," against the king's daughter (betrothed to the Castilian king) claim. For a more detailed analysis of the popular revolts during Fernando's reign, see the works of Maria José Pimenta Ferro, and, more recent, Bruno Marconi da Costa - Maria José Pimenta Ferro, 'A Revolta Dos Mesterais de 1383,' in *Actas Das III Jornadas Arqueológicas* (Lisboa: Associação dos Arqueólogos Portugueses, 1978), 359-63; Bruno Marconi da Costa, 'Experiência Social e Resistência Em Portugal No Século XIV. Las Revoltas Dos Mesterais e a Oligarquia Camarária de Lisboa,' *Roda Da Fortuna. Revista Eletrônica Sobre Antiguidade e Medievo* 5, no. 1 (2016): 115-40; Bruno Marconi da Costa, 'Os Mesterais e o Concelho de Lisboa Durante o Século XIV: Um Esboço de Síntese (1300-1383),' *Medievalista Online*, no. 21 (1 June 2017), <https://doi.org/10.4000/medievalista.1268>; Bruno Marconi da Costa, "'Sandice de dois sapateiros e alfaiates.'" O repertorio de ações coletivas dos mesterais lisboetas nos séculos XIII e XIV,' in *Trabajar en la ciudad medieval europea* (Logroño: Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2018), 379-408, <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=6663787>; Bruno Marconi da Costa, 'A atividade política dos mesterais de Lisboa no século XIV: da oligarquização do concelho à crise dinástica,' in *Estudos de Poder, Religião e sociedade na História* (Rio de Janeiro: Autografia, 2018), 15-29.

<sup>79</sup> Coelho, *A Revolução de 1383: tentativa de caracterização e importância histórica*, 92-94.

and how the people and the bourgeoisie fought against that reaction, in the cities, but also in the rural areas.<sup>80</sup>

Ultimately, this revolutionary process led to the insurrection of the peasants and artisans throughout the kingdom, driven by the contradiction of the *forces of production* and the *social relations of production*, as António Sérgio had argued. The “common people” were strangled by the oppression of two different groups: “the nobility, who hold them with serfdom, taxes, dungeons and the stump; and the bourgeoisie who forced them to work for low, fixed wages.”<sup>81</sup> In the face of this insurrection, the popular classes met the reaction of the bourgeois movement, leader of the Revolution, which had a different set of interests to be met after the acclamation of the new king, seeking to suppress any popular appropriation of the revolutionary movement and its transformation into *Jacquerie*.<sup>82</sup> This insurrection led, however, to some gains for the peasants, according to Borges Coelho, namely the end of the fixed wages and the creation of peasant “unions”, which gave the bourgeoisie some trouble to contain throughout the reign of João I. This king would be “elected” in 1385 at Coimbra’s *Cortes*, making him, according to Borges Coelho, “an elected king and almost parliamentarian”,<sup>83</sup> with some new gains to the peasants and artisans, but also to the leaders of the revolutionary movement that made him king: the bourgeoisie.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> (our translation) “We have never claimed that all bourgeoisie, rural or otherwise, have held up the Master’s [João] pendant, nor that the *small folk* haven’t taken every opportunity to conquer goods in the moonlight. What we are saying is that the class as a whole, in terms of men and interests, took the lead right from the start, for better or worse. What is being said is that the main events took place under the leadership of their captains. Nor do we deny the outbreak and vigour of the peasant uprisings that took place in some villages. Certain perplexities, especially among the more honourable, the perplexities of the good men of Montemor, stem precisely from the thorn in the bourgeoisie’s throat - the fear of those holding the other side of the rope.” Coelho, 103.

<sup>81</sup> (our translation) Coelho, 108.

<sup>82</sup> (our translation) “The incident in Vila Viçosa with Vasco Porcalho shows how the bourgeoisie did not agree with the popular insurrection. Porcalho, the town’s captain, had been arrested for colluding with the King of Castile. And when the people shouted: ‘Let the traitor die with as many as he has!’ saying to set him on fire, they made them stand still.’ To the Álvaro Coitados it wasn’t convenient that the revolution would degenerate into *Jacquerie*.” Coelho, 109–10.

<sup>83</sup> Coelho, 123–62.

<sup>84</sup> Coelho, 123–25.

Like these two authors, Joel Serrão interpreted this period also as a revolution. However, in his work,<sup>85</sup> he presents this revolutionary movement divided into two distinct moments: from 1383 until 1384 as a popular revolution, and from 1384 to 1385 as a bourgeois appropriation of the revolutionary movement, transforming it into a bourgeois revolution. In dialogue with other authors, such as António Sérgio and Jaime Cortesão, Joel Serrão rejects some of the ideas conveyed by these historians. This position becomes very clear in a chapter the author devotes to answering the interpretative proposals of both António Sérgio and Jaime Cortesão, asking directly in the second point of analysis in his book (in English: "The Portuguese Revolution of 1383"), "until the beginning of the struggle where was, António Sérgio, the «impulse, direction and funding by the bourgeoisie»?".<sup>86</sup>

Serrão, although acknowledging the value of Sérgio's work on this subject and even recognizing the validity of some of his conclusions, namely the class struggle determined by the circumstances of the fourteenth century, disagrees with the role played by the bourgeoisie in the awakening of the "civil war" (António Sérgio's term) that took place in Portugal between 1383 and 1385. Also, unlike António Borges Coelho, Joel Serrão is not convinced, because he affirms that there is no evidence to support such interpretation, that Álvaro Pais might have led the bourgeois revolutionary movement.<sup>87</sup> For this author, the war against Castile did not interest the bourgeoisie, because

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<sup>85</sup> Joel Serrão, *O Carácter Social Da Revolução de 1383*, Cadernos Da Seara Nova. Estudos Históricos (Lisboa: Seara Nova, 1946). The first edition of this study was published in 1946, with five other editions shortly after the Carnation Revolution, between 1976 and 1985, proving both the interest showed by the public in this work, and also (considering the dates of these last editions) the clear academic openness felt after the destruction of the fascist regime and its structures.

<sup>86</sup> (our translation) Serrão, 37.

<sup>87</sup> (our translation) "What fact or argument shows us that Álvaro Pais was the agent of the *haute* bourgeoisie at the start of the revolution? None, it seems to us. Neither was he exactly a *haute* bourgeois (is a *haute* bourgeois a man who owes his 'honour and advancement' not to lucrative commercial work but to royal favour for his bureaucratic tasks?), nor does Andeiro's murder reveal, in any case, the definite purpose of sparking the social struggle that, as events unfolded, came to fruition. (...) if this project was really an idea of the bourgeoisie (...) the socio-economic antinomies that led 'some Portuguese to want to destroy others' set a very different course for subsequent events - a course that, if the bourgeois leadership of the events is to be believed, was very hostile to their intentions: what would they profit from a war with Castile (a war with a hypothetical victorious outcome), which had defeated us three times in a row not so long ago?" Serrão, 48-49.

the chances of losing were too high and their interests could have been protected under the reign of a Castilian king. What then sparked the revolution? For Joel Serrão the answer lay with the “small folk” of Lisbon, which “was forced to elect a leader, and it is then that the Master [João], eager to flee to England and escape the consequences of his thoughtless deed [killing Andeiro, a Galician nobleman said to be the queen’s lover], becomes *Regidor and Defender of the Realm*.”<sup>88</sup> Only after this episode the adherence of the bourgeoisie to this cause becomes clearer, aimed against Fernando’s heir and her husband, the king of Castile, by demand and intimation of the people of Lisbon, led by Afonso Penedo, a cooper. Furthermore, the impact of the Revolution on rural areas, where it had more violent contours, clearly shows, according to Serrão, that “the 1383 revolution was a movement mainly directed against the landowners, with whom, the *haute* commercial and maritime bourgeoisie wouldn’t have a declared divergence of interests.”<sup>89</sup>

For this reason, Joel Serrão presents the revolution of 1383 divided into two distinct moments. As he puts it: “It is wrong to assume that the so-called revolution of 1383-85 had, from its beginning to its end, the same social character: there are not one but two revolutions in it: that of 1383, carried out by the «common people», with a clear character of *protest* against their living conditions at the time, and that of 1385, in which the bourgeoisie supplanted and dominated the «small folk», which we could call the «revolution-organization». The existence of these two revolutions may have been the root of the divergent interpretations that have been formulated for them until now.”<sup>90</sup> For this reason we mentioned the appropriation of the revolutionary movement by the bourgeoisie, according to Serrão’s interpretation. What began as an essential popular movement, a contradiction between the *forces of production* and the *social relations of production*, motivated by the lack of living conditions, a direct consequence of wages’ decline throughout the fourteenth century, was shortly after its beginning capitalized by the social class that

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<sup>88</sup> (our translation) Serrão, 49.

<sup>89</sup> (our translation) Serrão, 50.

<sup>90</sup> Serrão continues: “One, the first, has as its relevant characteristic the agitation of the working masses asserting themselves in bellicose acts of murder, robbery, in short, of collective protest, against the *order*; the other, the bourgeois, after this first one, taking the leadership, when it recognizes that its interests are also at stake, and winning, will erase the demands of the poor, for decades, for the mirage of the gold of spices and slaves, which are beyond the Tenebrous Sea, and where it is necessary to go and get them.” (our translation) Serrão, 42–43.

had means to wage a war and support João's claim to the throne, for their own political, social and economic gain.

The dialogue Joel Serrão establishes with the work of Jaime Cortesão,<sup>91</sup> allows us to understand also his divergences with this author's interpretation of the Portuguese revolution of 1383-85, which he perceives as a moment of *national* revolution. Inspired by the works on medieval economic and social history by Henri Pirenne, but mostly by the interpretations and method of Oliveira Martins, Jaime Cortesão places the Portuguese sovereignty and the integrity of the kingdom as the most relevant factor for the start of the revolution in 1383; "Woe betide those who aligned with them [the Castilians] against the integrity and independence of the Nation!", writes Cortesão.<sup>92</sup>

The class struggle identified by the previous authors in this period is not absent in this work, however, this is, in a way, supplanted by some sort of "national pride" that the author suggests to have existed among the Portuguese classes at the time, and for that reason, in the moment the privileged classes (nobility and clergy) declared their support to a "usurper foreign" king, the revolutionary movement was bound to begin. In any case, according to this author, the revolution was a product of the "cooperation, even if with different proportions, of all the classes", which had as main goal "avoiding the foreign usurpation [of the Portuguese Crown] (...) [and] a work of the majority of the nation and not just a small part",<sup>93</sup> which is a clear distinction compared to the analysis made by the historians presented so far in this study.

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<sup>91</sup> The work by Jaime Cortesão had been first made public as a part of a collective volume, directed by Luís de Montalvor (1891-1947), published in two volumes in 1930 and 1932 - Luís de Montalvor, ed., *História Do Regimen Republicano Em Portugal*, vol. 1 (Lisboa: Ática, 1930); Luís de Montalvor, ed., *História Do Regimen Republicano Em Portugal*, vol. 2 (Lisboa: Ática, 1932). The same study was then published as a part of Jaime Cortesão's complete works, first published in 1964, after the publication of Joel Serrão's book - Jaime Cortesão, *Os factores democráticos na formação de Portugal* (Lisboa: Portugália, 1964). This work was then re-edited three times, in 1974, 1978 and finally in 1984, showing the significance of this debate in the Portuguese historiographical context at least until the 1980s. After this decade, the discussion on this topic had a clear decline, with a general consensus within the academic community to refer to the revolution of 1383-85 as a *crisis*. This shall be the theme for a following study we hope to publish soon after this.

<sup>92</sup> (our translation) Cortesão, *Os factores democráticos na formação de Portugal*, 133.

<sup>93</sup> (our translation) Cortesão, 137.



His critics on the foreign policies of king Fernando are very clear throughout his book,<sup>94</sup> blaming the king and his action (supported and guided by the privileged groups), which the author claims to be a “masterpiece of insanity”, for the situation the kingdom was facing by the time he died, undermining the independence of Portugal. Facing the loss of this independence, Álvaro Pais, “a statesmen” in Cortesão’s words, puts in motion the revolutionary movement which would “kill the lover of the hateful queen [Leonor Teles]”, presenting himself to the people “with the halo of avenger of the nation and its defender [João, Master of Avis]”,<sup>95</sup> by directing the popular uprising in defence of João, Master of Avis, which would be later elected *Regidor and Defender of the Realm*.

To this interpretation, Joel Serrão very astutely asks Jaime Cortesão which “people” is he referring to in his work, claiming that Cortesão wishes to confuse people with nation. “The question arises: which people? the common people or the wealthy upper bourgeoisie? What seems to us is that when one defends an “economic and political formula” one is necessarily defending a class or a party, and not the nation, which is always an antinomy of divergent interests.”<sup>96</sup> Serrão implies, thus, that these are concepts that wouldn’t have had any meaning to the people living in the late Middle Ages. For this author it is clear that the revolution was not some kind of logical consequence in the course of the kingdom’s history, as Cortesão often implies, and that, because of its dual characteristic (first popular and then captured by the bourgeoisie), did not change structurally the Portuguese society at the end of the Middle Ages; the former aristocracy was replaced by new members, it’s certain, but

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<sup>94</sup> In a lot of ways, similar to the way previous historians did when analyzing the policies of some historical characters, such as the king Afonso V, who is heavily criticised by some historians in the nineteenth century, such as Oliveira Martins or Rebello da Silva (1822-1871), for what they considered to be a “plundering the royal treasury” in favour of the privileged groups, highlighting the role played by his son, the king João II, perceived as an “anti-aristocratic” king. The prevailing ideologies of the nineteenth century become, thus, very clear in their works, with a strong and declared defence of the local authorities and municipalism, individual rights, or the limited power of the king (which, of course, is not factual for the reign of João II). We have dealt with this theme on another article, mentioned above (Ribeiro, ‘O Príncipe Perfeito’).

<sup>95</sup> (our translation) Cortesão, *Os factores democráticos na formação de Portugal*, 135.

<sup>96</sup> (our translation) Serrão, *O Carácter Social Da Revolução de 1383*, 55.

those were still (or were made) noblemen, and the feudal structure endured for some time after the revolution.<sup>97</sup>

It becomes clear, thus, that even among those historians recognized in this work as opponents of the fascist regime, did not have a similar way of interpreting this historical moment, nor have all of them attributed the same relevance to our key historical agents, the artisans. Although the four of them argued that 1383-85 was indeed a revolution, we can find three different lines of thought not only on what constitutes a revolution, but also (and mainly) on the contours of this medieval revolution. The first two (António Sérgio and António Borges Coelho) seem to share a similar ground in their interpretation, presenting this moment as a *bourgeois revolution*, with some criticism by Joel Serrão to this interpretation, since this last author believes the *popular* character of the beginning of the revolutionary movement to be undeniable, even though it might have been captured and later led by the bourgeoisie in an attempt to ensure their political, social and economic gain, but also to suppress the radicalization of the movement, by controlling it and directing its course. Finally, Jaime Cortesão presents a very distinct interpretation of the historical records, seeing 1383-85 as an uprising in which members from distinct social classes participated, making it a *national revolution*, which had as main concern the head of the Portuguese Crown, ensuring the “nation” would not lose its independence to a “foreigner” (the Castilian king, married to the daughter and heir of the late king Fernando).

In opposition to these approaches, we might even consider the works of two more historians, clearly engaged with the Portuguese fascist regime (as historians, but also in political roles). It becomes, then, relevant to present some conclusions of the interpretations made by Marcello Caetano (the dictator that replaced Salazar after 1968), and also Franz-Paul de Almeida Langhans (a private secretary of the dictator Salazar), since both of them have interpreted this historical moment as a *crisis*, a concept that seems to have found relative consensus in the Portuguese academy at least since the 1980s.

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<sup>97</sup> (our translation) “The political arrangement that followed the revolution of 1383-85 was not, in fact, revolutionary: an old nobility was replaced by a new one that, although of bourgeois extraction, was nevertheless functionally identical to the old one. In short: the structure of Portuguese society was not changed by the revolution of 1383-85. If it was a feudal structure or, if you prefer, a seigniorial one, it remained and would remain feudal.” Serrão, 54.

In his work, *A Crise Nacional de 1383-85*,<sup>98</sup> Marcello Caetano gathers his two main studies for this theme: *As Cortes de 1385*, and *O Concelho de Lisboa na Crise de 1383-85*, published in the 1950s, engaging with the historiographical debate that had been occurring in Portugal since, at least, the previous decade. Beginning with the titles of his works, one can already understand his reluctance (or even rejection) in referring to the historical moment under analysis as a revolution, referring to it as a *national crisis*. However, between the two texts, it is not impossible to find a reference to some kind of *revolution*, since the author does perceive this moment, at times, as a revolutionary movement. It is not, nonetheless, a revolution as the Marxist historiography labelled or understood it, but rather a *corporatist revolution*. On that we will try to explore a bit more later.

His first mentioned work dealt with the analysis of the 1385 *Cortes*, which can be translated, in several ways, as the Portuguese medieval Parliament,<sup>99</sup> where Caetano refers to the relevance of this meeting as a way of “giving legal sanction” to the “popular revolution that, in April 1384, spread from Lisbon to great part of the country (...) defining the rules for a constitutional regime”.<sup>100</sup> However, if this author calls the movement as a revolution, he does not do it in a similar way of the previous historians. For Caetano, in

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<sup>98</sup> In English: “The National Crisis of 1383-85”. This book was published in 1985, after our chronological arc. However, this work is the result of a collection of two distinct texts, previously written by Caetano. The first one, “The 1385 Cortes”, was initially published in 1951, and the second one, “The Council of Lisbon in the Crisis of 1383-85”, published in 1953. Here, we will analyze both of these texts in their initial publication (from the 1950’s: Marcello Caetano, ‘As Cortes de 1385,’ *Revista Portuguesa de História* V (1951): 5–86; Marcello Caetano, ‘O Concelho de Lisboa Na Crise de 1383-85,’ *Anais Da Academia Portuguesa de História*, II, IV (1953): 175–247. This historian has also another relevant study for this theme but mainly focused on the circumstances that preceded the death of king Fernando, for which we have discarded a more focused analysis in our study: Marcello Caetano, ‘A Administração Municipal de Lisboa Durante a 1ª Dinastia (1179-1383),’ *Revista Da Faculdade de Direito Da Universidade de Lisboa*, 7–8 (1951).

<sup>99</sup> This institutional structure has been analyzed by many Portuguese historians since the last century, with most of them (especially in the last decades) referring to the *Cortes* as *Parliament*. One of the most known historians that focused on the study of this institution was Armindo de Sousa (1941-1998): Armindo de Sousa, *O parlamento medieval português e outros estudos*, 1.a edição, Fios da história (Porto: Fio da Palavra, 2014). It has been referred to as *Parliament*, in short, because it was an assembly that gathered the king, the privileged classes (nobles and clergymen), and also the popular classes (represented by the Council’s procurators), since 1254. Until then this institution was known as *Curia Regis*, with the representation of only the privileged classes.

<sup>100</sup> (our translation) Caetano, ‘As Cortes de 1385,’ 5.

1383-85 there was more than just a social issue at stake, deeply rooted in an “indisputable patriotic feeling”; this struggle was also based on a religious issue, for the Castilian king supported the so-called anti-Pope, in a period deeply marked by the Papal Schism and the game of influences and power behind it.<sup>101</sup> The Portuguese revolution of 1383 was also a fight between the “right” and “true” church against the schismatics.<sup>102</sup>

Caetano identifies, thus, three “parties” in which these *Cortes* were divided: one composed by those who supported the claim of Beatriz, daughter of king Fernando, to whom the author refers to as *legitimist*;<sup>103</sup> the second one, *legitimist-nationalist*, supported the claim of the “legitimized” Fernando’s brothers,<sup>104</sup> since the election of Beatriz could compromise the independence of the Portuguese kingdom; and the *nationalists*, the third party represented, who supported the claim of João, Master of Avis.<sup>105</sup> According to Caetano, this third party “put aside any concerns about legitimacy in the face of the supremacy

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<sup>101</sup> For a minimal understanding of the Portuguese king’s position on this subject we should mention the somewhat inconstant policies of king Fernando. The Schism began in 1378, with the election of a new pope in Rome and another in Avignon, France (which would be known as anti-pope). Initially (1378-79) Fernando aligned with the pope in Rome, from 1379 to 1381 with the anti-pope, from 1381 to 1382 with the pope, and then again with the anti-pope from 1382 to 1383. These allegiances were based mostly on the policies of alliances the Portuguese king had with other kingdoms (generally speaking: when allied with England and at war with Castile, allegiance with the pope in Rome; when at peace with Castile, allegiance with the anti-pope in Avignon).

<sup>102</sup> “It is clear that in the controversy with the Castilian King, the Portuguese jurists sought to take full advantage of the fact that he had recognised the Antipope of Avignon, calling for the cause of the Master of Avis, already supported by an indisputable patriotic feeling and which for a part of the population was a pretext for a movement of a social nature, yet another solid support, this one of a religious nature: the supporters of D. João I fought for the true Church against the schismatics and benefited from the indulgences of the crusade granted by Urban VI to those who fought the Castilian king.” (our translation) Caetano, ‘As Cortes de 1385,’ 26.

<sup>103</sup> This party, according to Caetano, was obviously not represented at Coimbra (where the *Cortes* were held).

<sup>104</sup> Sons of king Pedro I and Inês de Castro. There are no actual records that can attest their legitimation without any doubt, even though the king did assume to have married in secret with Inês de Castro, before she was murdered, in 1355. From this alleged marriage were born three sons and one daughter: Afonso (died as a child), João, duke of Valencia de Campos (known nowadays as Valencia de Don Juan, in León), Dinis, lord of Cifuentes (in Guadalajara, Castile), and Beatriz, married to Sancho of Castile, count of Albuquerque (in Badajoz, Castile) and illegitimate son of king Alfonso XI of Castile.

<sup>105</sup> Caetano, ‘As Cortes de 1385,’ 11.

of national interest: the defense of Portuguese independence required a king who was Portuguese and closely linked to the cause of the Nation, which excluded Beatriz, married to the King of Castile, and the children of Inès de Castro, who lived in Castile and had already fought for it against Portugal. Therefore, there was no other solution but to consider the throne vacant and elect a sovereign without taking into account the traditional rules of succession, with the choice falling on the popular leader that was João, Master of Avis, although a cleric and bastard."<sup>106</sup> It starts to become clearer, then, the idea behind Caetano's interpretation of 1383-85, as a national movement, with alleged nationalistic purposes and worries.

On the social character of the revolution, Caetano argues that, by the time of Coimbra's *Cortes*, the popular support of the new elected king (João, Master of Avis) was still strong in its power and intents, but was not formed anymore by the "small folk", as it was in 1383 in Lisbon, where the artisans had a strong influence in the direction of the revolutionary movement (which the author refers to as "political crisis with the appearance of a social revolt"), demanding for several changes in the local government, most of them approved by the then *Regidor and Defender of the Realm*.<sup>107</sup> For Caetano, those who spoke in the name of the "people" were now landowners and urban merchants, who had the financial ability to support the war against Castile and the claim of Beatriz and her husband.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> (our translation) Caetano, 11.

<sup>107</sup> (our translation) "The popular arm in the *Cortes* is no longer, however, formed by members of those masses of «small folk» who so readily took the Master's side throughout the country and gave the political crisis the appearance of a social revolt: the council prosecutors also protest against the excesses of this mob, clearly finding it strange the support that the demagogy had at one point on the part of the revolutionary government. The prosecutors are not even the craftsmen who in Lisbon had sought to achieve a position of command in the municipal administration and even the right to monitor and be present in the king's own council." Caetano, 64.

<sup>108</sup> (our translation) "Those who expressed the votes of the kingdom's cities and villages in the *Cortes* were the most serious people, linked to the land through property or with serious interests in commerce, and supported by jurists in whom an ideal of order, justice and power imbued with Roman texts tempered their renewing impetus. It was these, and only these, who could give the king the money needed for the war and they did so, safeguarding its expenditure by appointing the *treasurer of the councils*, with his clerk; as only they could give the appearance of genuineness to the representation of the kingdom's important places in the *Cortes*, because if the quantity could not be overwhelming, at least the quality of the procurators had to be chosen to show that they were on good terms with the Master." Caetano, 64.

In the second study presented, the author introduces what he believes to have been the essence of the revolution of 1383-85: a *corporatist revolution*. This idea is, therefore, profoundly in line with some philosophical debates and necessities at the time the text was written, since the Portuguese fascist regime presented itself as a Corporatist State, inspired by the fascist model of the Italian State led by Mussolini. The main idea behind it (which we intend to explore in a future study focused on the uses of medieval corporatism by the Portuguese fascist historiography) was that the nation was a whole, rejecting the idea of the Marxist *class struggle*, integrating families, local communities, and corporations. The goal was clear: to suppress the need for syndicalism and the formation of political parties, establishing a singular *National Union*, which became in practice the single party of the regime (although it was not labelled as such). It was the ultimate rejection of any idea of democracy by the fascist regime in Portugal and the obliteration of labour rights.

This idea, although not explicitly mentioned in Caetano's work, underlies his analysis on "The Council of Lisbon in the Crisis of 1383-85". His argument is that "the revolutionary investiture of the Master of Avis in the regency of the Kingdom" was a consequence of the pressure made by the "small folk" of Lisbon, who, by threat of violence and accusations of Lisbon's bourgeoisies being "bad patriots", forced them to recognize their selected *regidor* (João).<sup>109</sup> From this contribution of the popular masses, led by the city's artisans,

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<sup>109</sup> (our translation) "On 15 December, "many people from the city" gathered at the monastery and were harangued by João, who expressed his personal disinterest in power, but agreed to take on the regency and defence of the Kingdom as long as they all promised to help him unconditionally in bearing such grave burdens. The response was prompt: the crowd shouted in unison for him to stay, promised to dedicate their lives and property to the war effort – "to any adventure for the honour of the kingdom and its defence" – and joyfully acclaimed the Master of Avis's final consent to lead the revolution. However, they soon noticed that "many honourable citizens" were missing from the meeting, including bourgeoisie from the city's wealthy and respected families, landowners, merchants, and experienced people from the city administration whose votes were important to obtain in an issue of such importance. (...) On the 16th, the municipal assembly met in the "council chamber". The Master spoke again, explaining what had happened the day before; but when he finished, he was greeted by an embarrassed silence. The "good men" were the ones who had the most to lose. The revolution was an adventure in which they did not want to take responsibility. And they whispered to each other, not daring to speak out openly. The meeting, however, was attended by the common people, as usually happened when the city's serious interests were at stake. Respectful at first, the prolonged indecision of the leaders began to make them frantic. Among the audience, the

this group would receive some political gains, re-entering the local government through the *House of the 24* (in Portuguese, *Casa dos 24*).<sup>110</sup> Nonetheless, what comes out of this meeting and specially out of this “popular” support to João’s claim to the throne is a restructure of the city Council’s privileges, which was only possible through what we can only assume as *class collaboration* or some kind of *social harmony*, the foundation of the rhetoric behind the *corporatist* theory. Through the “state” (or in this case the central government) intervention, the merchants and artisans of Lisbon now had a new set of privileges which they had wanted for some time, such as larger participation in the government of the city, in the management of collective life, but also financial benefits that would free Lisbon’s merchants from the competition of foreign merchants, by eliminating some taxes within the realm.<sup>111</sup>

This *corporatist* approach is also the basis for Franz-Paul de Almeida Langhans’ works. This author has mainly studied the organization of urban labour in Portugal at the end of the Middle Ages, especially after the revolution of 1383-85, with a focus on the mentioned *House of the 24* in Lisbon,<sup>112</sup> and it

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cooper Afonso Anes Penedo stood out, who, putting his hand on a sword that he had at his belt, reproached the bourgeoisie for being bad patriots, encouraging them to ratify the popular decision. But even so, the notables did not resolve their decision. And then the cooper did not hesitate to make formal threats. He reminded them that, for his sake, he had nothing more to lose than his head, but that, for that very reason, if the leaders did not want to accompany him, they would also have to answer for theirs before leaving... (...) Given the commotion and seeing that they could not resolve anything other than what the people demanded, the good men granted what had been promised the day before in S. Domingos.” Caetano, ‘O Concelho de Lisboa Na Crise de 1383-85,’ 180.

<sup>110</sup> A system of representation of the artisans through the selection of two representatives of each craft (out of twelve), who should participate in the city’s government from then on.

<sup>111</sup> (our translation) “Therefore, the traditional oligarchic government of the municipality of Lisbon is tempered by the access of the artisans to the municipal power institutions: the municipality acquires the precious freedom of transit for its merchants, who can now travel armed throughout the country, without being bothered by foreign competition and without having to stop at every step at the interior customs to pay tolls and have their goods inspected; and the citizens of Lisbon acquire important prerogatives for their security, for the inviolability of their homes and for the possession of their goods.” Caetano, ‘O Concelho de Lisboa Na Crise de 1383-85,’ 247.

<sup>112</sup> Our analysis of this author’s interpretation on the revolution of 1383-85 was done based on two different studies by Almeida Langhans, concerning the crafts organization in Lisbon throughout the end of the fourteenth century and a great part of the following century - Franz-Paul de Almeida Langhans, *As Corporações Dos Ofícios Mecânicos : Subsídios Para a Sua História* (Lisboa:

is through this focus we can perceive his interpretation not only of the historical events occurring between 1383 and 1385, but mostly its outcomes. Thus, although his work does not deal greatly with the issue at hand in our study, it is still relevant to understand how the fascist historiography tried to look at the Portuguese medieval past, using key historical agents (the artisans), to answer some of their contemporary issues. In this sense, we shall not elaborate on the concept of *corporatism* and the way its alleged historical roots were fabricated by the Portuguese fascist regime, for that is a theme for another moment, but it is an image that must not go unnoticed in this approach.

The corporatist political ideology has been present in many different ideological systems and is not an exclusive invention of the twentieth century fascist regimes. It could be found even among the “liberal” currents of the previous century, and at the same time, in many other ideological systems (even within socialism). Its roots and appropriation by modern political philosophy are not our main concern here, but they do seem to have played an interesting role in building the Portuguese fascist regime, after 1926, but more firmly after 1933, with the approval of the new Constitution and especially after the approval of the *National Labour Statute* (in Portuguese: *Estatuto do Trabalho Nacional*), which identifies the main ideas of the labour organization in the Portuguese State, following a corporatist ideology. Marcello Caetano had even stated once that this legal document “corresponds exactly, by its nature, structure and purposes, to the Italian *Carta del Lavoro*, from which it even translates some formulas of doctrine and organization.”<sup>113</sup>

In a lecture by Constantino de Menezes Cardoso, given on the radio on July 6<sup>th</sup> 1937, this Judge of the district of Lisbon, presents some ideas on how medieval corporatism might have influenced the social politics of António de Oliveira Salazar, hinting precisely at the idea we intend to focus on here, finally. The edification of the fascist Portuguese state at the beginning of the twentieth century relied, among many other measures, on a tight control over the historical narrative, building an analysis of the past that could indeed answer to their contemporary needs. For this purpose, the studies on medieval

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Imprensa Nacional de Lisboa, 1943); Franz-Paul de Almeida Langhans, *A Casa Dos Vinte e Quatro de Lisboa. Subsídios Para a Sua História* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional de Lisboa, 1948).

<sup>113</sup> Marcello Caetano, *O Sistema Corporativo* (Lisboa: Oficinas gráficas de o Jornal de comércio e das colónias, 1938).



corporatism by Almeida Langhans seem to us fundamental to understanding the ideological project that was being built. This historian's analyses, although pioneering in this specific field of history, are strongly dictated by, on the one hand, his own ideology (aligned with the fascist regime), and on the other, by a material need to justify historically the fascist state organization. Once again, the main idea that underlies the rhetoric surrounding medieval corporatism is one connected with overcoming of class struggle and the achievement of social "peace", that would eventually allow Portuguese society to march into its somewhat lost "glory" (from the perspective of the regime, considering the tumultuous history of the First Republic).

### **Final remarks**

Throughout this perhaps too long analysis we have tried to show how the Portuguese Revolution of 1383-85 was perceived by the historiography during the fascist dictatorship in Portugal. As we were able to understand it was not, as it still isn't to our day, a consensual topic, with two main concepts being presented among the various studies: *revolution* and *crisis*, even considering the divergencies between the multiple authors analyzed or just mentioned here. The authors we proposed to analyze seem to be an excellent selection for our purpose. If one could argue that most of them presented the historical moment as a revolution (which is undoubtedly true), it is also true that even among these authors, the divergences of analysis are more than evident. Yes, it was for most of them a *revolution*, but not a similar revolution among them: a bourgeois revolution, a popular revolution, or a national revolution. For that reason, the authors on the "revolution side" were more numerous than on the "crisis side", precisely to make clear the distinction between what constitutes a revolution, and how 1383-85 could be perceived as such.

Our main goal was, as presented at the beginning of this study, to affirm that history is an ideological exercise, because so are its authors: the historians. Even disregarding for a moment, the more or less hidden motivations that led these authors to write their studies, the conceptual debate focused on this specific historical period proves precisely this! Using the same historical document as the main source for their interpretations, all of them reached

distinct conclusions, not because the source speaks differently to any of them, but rather because they were able to read it from different perspectives, which is obviously motivated by the historian's ideologies, by the way the historian looks into the past, with his/her contemporary eyes. At the same time, we intended to present some kind of evolution or development of the historic-philosophic thought among the Portuguese intellectual elite, which becomes even clearer when we compare the results presented here with the period that followed, as we intend to do soon. Nonetheless, even by comparing with the previous period, that development can be understood if we consider, for instance, how the concept of revolution became less and less used.

It seems undeniable that the social and political contexts of the authors analyzed here were crucial for the way they perceived the past, in this particular case, the medieval past, with a bigger focus on the revolution of 1383-85. Some of the critics of the authors we presented as "oppositional" to the fascist regime even considered at times that they might have been trying to find in the past, a revolution they wanted to see in their present, as Borges Coelho states in his preface to the fifth edition of his book (in 1985, the commemoration of the 600 years of the medieval revolution). Strangely enough, to present the historical moment as a crisis doesn't seem to have sparked such a violent reaction by so many historians in Portugal who still use this concept to describe this moment until this day (wrongfully, in our opinion). For many reasons, this concept might have served the fascist regime better than an eventual revolution. The corporatist ideology of the regime, based on a notion of social peace and absence of class struggle (or even its need), answered material needs the Portuguese State had during the long night of fascism. The question that remains is why it became a general consensus after the revolution in 1974, and especially after 1985?

We shall hope to give some possible answers in the following study, to be published in 2025. Nonetheless, we should mention the extreme focus the historians seem to apply to the dynastic change in this historical moment, sometimes disregarding the social movements, based on the political and economic circumstances at the time, that underlay this entire period, and that were a reflection of a contradiction that had been present for many decades. This is to say that it seems to us that historians might have analyzed this moment from an elite perspective, considering the "major events" and especially the Crown (as an institution), and not from a popular perspective, a way of

writing history from below, acknowledging the centrality of the *structures* (that Braudel developed so brightly). That, we believe, is what might be missing in this analysis!

For this reason, it seemed to us relevant to return to this conceptual discussion, especially on the Portuguese case. Keeping track of the more recent studies developed in the European historiography, the need for a complexification of the conceptual debate on the Portuguese medieval studies seems undeniable, one that would appeal to other concepts that can definitely challenge that of *revolution* that we openly argued for throughout this analysis.

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# A Paradigmatic Shift since the Velvet Revolution? State-of-the-art Research and new Historiographical Perspectives on the Pontifical Seminary of Olomouc (1579-1741)

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**Abstract:** Since the nineteenth century, the Olomouc Pontifical Seminary has been the object of numerous studies. Nevertheless, these research efforts rarely attempted to assess the overall impact of the seminary in the Margrave of Moravia and the territories under its supervision. To date, a comprehensive analysis of its development, from its inception until its suppression, is still missing. The grounds for the historiographical neglect towards this institution, which constituted a core element of the Jesuit mission in Olomouc, can be found in the cultural, socio-economic, linguistic, and political barriers that affected the historians dealing with this topic before the Velvet Revolution (1989), the re-establishment of the Czech Historical Institute in Rome (1994), and the entrance of the Czech Republic in the European Union (2004). The aim of this article, therefore, is to provide the readership with a panoramic review of the state-of-the-art research on the Olomouc Pontifical Seminary until 1992 and to outline the new historiographical perspectives opened with the demise of the communist Czechoslovakian regime.

**Keywords:** Pontifical Seminary; Olomouc; Jesuits; Velvet Revolution; Middle Ages.

**Rezumat:** Încă din secolul al XIX-lea, Seminarul Pontifical din Olomouc a făcut obiectul a numeroase studii. Cu toate acestea, eforturile de cercetare au încercat rareori să evalueze impactul global al seminarului în Margravatul Moraviei și în teritoriile aflate sub supravegherea sa. Până în prezent, lipsește încă o analiză cuprinzătoare a evoluției sale, de la înființare până la desființare. Motivele neglijării istorice a acestei instituții, care a constituit un element central al misiunii iezuite

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din Olomouc, pot fi găsite în barierele culturale, socio-economice, lingvistice și politice care au afectat istoricii care s-au ocupat de acest subiect înainte de Revoluția de Catifea (1989), de reînființarea Institutului Istoric Ceh din Roma (1994) și de aderarea Republicii Ceha la Uniunea Europeană (2004). Scopul acestui articol este, așadar, de a oferi cititorilor o imagine de ansamblu asupra cercetărilor de ultimă oră privind Seminarul Pontifical din Olomouc până în 1992 și de a schița noile perspective istorice deschise odată cu căderea regimului comunist cehoslovac.

**Cuvinte cheie:** Seminar pontifical; Olomouc; iezuiți; Revoluția de Catifea; Evul Mediu.

## Introduction

Last night, Most Illustrious Monsignor, a very dark eclipse and a rain of tears occurred here in the North, with the bitter news that came to us from the death of that true father of many nations, the Most Holy Gregory XIII. [...] However, throwing myself most humbly before Her and, through Her, to those who have perhaps already been elected Pontiff, I recommend this most holy undertaking [i.e., the Pontifical seminars] to Her; the only means to renew the world and to keep alive the possession of this Holy See amid of every most barbarous nation, not to mention how grave a shock our religion would feel if so many poor sheep were forced to scatter and return under the teeth of those wolves that tear infinite souls every day (so to speak).<sup>1</sup> As the quote above reports, on May 22, 1585, the Jesuit Father Antonio Possevino<sup>2</sup> lamented

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<sup>1</sup> "Hier a notte, Monsignor Illustrissimo, si fece qui nel Settentrione un oscurissimo eclissi et una pioggia di lagrime, coll'acerba nuova che ci venne dalla morte di quel vero padre *multarum gentium*, Santissimo Gregorio XIII. [...] Però, gettandomi humilissimamente inanti lei et, per mezzo suo, a chi sarà stato forse già eletto in Pontefice, le raccomando questa santissima impresa [...]; unico mezo a rinnovare il mondo et a tener vivo il possesso di cotesta Santa Sede in mezo di ogni piu barbara natione, per tacer quanto grave scossa sentirebbe la religione nostra, se tante poverelle pecorelle fossero costrette di sbandarsi et ritornare sotto i denti di que' lupi ehe sbranano (per cosi dir) infinite anime ogni giorno." Antonio Possevino, SJ, to Tolomeo Gallio, May 22, 1585. László Lukács, SJ, 'Die nordischen papstlichen Seminarien und Possevino (1577-1587)', *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*, XXIV/47 (1955): 33-94.

<sup>2</sup> For his biography, cfr. Emanuele Colombo, 'POSSEVINO, Antonio,' in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia, 2016), vol. 85, pp. 153-58.  
[https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/antonio-possevino\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/antonio-possevino_(Dizionario-Biografico)/).

in such a sorrowful tone the death of Pope Gregory XIII to the Cardinal Tolomeo Gallio.<sup>3</sup> Appealing to the influence of the former secretary of State, Possevino aimed at safeguarding the numerous Pontifical seminars erected by Gregory XIII in his long tenure (1572-1585).

These seminars had been established (mainly under Possevino's instigation) across the entire European continent. They aimed to convert the youth of these countries where Catholicism had been outlawed and persecuted. In this vast educational network spreading from Rome to Vilnius, the *seminarium pontificium* of Olomouc (Olmütz) - then capital of the Margrave of Moravia - played a pivotal role. In the grand scheme for propagating the Catholic faith among all the nations on Earth, Olomouc, together with its twin seminary of Braunsberg (Braniewo) - then part of the bishopric of Warmia - was assigned the delicate task of overseeing Northern-Central Europe. Established at the end of 1578, the seminary welcomed young students of several nations, namely Balts, Hungarians, Moscovites, Ruthenians, Scandinavians, and Transylvanians. Occasionally, pupils from the British Isles, Flanders, and other Catholic territories (above all the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) would receive a scholarship as well. Once they completed their studies at the hands of the local Jesuit Fathers (who had arrived in Olomouc in 1566), such 'fortified' youths were supposed to return to their homeland and lay the foundations of the Catholic renewal.

Throughout its existence, ranging from its initiation in 1578 to its cessation in 1741, the Olomouc Seminary went through various upheavals that challenged, deviated and even undermined its original mission. Primarily, the dismay of the Catholic faith in the Moravian diocese, coupled with the paucity of human and financial capital, prompted the Olomouc bishops, from Stanislaus Pavlovský to Cardinal Francis of Dietrichstein, to Archduke Leopold William of Habsburg, to demand (and repeatedly bestow) some of the seminary's scholarships for the formation of the diocesan clergy. Secondly, the course of the Thirty Years War and its reversals, such as the revolt of the Moravian Estates (1619) and the Swedish occupation of Olomouc (1642-1650), imposed dramatic displacements of the Olomouc seminary and the relocation of its students in other Pontifical and Jesuit facilities. Ultimately,

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<sup>3</sup> For his biography, cfr. Giampiero Brunelli, "GALLIO, Tolomeo," *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia, 1998), vol. 51, pp. 685-690.  
[https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/tolomeo-gallio\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/tolomeo-gallio_(Dizionario-Biografico)/).

due to the limited resources at its disposal, the seminary oscillated between the myriad goals it was supposed to achieve; a failure or complication in one context implied the shift of the missionary resources and impetus to another.

## Methodology

In their attempt to reform the Catholic Church, the Council fathers gathered in Trent (1545–1563) placed a special emphasis on the preparation of future priests. The eighteenth canon of the twenty-third session of the Council, held on July 15, 1563, decreed that, to educate the ecclesiastical youth in their dioceses, bishops shall establish a *seminarium*. This bucolic term, familiar in the ancient world for Lucius Columella's *De Arboribus*,<sup>4</sup> had already been Christianised by St. Ambrose to indicate Noah's Ark.<sup>5</sup> However, the direct inspiration for this novel institution came from Cardinal Reginald Pole, who expressed in the council of London of 1555 the urgency of designing spiritual nurseries of seedlings, where the Catholic youth was to be nurtured in the faith, secluded from the dangers of secular life.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, as for other Tridentine decrees, the implementation of episcopal seminaries proved challenging, especially in the dioceses impacted by the Reformation,<sup>7</sup> since bishops often lacked detailed instructions and adequate resources.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, in the pontificate of Gregory XIII, the Holy See resolved to found and endow several Pontifical seminaries, the first of which was erected in Vienna in 1573.

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<sup>4</sup> L. Iunii Moderati Columellae, *De re rustica libri XII. Eiusdem de Arboribus liber, separatus ab aliis* (Lugduni: apud Sebastianum Gryphium, 1548), p. 466.

<sup>5</sup> Sancti Ambrosii Mediolanensis, 'De Noe et arca, liber unus' in *Opera Omnia. Volumen Primum* (Mediolani: Typographia Sancti Josephi, 1875), p. 302.

<sup>6</sup> Simona Negruzzo, 'The Tridentine Proposal for the Formation of the Clergy: The Seminaries,' in Nelson H. Minnich (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Council of Trent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), pp. 212–214.

<sup>7</sup> As lamented by the imperial nuncio Giovanni Delfino, in 1573, among the German bishops and princes, only the bishop of Olomouc had established a diocesan seminar. László Lukács, SJ, 'Die Grundung des Wiener papstlichen Seminars und der Nuntius Giovanni Delfino,' *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*, XXIII/45 (1954): 35–75, especially 36.

<sup>8</sup> Celeste McNamara, *The Bishop's Burden. Reforming the Catholic Church in Early Modern Italy* (Washington D. C: Catholic University of America Press, 2020), pp. 4–6.

The second half of the sixteenth century witnessed also the resumption of tremendous Pontifical efforts to inspire and oversee the conversion of all the nations to Catholicism. Although the apostolate was not a concern of the Council of Trent, its aftermath witnessed the Papal attempts to re-assert the leading role of Rome in spreading the Gospel across the four continents.<sup>9</sup> The missionary model implemented by the Catholic Church did not possess the traits of the “spiritual conquest” applied in the New World, where spiritual interests advanced under the aegis of temporal weapons.<sup>10</sup> Instead, the Papacy preferred the “way of the piety,” which was the conversion through preachers and priests to reveal to the heretics, the schismatics, the infidels and the pagans “the mistakes, in which they were induced by the persuasion of very wicked men and in which they now live.”<sup>11</sup> Videlicet in Europe, a keystone of this evangelisation strategy was the education of the youth and the formation of local clergy for the missionary territories: numerous national colleges and seminars were therefore established in Rome and several European cities, entrusted to the newly established religious orders, in particular the Society of Jesus.<sup>12</sup>

The “Bohemian question,”<sup>13</sup> the multifarious and (for the Catholic Church) problematic religious milieu generated with the Hussite revolution and exacerbated by the Reformation, acquired a graver and higher-stakes dimension with the relocation of the Imperial capital to Prague in 1583. In this context, within the Catholic field, the desire and pressure to enforce the Tridentine reforms and reject any claim of religious tolerance progressively increased over time, finding their most zealous proponents in the Society of

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<sup>9</sup> Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia (ed.), *A Companion to the Early Modern Catholic Global Missions* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2018).

<sup>10</sup> Giovanni Pizzorusso, *Propaganda Fide I: La congregazione pontificia e la giurisdizione sulle missioni* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2022), p. 209.

<sup>11</sup> “Ne’ quali a persuasione di huomini sceleratissimi sono incorsi e vivono.” Archivio Storico de Propaganda Fide, Scritture Originali rife- rite nelle Congregazioni Generali 1622 - 1892 (SOCG), I Collegi, vol. 362, “Raggioni date a diversi Illustri Cardinali in favore de ‘Collegi, e seminari instituiti dalla Santità di Gregorio XIII,” fol. 11r. - 31r. (here 13r).

<sup>12</sup> Paul F. Grendler, *Jesuit Schools and Universities in Europe 1548-1773* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2019), pp. 48-53.

<sup>13</sup> František Kavka and Anna Skýbová, ‘The ‘Bohemian Question ‘in the Sixteenth Century,’ in James R. Palmitessa (ed.), *Between Lipany and White Mountain. Essays in Late Medieval and Early Modern Bohemian History in Modern Czech Scholarship* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2014), pp. 149-165.

Jesus and its supporters.<sup>14</sup> The most serious hindrance to the recatholicisation plans of the Bohemian Lands laid in the shortage of ecclesiastical manpower, which left hundreds of parishes and thousands of souls unattended.<sup>15</sup> Overcoming this paucity of 'shepherds' proved indeed challenging for the Catholic leadership, since besides the decline of vocations among the Bohemian (both German and Czech-speaking) youth, the bishops had to handle and improve the dilapidated finances of their dioceses. Therefore, external Catholic support, both in terms of missionaries and resources, appeared crucial for solving the confessional-economic-political riddle posed by the intricate Bohemian question.

### State-of-the-art-research

The first historical account of the Olomouc Pontifical Seminary<sup>16</sup> was sketched by the Jesuit Father Johannes Schmidl (1693-1762).<sup>17</sup> In the first volume of his monumental history of the Jesuit Bohemian Province, Schmidl provided a fundamental overview of the seminary, its foundation and purpose.

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<sup>14</sup> Francesco Gui, *I gesuiti e la rivoluzione boema. Alle origini della guerra dei trent'anni* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1989), pp. 11-27, 143-177.

<sup>15</sup> See the case of the domain of Mikulov, where the Olomouc bishop could not support the recatholicisation efforts of Adam Dietrichstein and send valid priests for the *cura animarum*. Adam Darlage, 'The Feast of Corpus Christi in Mikulov, Moravia: Strategies of Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation (1579-86),' *The Catholic Historical Review*, 96/4 (2010): 651-677, especially 664-665.

<sup>16</sup> Before him, the Pontifical seminary was briefly mentioned in the celebration of its founder, Gregory XIII, by Marc'antonio Ciappi, *Compendio delle heroiche, et gloriose attioni, et santa vita di Papa Greg. XIII* (Roma: Giovanni Martinelli, 1591), p. 21; the 1596's edition of the *Compendio* is embellished with a fictional image of the seminary, Marc'antonio Ciappi, *Compendio delle heroiche, et gloriose attioni, et santa vita di Papa Greg. XIII. Distinti in Tredici Capi, in memoria delli XIII. anni, ch'egli visse nel suo Felice Ponteficato* (Roma: Stamperia degli Accolti, 1596), p. 33; the seminary was mentioned by the Bohemian Jesuit historiographer Georgius Crugerius in *Sacri pulveres mensis aprilis: ad Sanctomontanam SS. Virginem Mariam* (Pragae: Joannis Arnolti à Dobroslavina, 1669), pp. 114-115, in the entrance of April 20, day of the death of Gregory XIII (interestingly, Crugerius mistakenly postponed Gregory's death by 10 days, exactly those added in the Gregorian calendar reform).

<sup>17</sup> For his biography, cfr. Ivana Čornejová, "SCHMIDL, Johannes, SJ," in Katerina Bobková-Valentová, Jarmila Kašpárková (eds.), *Historiam scribere: rádová historiografie raného novoveku, II, Biografický slovník* (Olomouc: Historický Ústav AV ČR - Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2018), pp. 609-610.

Moreover, Schmidl referred to one of the major turning points in the life of the seminary: the request made in the year 1600 by Cardinal Francis of Dietrichstein to obtain fifteen scholarships for the formation of the Olomouc diocesan clergy.<sup>18</sup> This privilege, granted by Pope Clement VIII, significantly influenced the development of the seminary until the Cardinal's death in 1636. The work of Schmidl, albeit based on original Jesuit archival documentation, was still bound to *theorhetorics* (i.e. convincing the readership that God operated in history)<sup>19</sup> and pre-positivist methodological standards, and therefore can only partially be considered a secondary source.

After Schmidl, the seminary was further investigated by Augustin Theiner (1804–1874). The Silesian Oratorian, future archivist of the Vatican Archives, published in the biennium 1839–1838 two volumes devoted to the Catholic attempts to reconvert Scandinavia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These books belong to the staunchest pro-Papal phase of Theiner's tempestuous religious life<sup>20</sup> and were conceived as a response to Leopold Ranke's *Die römischen Päpste*; hence their apologetic tone.<sup>21</sup> Due to his professorship at Propaganda Fide College, and his cooperation with the ailing archivist Marino Marini, Theiner was one of the few historians allowed to access and publish manuscripts before the opening of the Vatican Archives in 1883.<sup>22</sup> The documents pertaining to the Olomouc Seminary, such as its *ratio et leges*

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<sup>18</sup> Johannes Schmidl, *Historiae Societatis Iesu Provinciae Bohemiae, pars I (1555 - 1592)* (Pragae: Typis Universitatis Carolo-Ferdinandae in Collegio S.J.ad S.Clementem, per Jacobum Schweiger Factorem, 1747), pp. 433–434; Johannes Schmidl, *Historiae Societatis Iesu Provinciae Bohemiae, pars II (1593–1615)* (Pragae: Typis universitatis Carolo Ferdinandae in Collegio S. J. Ad S. Clementem, per Jacobum Schweiger Factorem, 1749), pp. 230–231, 263.

<sup>19</sup> Marc Fumaroli, 'The Fertility and Shortcomings of Renaissance Rhetoric: The Jesuit Case,' in John o'Malley et al. (eds.), *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540–1773*, vol 1 (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2006), pp. 90–106, especially p. 101.

<sup>20</sup> Hubert Jedin, 'Augustin Theiner: Zum 100. Jahrestag seines Todes am 9. August 1874,' *Archiv für schlesische Kirchengeschichte*, 31 (1973): 134–176. The books were published just four years after the announcement of his (re-)conversion to Catholicism. Augustin Theiner, *Geschichte der geistlichen Bildungsanstalten* (Mainz: Kupferberg, 1835), pp. V–LXVI (this preface is dated 13 November, 1833).

<sup>21</sup> Augustin Theiner, *Versuche und Bemühungen des heiligen Stuhles in den letzten drei Jahrhunderten, die durch Ketzerei und Schisma von ihm getrennten Volker des Nordens wiederum mit der Kirche zu vereinen. Nach geheimen Staatspapieren* (2 vols., Augsburg: Kollmann, 1838), Band 1, Theil 1, pp. VI–VII, 1–102 (the entire preface is indeed an erudite, heartfelt praise of the Catholic Church, St. Peter and his *munus*, inherited by the Roman Pontiffs).

<sup>22</sup> Owen Chadwick, *Catholicism and History. The Opening of the Vatican Archives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 31–45.

and first students' list,<sup>23</sup> advanced significantly the research on the topic, despite lacking proper archival references and their transcription errors.

Besides the brief mention of the seminary by Christian d'Elvert (1803-1896)<sup>24</sup> in his history of education in Moravia,<sup>25</sup> Theiner's pioneering work remained an isolated historiographical effort for several decades. Only at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Jesuit Father Alois Kroess (1856-1928)<sup>26</sup> composed, as part of his monumental history of the Bohemian Province, the first comprehensive study on the Olomouc Pontifical seminary, from its foundation until the bishopric of Cardinal Dietrichstein.<sup>27</sup> Kroess had spent two years working in the Roman archive of the Jesuit Order (1894-1896), where he presumably embraced the admonition given by General Luis Martin in the 24th general congregation of the order of 1892 to cultivate and delve into the Society's past.<sup>28</sup> Later, he spent several years in Prague, until 1896, consulting sources for his *magnum opus*, whose first volume emerged in 1910.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Augustin Theiner, *Versuche und Bemühungen des heiligen Stuhles in den letzten drei Jahrhunderten, die durch Ketzerei und Schisma von ihm getrennten Volker des Nordens wiederum mit der Kirche zu vereinen. Nach geheimen Staatspapieren* (2 vols., Augsburg: Kollmann, 1839), Band 1, Theil 2, pp. 56-57, 66, 153-155, 299-306, 313-322.

<sup>24</sup> On the life of this influential Moravian historian and politician, cfr. Pavel Cibulka, 'd'ELVERT, Christian Friedrich,' *Biografický slovník českých zemí*, 2020.

<sup>25</sup> Christian d'Elvert, *Geschichte der Studien-, Schul- u. Erziehungs-Anstalten in Mähren und Österr. Schlesien, insbesondere der olmützer Universität, in den neueren Zeiten* (Brunn: Rohrer 1857), p. XXXIV. Interestingly, d'Elvert did not quote Schmidl, yet used Crugerius' *Sacri Pulveres* and Joseph Wladislaw Fischer's first history of the city of Olomouc (which however merely translated into German the notions of Schmidl, without any reference) *Geschichte der königl. Hauptstadt und Granzfestung Olmütz im Markgrathume Mahren. Zwenter Band. Welcher die politische Geschichte bis zum Jahre 1808 enthält* (Olmütz: Auf Kosten des Verfassers, gedruckt bey Anton Alex. Skarnitzl, k.k. pr. Buchdrucker, 1808), p. 181.

<sup>26</sup> László Szilas, 'Kross, Alois,' in Charles E. O'Neill, S.I., Joaquín Maria Dominquez, S.I. (eds.), *Diccionario Histórico de la Compañía de Jesús. Biográfico-temático. III Infante de Santiago - Piatkiewicz* (Roma-Madrid: Institutum Historicum, S. I. - Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2001), p. 2228; Eduard Widmoser, *Südtirol A-Z: Kr-N* (Südtirol-Verlag, 1988), ad indicem.

<sup>27</sup> Until 1928 the Bohemian Jesuit Province was not re-established and the Bohemian Lands were part of the Austrian Jesuit Church. Ivo Cerman, 'Jesuit Historiography in Bohemia,' *Jesuit Historiography Online*. <https://referenceworks.brill.com/display/entries/JHO/COM-192532.xml>.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Danieluk, S.J., 'Some Remarks on Jesuit Historiography 1773–1814,' in Robert A. Maryks, Jonathan Wright (eds.), *Jesuit Survival and Restoration: A Global History, 1773-1900* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2014), pp. 34-48, especially 37-38.

<sup>29</sup> Alois Kroess, *Geschichte der Böhmischen Provinz der Gesellschaft Jesu* (4 vols., Wien: Opitz, 1910), I. Band, pp. 516–543; Alois Kroess, *Geschichte der Böhmischen Provinz der Gesellschaft Jesu* (4 vols., Wien: Verlag, 1927), II. Band, pp. 668–669, 676–677, 683, 694–696. The entire publication was delayed by severe financial challenges. The fourth and last tome saw the light only in 2012.



Among the historical findings presented by Kroess, who lamentably never quoted his sources verbatim, the most noteworthy is the request of the Olomouc Bishop Stanislaus Pavlovský to obtain six scholarships from the seminary for the formation of the diocesan clergy. This demand, sent to the Jesuit General Claudio Acquaviva in 1586, preceded by almost fifteen years the privilege granted to Dietrichstein.

The research conducted by Theiner and Kroess was then expanded and refined by the Czech archivist and historian Bohumil Navrátil (1870-1936). In his in-depth critical edition of the sources pertaining to the Olomouc Jesuits, Navrátil published numerous documents regarding the Pontifical seminary from the onset of its mission until 1590. In the original project, Navrátil intended to cover the period until the Moravian Estates' Insurrection, yet after the First World War he halted his editing work due to his involvement in the academic life of the new-born Czechoslovak Republic.<sup>30</sup> Despite Navrátil's systematic approach, whose results far eclipsed those of his predecessors, this edition cannot be considered exhaustive, since he was barred from accessing the Jesuit archives in Rome, allegedly "due to the disfavour of the Jesuit General Franz Wernz."<sup>31</sup> Among the most valuable documents discovered by Navrátil, there are the above-mentioned pleas of Pavlovský to obtain scholarships for his diocesan clergy.<sup>32</sup>

In 1923, as the result of extensive archival research, two volumes further explored the development and issues faced by the Olomouc Pontifical Seminary. The first tome was devoted to the life and deeds of Gregory XIII, penned by the famous Austrian historian Ludwig von Pastor.<sup>33</sup> The thorough investigation pursued by Pastor did not deal directly with the Olomouc Seminary, yet it highlighted several primary sources regarding its

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<sup>30</sup> In 1920 he was nominated the first dean of the Philosophical Faculty of the newly established university of Brno, and later in 1927 rector. Martin Vonásek 'Bohumil Navrátil,' Tomáš Borovský (ed.), *Historici na brněnské univerzitě. Devět portrétů* (Brno: Archiv města Brno, 2008), p. 9–33.

<sup>31</sup> "pro nepřítel generála jezuitů Františka Wernze." Drímal does not provide any reference to this statement. Jaroslav Drímal, 'Archivář Bohumil Navrátil,' *Sborník archivních prací*, 21/1 (1971): 545–561, especially 551.

<sup>32</sup> Bohumil Navrátil, *Jesuité Olomouctí za Protireformace. Akty a listiny z let 1558–1619, vol. I 1558–1590* (Brno: 1916), pp. XVII–XVIII, 179–188, 203, 207–220, 227–230, 294–296, 301–303.

<sup>33</sup> Ludwig Pastor, *Geschichte der Papste sei dem Ausgang des Mittelalters. Gregor XIII. (1572–1585)* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1923), pp. 178, 280, 685, 694–696.

notable position in the grand-strategy of the long and fruitful Pontificate of Gregory XIII. The significance of Pastor's efforts lies in the verbatim quote or precise reference to the archival sources (stored in the Vatican,<sup>34</sup> Propaganda Fide archives or elsewhere)<sup>35</sup> such as the students' list of the students enrolled from the seminary foundation until the first visitation conducted by Propaganda in 1624.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, Pastor was aware of the findings of the Finnish Historical expedition to Rome, including them in his treatise.<sup>37</sup>

In the same year, the Czech archivist Hynek Kollmann (1864-1938) produced the first volume of a groundbreaking critical edition of sources collected in the rich archives of the Congregation de Propaganda Fide.<sup>38</sup> Contrary to Navrátil, Kollmann's inquiry had been perceived by the ecclesiastical authorities as crucial for the process of recatholicisation of Czechoslovakia, with whom the Holy See was attempting to re-establish diplomatic ties.<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately, since Kollmann was the sole member of the Czech Historical Expedition to Rome in charge of exploring and copying Propaganda Fide's

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<sup>34</sup> Avviso di Roma of July 22, 1579, [then stored in] Urb. 1047 p. 243, Vatican Library. Pastor, *Geschichte der Papste*, p. 280.

<sup>35</sup> "Il giorno di S. M. Maddalena visitò [Gregory XIII] il collegio Inglese et fu recitata fi una oratione a S. S latina et molto dotta con alcuni versi latini bellissimi, al qual collegio s' e mostrato molto liberale havendoli sin ad hora fatto conferire 300 ducati il mese, et veramente S. Stà merita in questa grandissima laude come in molte altre parti rare, che ha eretti dieci collegi in varie parti del mondo, cioè: uno in Fiandra, uno in Boemia, uno in Prussia, uno in Vienna et uno in Olmutz, et dieci qua in Roma, nelli quali spende ogni anno più di 40 mille ducati d'oro." Giovanni Antonio Odescalchi to the Duke of Mantua, July 25, 1579, Gonzaga Archives, Mantua. Pastor, *Geschichte der Papste*, p. 280.

<sup>36</sup> "Catalogus alumnorum collegii Olmucensis" [from Gregory XIII down to 1624, then stored in], Visite, 1, p. 17 et seq., Propaganda Archives, Rome. Pastor, *Geschichte der Papste*, p. 178.

<sup>37</sup> Federico Zuliani, 'L'expédition historique finlandaise à Rome (1900-1915) e la storiografia italiana novecentesca,' in Andrea Meregalli, Camilla Storskog (eds.), *Bridges to scandinavia* (Milano: di/segna, 2016), pp. 157-169.

<sup>38</sup> Ignatii Kollmann, *Acta Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide Res Gestas Bohemicas Illustrantia. Tom. I. Pars I. 1622-1623* (Pragae: Typis Gregerianis, 1923), pp. 2, 52-53, 299, 305.

<sup>39</sup> The Cardinal prefect Mieczysław Halka-Ledóchowski, persuaded by the diplomatic efforts of the Land Marshall of Bohemia, Jiří Kristián prince of Lobkowitz, opened the doors of Propaganda's archives and wished Kollmann "abundant success in the work, done certainly for the good of the Roman Church (hojně zdaru v práci, konané zajiště pro dobro církve římské)." Zdenek Kristen, 'Hynek Kollmann: 31 cervence 1864 - † 22. cervna 1938,' *Zprávy českého zemského archivu*, 9 (1946): 5-52, here 13, without reference.

sources (1890-93, 1899-1901, 1902-1903)<sup>40</sup> his declining health and familiar problems endangered such a monumental edition plan, which could not progress after the year 1624 and was completed posthumously by Antonín Haas.<sup>41</sup> Undoubtedly, the most remarkable result of Kollmann's edition has been the publication of the 1624 visitation of the Olomouc seminary, overseen by the nuncio Carlo Caraffa and handled by the Olomouc canon Johannes Ernst Plateis.<sup>42</sup>

In the midst of the Second World War, the Russian emigré in the Czech Republic Antonín Vasiljevič Florovskij (1884-1968), following the path traced by Evgenij Šmurlo (1854-1934),<sup>43</sup> conducted extensive research on the Jesuit attempts to reunite the Orthodox Church to Rome, analysing also the function of the Olomouc Pontifical seminary in these missionary efforts to evangelise Eastern Europe.<sup>44</sup> Regrettably, while conducted with utmost meticulousness, Florovskij's study was animated by a spirit of Great-Russian nationalism, often imposing a narrative that did not match with the historical findings.<sup>45</sup> In this sense, instead of underlying the richness of the Czech-Russian cultural relations, as expected by the author, this volume reveals the obstacles met by the Jesuits in propagating the Catholic faith, and the opportunistic behaviour of numerous non-Catholic students, who attended the Olomouc seminary without renouncing the Orthodox rite. However, by providing additional details to the biographies of the seminary's Eastern European students (often known only by their name in the 1624 students' list), Florovskij's work constitutes a landmark for understanding the development of the Olomouc Seminary.

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<sup>40</sup> Jaroslav Pánek, 'Český archivár v Ríme. Hynek Kollmann jako cestovatel, pozorovatel a společník,' *Paginae historiae - sborník Národního archivu / Praha - Národní archiv*, 31/2 (2023): 191-222, here 194.

<sup>41</sup> Ignatii Kollmann, *Acta Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide Res Gestas Bohemicas Illustrantia. Tomus II. 1623-1624* (Pragae: Statní Pedagogické Nakladatelství, 1954), pp. 101-116, 117, 119-154, 176-177, 302-303, 313-314, 324, 340-342.

<sup>42</sup> Including the students' list already mentioned by Pastor.

<sup>43</sup> Evgenij Francevič Šmurlo, *Kurie a pravoslavný východ v letech 1609-1654. Rimská kurija na ruskom pravoslavnom vostokě v 1609-1654 godach = Le saint siège et l'Orient orthodoxe Russe 1609-1654* (Praha: Orbis, 1928).

<sup>44</sup> Antonín Vasiljevič Florovskij, *Cestí jesuité na Rusi: jesuité české provincie a slovanský východ* (Praha: Nakladatelství Vysehrad, 1941), pp. 10-14, 46-66, 74-95.

<sup>45</sup> Josef Saur, 'A. V. Florovskij (1884-1968),' *Slovanský Přehled, Review for Central and Southeastern European History*, 91/1 (2005): 131-146.

After the war, the historians living under the Communist regimes were barred from undertaking research on this topic by ideological obstructions, whilst the sources stored in Eastern and Central European archives became virtually inaccessible to Western scholars. Therefore, the main contributions were issued by the Roman Catholic institutions supervising the Olomouc Pontifical seminary, namely the Congregation de Propaganda Fide and the Society of Jesus. On the occasion of the 350th anniversary of its foundation, the former published its first comprehensive historiographical account.<sup>46</sup> In two articles, the Verbite missionary Ralph M. Wiltgen, author of a famous eyewitness account of the Second Vatican Council,<sup>47</sup> dealt with the Pontifical seminaries placed under Propaganda jurisdiction in 1622 (including that one of Olomouc).<sup>48</sup> Although the destiny of this seminary is therein merely sketched, Wiltgen was the first historian, supported by archival sources,<sup>49</sup> to describe its suppression, decided by Benedict XIV in 1741.<sup>50</sup>

The second institution that governed the Olomouc Seminary, the Society of Jesus, gave two crucial contributions to its historiography. The Hungarian emigré, László Lukács, a pivotal figure in numerous research

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<sup>46</sup> Josef Metzler O.M.I., Propaganda's archivist, coordinated the multi-volume project *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide memoria rerum*, which appeared fifty years after the failed attempt to publish the first official history of Propaganda Fide in 1922 (the 300th anniversary of the Congregation) designed by the Cardinal Prefect Jan Van Rossum. On the life of this Cardinal, actively engaged in the recatholicisation of Scandinavia, cfr. Vefie Poels, Theo Salemink and Hans de Valk (eds.), *Life with a Mission. Cardinal Willem Marinus van Rossum C. Ss. R. (1854-1932)* (Nijmegen: Trajecta, 2010).

<sup>47</sup> Ralph M. Wiltgen, *The Rhine flows into the Tiber: a history of Vatican II* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1967).

<sup>48</sup> Ralph M. Wiltgen, 'Propaganda is placed in charge of the Pontifical Colleges,' in J. Metzler (ed.), *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide Memoria Rerum. 1622-1972. vol. I. 1622-1700* (Roma-Freibuerg-Wien: Herder, 1971), pp. 483-505.

<sup>49</sup> Indeed, on the eve of the Communist coup d'état of Czechoslovakia, Václav Nespör, in his *Dejiny University olomoucké* (Olomouc: Národní výbor hlavního města Olomouce, 1947), mentioned, *inter alia*, the termination of the seminary, quoting the Papal breve of 6/2 1740 (p. 161, note 17). This reference is indeed problematic (as others in Nespör's text), since Benedict XIV had not been elected then.

<sup>50</sup> Ralph M. Wiltgen, 'Supervision of Pontifical Colleges by the Evangelization Congregation,' in J. Metzler (ed.), *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide Memoria Rerum. 1622-1972. vol. II 1700-1815* (Roma-Freibuerg-Wien: Herder, 1973), pp. 236-247.

projects of the Jesuit Institutum Historicum of Rome,<sup>51</sup> published two valuable articles dealing with the foundation and background of the Olomouc Pontifical Seminary in 1954 and 1955.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, throughout his long career, Lukács edited several volumes of sources related to Jesuit activities in Hungary (whose territories were under the seminary's oversight since its foundation) and the Austrian Jesuit Province (to whom the Olomouc college belonged until 1623).<sup>53</sup> The magnitude of these publication cannot be underestimated, since they not only shed additional light to the role of the Olomouc seminary in the missionary grand-design emerging then in the Catholic elites, yet also provided the academic community with the edition of numerous manuscripts previously unknown (as the result of the ban imposed on Navrátil).

The last two fundamental studies which focused on the Olomouc Pontifical Seminary were indeed published after the end of the Cold War, yet they were the result of years of research carried out in a completely different context. In 1990, Zdenek Hojda devoted one an article to the Nordic students of the Olomouc seminary, from its establishment to the revolt of the Moravian Estates (1619), when the Jesuits and their pupils were expelled from the region.<sup>54</sup> This contribution waited for many years in Hojda's drawer before resurfacing with the demise of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia.<sup>55</sup> In his study, complemented by 6 tables and 2 appendixes, Hojda made use of the state-of-the-art literature at his disposal. The article suffers from two major shortcomings: the impossibility to visit any archive outside Czechoslovakia diminish the historiographical value of the Olomouc students' list (appendix 1);

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<sup>51</sup> Lukács, who reached Rome in 1950, soon formed a group of work with his fellow emigrated confreres. Antal Molnár, 'La 'Scuola Ungherese di Roma:' Storici Gesuiti emigrati ungheresi nella Città Eterna dopo il 1945,' in Francesco Guida, Zoltán Turgonyi (eds.), *Italia e Ungheria tra pace e guerra fredda (1945-1955)* (Budapest: Research centre for the humanities, 2020), pp. 185-200.

<sup>52</sup> Lukács, 'Die Gründung des Wiener'; Lukács, 'Die nordischen papstlichen Seminarien'.

<sup>53</sup> Ladislaus Lukács (ed.), *Monumenta antiquae Hungariae [1550-1592]* (4 vols. Romae: Institutum historicum S.I., 1969-1987); Ladislaus Lukács (ed.), *Catalogi personarum et officiorum Provinciae Austriae S.I. [1551 - 1640]* (2 vols., Romae: Institutum Historicum S. I., 1978).

<sup>54</sup> Zdenek Hojda, 'Collegia Nordica v Olomouci a Braníevě 1578-1619,' *Acta Universitas Carolinae-Historia Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis*, XXX/1 (1990): 49-95.

<sup>55</sup> The same author admits in the article (pp. 50-51) that he begun it in 1976, as part of his university thesis, which was itself the continuation of a previous research on the Swedish students of the Olomouc seminary by Miloš Kouřil, 'Skandinávští studenti na olomoucké universitě v době předbělohorské,' *Sborník k dějinám moravského školství*, 2 (1971): 3-25.

the focus of the article is unclear, since the title<sup>56</sup> refers to the seminars in Olomouc and Braunsberg, while 5 out of 6 tables include also Vilnius, and the second appendix reports the list of the Scandinavian students in Prague. However, the impact of this work in the Czech historiography should not be underestimated, as it remains the most quoted work on the topic up to date.<sup>57</sup>

Two years later, the Norwegian historian Oskar Garstein (1924-1996)<sup>58</sup> wrote another study that focused (also) on the Olomouc Pontifical Seminary. After his theological studies, Garstein had resumed the research of the Scandinavian Historical Expeditions to Rome and harnessed the full potential of the thousands of copies and photostats gathered from various Roman archives by Prof. Oluf Kolsrud (1885-1945).<sup>59</sup> Garstein's efforts produced four ponderous, unsurpassed volumes on the Counterreformation in Scandinavia, the third of which was devoted to the Pontifical seminaries erected in Central and Northern Europe and the Scandinavian students enrolled there until the foundation of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide. For compiling a comprehensive list of the Scandinavian students at the Olomouc seminary,

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<sup>56</sup> Curiously, the term employed in the title, Collegium Nordicum, does not appear in contemporary sources; it seems to have been coined by the Czech historian Frantisek Kameníček, who twice defined the seminary "so-called collegium nordicum" (*tak zvané nordické collegium*), alas without any reference. Frantisek Kameníček, 'O vzniku prvních dvou kolejí jezuitských na Moravě,' *Sborník historický*, III (1885): 104-111, here 109; Frantisek Kameníček, *Zemské snemy a sjezdy moravské (1528-1628). Díl III a poslední* (Brno: 1905), p. 360.

<sup>57</sup> Martin Elbel, 'Utváření katolické konfesijní identity v Olomouci,' in Martin Elbel, Ondřej Jakubec (eds.), *Olomoucké Baroko* (Olomouc: Muzeum Umění, 2010), pp. 189-196, here 190.

<sup>58</sup> Gunnar Christie Wasberg, 'Oskar Garstein in memoriam,' *Signum*, 8 (1996). This unusual figure in the Scandinavian landscape, born in China from a missionary family, was not a prophet in patria. Garstein did not obtain any relevant position in the Norwegian academia, and only recently his research has been revived by his former pupil Henning Laugerud, *Reformasjon uten folk. Det katolske Norge i før- og etterreformatorisk tid* (Oslo: St. Olav bokhandel, 2018).

<sup>59</sup> Claes Gejrot, 'The Scandinavian Expeditions to Rome,' in Kirsi Salonen, Anna-Stina Hagglund and Claes Gejrot (eds.), *Scandinavia and the Vatican Archives. Papers from a Conference in Stockholm 14-15 October 2016* (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien (KVHAA), 2022), pp. 11-31. These expeditions took place in a period of virulent anti-Catholicism and anti-Jesuitism in the whole Scandinavia, cfr. Yvonne Maria Werner, 'The Catholic Danger': the Changing Patterns of Swedish Anti-Catholicism - 1850-1965,' *European Studies*, 13 (2013): 135-148; Jes Fabricius Møller and Uffe Østergaard, 'Lutheran Orthodoxy and anti-Catholicism in Denmark - 1536-2011,' *European Studies*, 13 (2013): 165-189; Ainur Elmgren, 'The Jesuit Stereotype: an Image of the Universal Enemy in Finnish Nationalism,' *European Studies*, 13 (2013): 191-205; Bernt T. Oftestad, 'Norway and the Jesuit Order: a History of anti-Catholicism,' *European Studies*, 13 (2013): 209-222.

Garstein consulted the sources of the *Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu*, insofar unavailable for the Czech historians. At the same time, prevented from accessing the Czech archives, Garstein had to rely on the secondary literature on the seminary, namely Navrátil and Kroess, and therefore could not add any valuable detail to their historical inquiries.

### New perspectives after the Velvet Revolution

The fall of the Czechoslovakian communist regime in 1989 brought about a paradigmatic shift in several fields, including the academic milieu. Concerning history, the first and most fruitful change created with the Velvet Revolution has been the full re-establishment of the Czech Historical Institute in Rome in 1994. This center of studies, as it has been outlined before, had been crucial for the development of numerous critical editions and studies until 1948, when it was closed by the Communists.<sup>60</sup> Once reopened, the institute found its home in the *Collegium Nepomucenum*, the seminary for the Bohemian priests founded by Pope Leo XIII in 1884 (originally as *Collegium Bohemicum*).<sup>61</sup> In the last thirty years, numerous Czech historians aiming to conduct research in the Roman archives and libraries (awarded with public scholarships) have found accommodation in its rooms. Among them can be cited Tomáš Parma, one of the most relevant figures involved in Early Modern Catholic studies, including the Olomouc Pontifical seminary. In his work on the Cardinal Francis of Dietrichstein and his links with the Roman Curia, Parma provided key information on the privilege obtained by Dietrichstein to use fifteen seminary students for his diocese, and the (failed) Propaganda attempts to revoke it.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Jaroslav Pánek, 'I primi venti anni dell'Istituto Storico Ceco di Roma: l'eredità di 177 anni di ricerca storica ceca negli archivi vaticani e italiani,' *Bollettino dell'Istituto Storico Ceco di Roma* 9 (2014): 13-33; Jaroslav Pánek, et alii, *Ad Fontes. Český historický ústav v Říme (1994 - 2014) v kontextu českého bádání v Itálii a Vatikánu v 19. - 21. století* (Praha-Roma: Historický ústav AV ČR, 2014).

<sup>61</sup> Tomáš Parma, *Dal Bohemicum al Nepomuceno. La cultura ceca e la formazione sacerdotale in un contesto di scontri nazionalisti e di coesistenza* (Roma-Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2011).

<sup>62</sup> Tomáš Parma, *Frantisek kardinál Dietrichstein a jeho vztahy k římské kurii. Prostředky a metody politické komunikace ve službách moravské církve* (Brno: Matice moravská, 2011), pp. 113-114, 231, 284-286, 304, 308.

The second remarkable transformation occurring in the former Eastern bloc in the 1990s has been the removal of political censorship and control over academic research projects. Therefore, international cooperation has been revived and allowed to deliver results without ideological biases. These coordinated research efforts have produced noteworthy outcomes, furthering the historiography on Central and Eastern Europe in the Early Modern era. Among these endeavours, the critical editions published by Alena Pazderová,<sup>63</sup> István György Tóth,<sup>64</sup> and the series *Acta Nuntiaturae Poloniae*<sup>65</sup> are indisputably of primary relevance. Similarly, behind the ambitious plan of Lenka Veselá to track the books plundered by the Swedish army in the Bohemian Lands during the Thirty Years War,<sup>66</sup> there is a successful partnership with the Scandinavian academics, as Peter Sjökvist.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, a greater academic integration of the Central European region has been supported by the CEEPUS network since 1993, while the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 opened up new mobility opportunities and financial resources for both domestic and international scholars.

Besides this institutional drive, there has been a genuine interest within the Czech academic community (and few notable foreign historians)<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Alena Pazderová, *Epistulae et acta nuntiorum apostolicorum apud imperatorem 1592–1628. Tomus I.: Epistulae et acta Caesaris Speciani 1592–1598, pars IV.–V., Januar 1595 – December 1595* (Prague: Archivum Nationale, MMXXII).

<sup>64</sup> István György Tóth (ed.) *Litterae missionariorum de Hungaria et Transilvania (1572-1717)* (5 vols., Roma-Budapest: Római Magyar Akadémia - Magyar Egyháztörténeti Enciklopédia Munkaközösség (METEM) - Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 2002-2008).

<sup>65</sup> Polska Akademia Umiejętności, "Acta Nuntiaturae Poloniae,"

<https://pau.krakow.pl/index.php/pl/wydawnictwo/publikacje-on-line/acta-nuntiaturae-polonae>.

<sup>66</sup> The Swedish Booty of Books from Bohemia and Moravia 1646-1648 Bibliographic and Informational Portal, <https://knizni-korist.cz/en/about-the-portal/>.

<sup>67</sup> Jonas Nordin, Gustavs Strenga, and Peter Sjökvist (eds.), *The Baltic Battle of Books Formation and Relocation of European Libraries in the Confessional Age (c. 1500–c. 1650) and Their Afterlife* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2023).

<sup>68</sup> Francesco Gui, *I gesuiti e la rivoluzione boema. Alle origini della guerra dei trent'anni* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1989); Paul Shore, *The Eagle and the Cross: Jesuits in Late Baroque Prague* (St.Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2002); Domenico Caccamo, 'La Propaganda fide, la chiesa boema e la tolleranza ad tempus di Valeriano Magni,' in Sante Graciotti, Jitka Křesálková (eds.), *Barocco in Italia, Barocco in Boemia: uomini, idee e forme d'arte a confronto* (Roma: Il Calamo, 2003), pp. 121-143; Alessandro Catalano, *La Boemia e la riconquista delle coscienze: Ernst Adalbert von Harrach e la Controriforma in Europa centrale (1620-1667)* (Roma: Edizioni di storia e Letteratura, 2005), translated into Czech in 2008.



towards the Catholic past of the Bohemian Lands, particularly with regards to the Society of Jesus. To date, this enthusiasm has resulted in two well-attended international conferences,<sup>69</sup> valuable critical editions,<sup>70</sup> countless articles and monographs, and ultimately several museum exhibitions.<sup>71</sup> The leading authorities in this booming historiographical field have been Anna Fechtnerová (who conducted research in the hostile communist atmosphere),<sup>72</sup> Ivana Cornejová (a crucial figure in the aftermath of 1989),<sup>73</sup> and Katerina Bobková-Valentová, (arguably the most prominent contemporary historian in the Bohemian Jesuit studies),<sup>74</sup> and, among the art historians, Michal Šroněk.<sup>75</sup> Notwithstanding these achievements, Jakub Zouhar has issued a gloomy forecast for this research area, endangered by the inclination of most students towards Contemporary history, and their decreasing competences to comprehend primary sources (mostly in Latin and German).<sup>76</sup>

This lay excitement for Catholic history was accompanied by the professional and unfeigned dialogue with ecclesiastical historians, and reinforced

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<sup>69</sup> Tomáš Slavický, 'Bohemia Jesuitica 1556-2006, mezinárodní konference Jezuité v českých zemích: Praha 25. - 27. dubna 2006,' *Hudební věda = Musicology = Musikwissenschaft*, 43/3 (2006); 331-333; Petronilla Cemus (ed.), *Bohemia Jesuitica 1556-2006* (2 vols., Praha: Univerzita Karlova v Praze, Karolinum, 2010); Historický ústav AV ČR, v. v. i., '400 anniversary provinciae Bohemiae Societatis Jesu 1623 – 1773 – 2023,' <https://www.hiu.cas.cz/udalosti/400-anniversary-provinciae-bohemiae-societatis-jesu-1623-1773-2023-5>

<sup>70</sup> Kateřina Bobková-Valentová (ed.), *Consuetudines. Assistentiae Germaniae I.* (Praha: Historický ústav AV ČR, v. v. i., 2011).

<sup>71</sup> Eva Novotná (ed.), *Čeští jezuité - cestovatelé a objevitelé. Katalog výstavy k 450 výročí příchodu jezuitů do Prahy.* Praha 21. 6. 2006 - 22. 9. 2006 (Praha: Geografická knihovna PpF UK, 2006); Kateřina Bobková-Valentová, Jarmila Hlaváčková, Hedvika Kuchařová (eds.), *Knihovna jezuitské koleje v Telči: katalog výstavy* (Praha: Historický ústav, 2020); Vlastivědné muzeum v Olomouci, "Chrám moudrosti a Symboly moudrosti představí počátky olomoucké univerzity 05. 10. 2023 – 11. 02. 2024," <https://www.vmo.cz/vystavy/232/chram-moudrosti-a-symboly-moudrosti-predstavi-pocatky-olomoucke-univerzity>.

<sup>72</sup> Anna Fechtnerová (ed.), *Rectores collegiorum Societatis Iesu in Bohemia, Moravia ac Silesia usque ad annum MDCCLXXXIII iacentum* (2 vols., Praha: NK, 1993); cfr. also Jakub Zouhar, 'Historical Research in the Czech Republic between 1974 and 2019 on the Pre-Suppression Society of Jesus,' *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*, 89/178 (2020 II): 467-498, especially 473-475.

<sup>73</sup> Ivana Čornejová, *Tovaryšstvo Ježíšovo. Jezuité v Čechách* (Praha : Mladá fronta, 1995); cfr. Also Zouhar, 'Historical Research,' 479-480.

<sup>74</sup> Kateřina Bobková-Valentová, *Každodenní život učitele a žáka jezuitského gymnázia* (Praha: Karolinum, 2006).

<sup>75</sup> Michal Šroněk, Katerina Horníčková (eds.), *Jesuit Art and Czech Lands, 1556-1729. Missionizing through the Arts* (Lanham-Boulder-New York-London: Lexington Books, 2023).

<sup>76</sup> Zouhar, 'Historical Research,' 495.

by the sympathetic attitude of the ecclesiastical hierarchies. This has greatly favoured the *désenclavement* of the studies on the Society of Jesus and the Congregation de Propaganda Fide, previously dominated by the religious members of these institutions.<sup>77</sup> An eloquent consequence of this new interaction between academia and the Catholic Church has been the opening in 1998 of the Archive of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (until 1908 known as the Inquisition),<sup>78</sup> and the full-accessibility for scientific purposes of other historical religious archives, which is nowadays granted without moral and confessional biases: indeed, the demand from the researchers has become so pressing that these institutes must be contacted months beforehand to consult a manuscript.<sup>79</sup>

This rapprochement has put an end to decades (if not centuries), of heated political and confessional debates, eventually remodelling the cultural memory of several nation-states that had shaped their identity on a virulent anti-Catholicism. In this sense, an invaluable contribution has been made by the European Union and its cultural heritage policy.<sup>80</sup> The emphasis on the common European values and tradition, while apparently unrelated to historical research, has nonetheless accelerated the process of overcoming the national historiographical paradigms. As in the case of the Czech Republic, the process of re-evaluation of traumatic (for the national consciousness) historical

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<sup>77</sup> An emblematic case is the above-mentioned volume of Giovanni Pizzorusso, published on the 400th anniversary of the Congregation de Propaganda Fide, which gathers 18 journal articles, conference proceedings and public lectures held and published throughout his long academic career devoted to the study of the Congregation. Andrea Trenta, 'Giovanni Pizzorusso, Propaganda Fide I: La congregazione pontificia e la giurisdizione sulle missioni,' *Folia Historica Bohemica*, 38/1-2 (2023): 145-148.

<sup>78</sup> Michaela Valente, 'Nuove ricerche e interpretazioni sul Sant'Uffizio a più di dieci anni dall'apertura dell'archivio,' *Rivista di storia della Chiesa in Italia*, 66/2 (2012): 569-592, here 570.

<sup>79</sup> Since the access is free of charge, these archives rely on copy services as additional sources of income (as in the period of the Historical expeditions taking place between the 19th and 20th century). In this sense, there is also an economic incentive to divulgate the content of these archives.

<sup>80</sup> Cfr., for instance, the purpose of the "European Heritage Label sites," introduced in 2013: "European Heritage sites are milestones in the creation of today's Europe. Spanning from the dawn of civilisation to the Europe we see today, these sites celebrate and symbolise European ideals, values, history and integration. [...] These sites bring the European Union and its citizens closer together. "European Heritage Label sites,"

<https://culture.ec.europa.eu/cultural-heritage/initiatives-and-success-stories/european-heritage-label>.

watersheds as the arrival of the Jesuit order in the country, or the battle of the White Mountain,<sup>81</sup> has been smoothed over by a new-found sense of belonging to the shared European household.<sup>82</sup> The repercussions of this revolutionary change of perspective to historical research have not unfolded yet in their entire magnitude, as the so-called Erasmus generation is still gradually attaining research positions in the various national academic communities.

## Conclusion

The aftermath of the Velvet Revolution has opened up unprecedented opportunities to conduct research on a topic, the Olomouc Pontifical Seminary, which until then suffered significantly from cultural barriers, economic hardships, ideological obstacles and political interferences, as it has been observed in the state-of-the-art review section.

Primarily, since the demise of Communism and the reunification of Europe, scholars have gained admission to virtually all European archives (lay and ecclesiastical). By contrast, as this article has demonstrated, the unavailability of archival sources had been the norm for almost but all the historians involved in the Olomouc Seminary. In this sense, future research could finally dare to resume and amend the critical editions ended abruptly with the death of their curators (Navrátil, Kollmann). There is also the occasion to consult sources merely hinted at in the previous literature (Kroess), while the time is probably ripe for compiling a comprehensive seminary students' list<sup>83</sup> that would go beyond the single national groups (Florovksij, Hojda, Garstein)

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<sup>81</sup> Tomás Knoz, 'The Phenomenon of the White Mountain in the Process of Modern Czech National and State Formation,' in Francesco Gui, Tomáš Parma, Andrea Trenta (eds.), *Santa Maria della Vittoria. Una testimonianza fondamentale della storia europea* (3 vols., Roma: Veat Tipografica, 2024), vol. 2, pp. 129-144.

<sup>82</sup> Jaroslav Pánek, 'Jsme všichni v Evropě na jedné lodi,' as quoted in James R. Palmitessa (ed.), *Between Lipany and White Mountain. Essays in Late Medieval and Early Modern Bohemian History in Modern Czech Scholarship* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2014), p. 39

<sup>83</sup> The edition of the Olomouc University *matriculae* provides the momentum for a similar venture, cfr. Libuše Spáčilová, Vladimír Spáčil (eds.), *Nejstarší matrika olomoucké univerzity / Die älteste Matrikel der Olmützer Universität (1576) 1590–1651* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 2016); Libuše Spáčilová, Vladimír Spáčil (eds.), *Matricula olomoucké univerzity Matricula der Olmützer Universität (1636–1637) 1652–1729* (2 vols., Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 2023).

or historical turning points (Kollmann). Ultimately, the possibility to visit both the Roman and Czech archives might result in unexpected archival findings and a breakthrough in stages of the Olomouc Seminary already extensively investigated (Lukács).

Secondly, the free mobility and the ample room for cooperation among European scholars finally allow scholars to explore intricate historical events and characters linked with more than one country, as it was the norm for the seminary's students and Central Europe in the Early Modern era. Following the virtuous example of Lenka Veselá, several obscure moments in the history of the seminary, as the fate of its students during the Estates' Insurrection or the Swedish occupation of Olomouc, could be illuminated by the joint-efforts of a multinational research team. Correspondingly, the relationship between the Olomouc Seminary and other Catholic educational institutions in Central and Eastern Europe, partially examined for the case of Hungary,<sup>84</sup> would benefit from an international approach.

Ultimately, the renewed historical interest in Early Modern Catholicism, the overcoming of confessional and political prejudices, and the feeling of a common European identity, could form the basis for long-term research projects on the Pontifical Olomouc Seminary. While previous research on this topic has been characterised by lack of international collaboration and excessive methodological individualisation (especially concerning the critical editions), in prospect, the involvement of various scholars from various European countries (integrated in the Erasmus and CEEPUS network) in the creation of a database/biographical dictionary of the seminary's professors and students, might be a feasible and advantageous initiative for all parties concerned.

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<sup>84</sup> Eszter Kovács, *"Légy cseheknek, pártfogója, magyaroknak szószólója..." Cseh–magyar jezsuita összefüggések a kezdetektől 1773-ig* (Budapest: Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, 2015).

# Historians and Politics: Hussite Warfare (1419–1434) in Czech Historiography (1850–1960)

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**Abstract:** The article outlines the historiographical context of the now-standard narrative regarding the genesis of Hussite warfare. František Palacký (1798-1876), the founding father of Czech historiography, formed the core of this narrative by focusing on the role of Jan Žižka of Trocnov (ca. 1360–1424), a genius military commander of the radical Taborite faction of Hussites. Žižka allegedly created an unprecedented way of war based on wagons and early firearms, advancing the art of war. Within the context of this narrative, Palacký also created a dichotomy between the military forces of the progressive Hussites and the conservative “feudal” crusaders. The paper further stresses the role of Czechoslovak Marxist historians of the 1950s, in particular Jan Durdík. The latter evolved Palacký’s thesis by stretching the dichotomy between crusaders and Hussites even further, in accordance with the political convictions of the day. Žižka’s army and other Hussite forces, whose military culture exhibited many commonalities with their enemies, were transformed into heralds of proto-communist ideals. The paper thus concludes that while the traditional narrative on Hussite warfare has its merits, it’s flawed by the politico-ideological motivations of its creators. Concomitantly, a holistic reevaluation of Hussite wars from an unbiased military-historical perspective is still a desideratum.

**Keywords:** Hussites, Medieval Warfare, Historiography, Political Convictions.

**Rezumat:** Articolul prezintă contextul istoriografic al narațiunii standard actuale privind geneza războiului hussit. František Palacký (1798-1876), părintele fondator al istoriografiei cehe a constituit nucleul acestei narațiuni, concentrându-se asupra rolului lui Jan Žižka din Trocnov (c. 1360–1424), un comandant militar al facțiunii radicale taborite a husiților. Žižka ar fi creat o modalitate de război fără precedent,

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bazată pe căruțe și arme de foc primitive, contribuind la progresul artei războiului. În contextul acestei narațiuni, Palacký a creat, de asemenea, o dihotomie între forțele militare ale husiților progresiști și cruciații conservatori „feudali”. Lucrarea subliniază în continuare rolul istoricilor marxiști cehoslovaci din anii 1950, în special al lui Jan Durdík. Acesta din urmă a dezvoltat teza lui Palacký, extinzând și mai mult dihotomia dintre cruciați și husiți, în conformitate cu convingerile politice ale vremii. Armata lui Žižka și alte forțe hussite, a căror cultură militară prezenta multe similitudini cu cea a inamicilor lor, au fost transformate în vestitori ai idealurilor proto-comuniste. Lucrarea concluzionează astfel că, deși narațiunea tradițională despre războaiele hussite are meritele sale, ea este viciată de motivațiile politico-ideologice ale creatorilor săi. În același timp, o reevaluare holistică a războaielor husite dintr-o perspectivă militar-istorică imparțială rămâne în continuare un deziderat.

**Cuvinte cheie:** condamnări politice; husiți; istoriografie; război mondial.

## **Introduction: The Traditional Narrative of the Hussite Warfare**

The Hussite movement is primarily remembered for its pivotal role in the religious affairs of Europe. It emerged in the early fifteenth century in the Kingdom of Bohemia, primarily as a response to perceived corruption and doctrinal issues within the Catholic Church. Jan Hus (1370-1415), a prominent Czech scholar and preacher, played a crucial role in this process by advocating for church reform, especially secular intervention in church affairs plagued by simony. Following Hus' execution for heresy in 1415, his followers, known as Hussites, intensified their demands for religious reform. The conflict escalated into the so-called Hussite Wars in 1419, marked by a series of military conflicts between various Hussite factions and Catholic forces (1419-1434).

The principles of Hussite beliefs are most clearly articulated in the so-called Four Articles of Prague, proclaimed in 1420. The first called for the freedom to preach the word of God, the second for communion in both kinds, the third prohibited a life of luxury and secular power for religious institutions, and the fourth demanded just punishment for all sinners, regardless of their social status. Despite these underlying principles, the Hussites were not a monolithic movement. The various groupings are

conventionally divided into three main factions: 1) moderate forces around the kingdom's capital of Prague, 2) a heterogeneous collection of nobility and towns in eastern Bohemia known as the Orebiters, and 3) a socially and religiously radical group – the Taborites.<sup>1</sup>

It was the latter group that established an egalitarian commune on the hill of Tábor in southern Bohemia, named after its biblical counterpart. Taborites sought a more radical reform of the Church and society, advocating for a return to apostolic poverty and communal property ownership. In addition to these radical social and religious reforms, the military forces of the Taborites are conventionally acknowledged by many as innovators of warfare.

At the heart of the story about the genesis of Hussite warfare is the Taborite military captain, Jan Žižka of Trocnov (ca. 1360–1424).<sup>2</sup> When Pope Martin V (1369–1431) declared a crusade against the Hussites in 1420, Žižka had under his command only amateur forces composed of farmers and urban poor, mostly fighting on foot. Standing against them were the heavily equipped and well-mounted nobility of Catholic Bohemia, as well as international crusading forces. Consequently, Žižka's people and many other Hussite groups of similar backgrounds stood little chance in an open-field battle, where the crusaders could effortlessly shatter and overrun the heretics.

To level the odds, the renowned captain conceived an ingenious plan. He proposed reinforcing the humble peasant wagons—a mainstay of armies since ancient times—with additional wooden and metallic elements, transforming them into a kind of defensive battle platform. Furthermore, by chaining these wagons together, the Taborites created a structure resembling a fortified city, a so-called wagon-fort. Unlike a castle or a fortress, the wagon-fort had the option of strategic mobility, as it could be disassembled and moved to a different place.

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<sup>1</sup> Recent summary listing foundational literature on the topic may be found in: František Šmahel, 'The Hussite Revolution (1419–1471)', in Jaroslav Pánek et al (eds), *A History of the Czech Lands* (Prague: Karolinum Press, 2018), pp.159–183.

<sup>2</sup> The following narrative on the genesis and main features of Hussite warfare can be found in many authoritative textbooks on medieval military history, with one of the most succinct descriptions available in Clifford J. Rogers (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of Medieval Warfare* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press), pp. 193–199.

Within the security of a wagon-fort, the Taborites no longer feared the overwhelming numbers of the crusaders or the might of their heavy cavalry forces. Fighting from atop these fortified vehicles, they could effectively use weapons converted from farming tools, such as the threshing flail—an instrument familiar to Žižka's fighters throughout their lives. Moreover, the town-dwellers, who constituted a significant portion of the Taborite forces, were accustomed to early firearms. The wagon-fort, much like the towers and walls of their native towns, provided a similar combat environment for them. The defensive power of the wagon-fort was thus capable of significantly impeding any determined attack, whether on foot or on horseback.

The outcome of Žižka's military experiment was a remarkable string of victories. The rest of the Hussite factions soon followed the trend and adopted the wagon-based warfare championed by the Taborites and their captain. While the crusaders managed to secure a few minor victories, in most major battles spanning from 1420 until 1431, the Hussites almost always emerged victorious. A pinnacle of the crusaders' defeat was the Battle of Domažlice in 1431, during which the crusading army fled in panic before even engaging with the heretics.

The traditional narrative thus concludes that the Hussite conflict was a turning point in the art of war itself. The domination of the so-called feudal-chivalric style of warfare, centered on deploying cavalry forces, was over, at least in Central Europe. Instead, even the foremost adversaries of the Hussites, such as the German princes and the Hungarian kingdom, adopted the heretics' progressive combat methods, incorporating war-wagons into their own forces, which were militarily valuable in parts of Europe at least until the late seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For the use of wagon-forts during periods following the Hussite wars (1419–1434) see (among others): Brian Davies, 'Guliai-Gorod, Wagenburg, and Tabor Tactics in 16th–17th Century Muscovy and Eastern Europe', in Brian Davies (ed.), *Warfare in Eastern Europe, 1500–1800* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 93–108; Dominik Tóth, '„...Isten irgalma sajnos tovaszállt.” Szekérvár alkalmazása Győr mellett?' [...The Mercy of God Unfortunately Flew Away." The Application of Wagon Fort at Győr?], *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, 134/1 (2021): 229–246.



### The Genesis of the Traditional Narrative: The Nationalist Period of Czech Historiography (1850s)

It's crucial to emphasize the scholarly context in which the traditional narrative surrounding the uniqueness of Hussite warfare originated and evolved throughout professional historiography. František Palacký (1798-1876) was the one who initially articulated the concept of Hussite military innovation, along with the contrast between the progressive Hussite forces and the conservative "feudal-chivalric" forces of the Crusaders. The founding father of Czech historiography argued that the Hussites represented a radical departure from the brute force approach of "medieval feudal combat," aligning more with the "scientific forms" of warfare present in classical antiquity. In fact, the combined arms of infantry, cavalry, and war-wagons that the Taborites under Žižka's leadership pioneered (and later Hussite forces perfected) heralded the more rational patterns of early-modern warfare.

Starting almost with nothing, the legendary captain slowly built up his humble field army to eventually defeat all the major surrounding powers of Christendom that greatly outnumbered his forces. Moreover, it was largely through Žižka's natural military talent and his sacrifices that he transformed the small and obscure Czech nation into one of the most bellicose actors in late medieval Europe. Writing from a nationalist perspective and basing his argument on the poor state of knowledge (as well as the assessment of) medieval warfare, Palacký attributed the military success of the Hussite movement to the technological innovations and genius of Jan Žižka of Trocnov. The father of Czech historiography, thus, laid the foundational narrative on the genesis of Hussite warfare.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> František Palacký, *Dějiny národu českého v Čechách a v Moravě. Dílu III. částka I.* [The History of the Czech nation in Bohemia and Moravia. First half of Part 3] (Prague: České Museum, 1850), pp. 536-542. On the foundational role of Palacký with regards to Hussite history see Petr Čornej, *Husitství a husité* [Hussitism and Hussites] (Prague: Karolinum Press, 2019), pp. 441-455. On the state of knowledge and poor reputation of medieval warfare within nineteenth century scholarship see: Malte Prietzel, 'Veränderungen in der spätmittelalterlichen Kriegführung', in Werner Paravicini et al (eds.), *Tannenberg – Grunwald – Žalgiris 1410: Krieg und Frieden im Späten Mittelalter* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012), pp.103-109.

## **Hussite Warfare and the Czechoslovak Marxist Historiography (1950s)**

Palacký's thesis on the progressiveness of Hussite warfare was accepted by subsequent Czech scholarship and spread among other European historians. However, it was the Marxist historians of 1950s Czechoslovakia who emphasized the dichotomy between the Crusaders and the Hussites in a strongly ideologically-driven narrative. A leading role in this respect was played by Jan Durdík's work, "*Husitské vojenství*" [The Hussite Art of War], published in 1953.<sup>5</sup> Despite the vague nature of Czech primary sources, Durdík and other historians of this period clearly understood the principle behind the Hussites' resounding military victories. While acknowledging the innovative use of technology and military tactics, the primary factor contributing to the Hussite movement's success lay elsewhere. According to Czechoslovak Marxist historiography, it was the distinct class structure of the opposing forces that played the most pivotal role.

According to Marxist historians, the crusader forces were primarily composed of mercenaries and conscripted peasants, under the command of influential feudal landowners. Consequently, morale and military discipline in the "feudal-chivalric" armies often hinged on the prospects of plunder, financial incentives, and the fear of punishment. On the other hand, the Hussites were led by lower nobility, with the majority of their forces comprised of poor urban and rural volunteers, essentially the proletariat. They fought a virtuous dual struggle: one against domestic feudal oppressors and another in defense of their homeland against foreign invaders. Unlike their morally bankrupt enemies—the Catholic Church, oppressive feudal regimes, and their servants—the field armies of the Hussites fought out of patriotic duty and for a vision of a future classless society. Czechoslovak Marxist historians thus perceived the Hussite forces as a medieval equivalent of a national communist army.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Jan Durdík, *Husitské vojenství. Druhé vydání*. [The Hussite Art of War. Second Edition] (Prague: Naše vojsko, 1954). Durdík's monograph had a widely read German language version published in 1962: Jan Durdík, *Husitisches Heerwesen* (Berlin: Deutscher Militärverlag, 1961).

<sup>6</sup> Durdík, *Husitské vojenství*, p. 14-44, 190-198. See also František Graus' (1921-1989) perspective on the matter in his review of Durdík's book. Due to his experience with the Second World War, Graus was a deeply committed Marxist at the time of the review: František Graus, 'Recense: *Husitské vojenství*' [Review of Hussite Art of War], *Historie a vojenství*, 4 (1953): 211-214. The review comments on the first edition of *Husitské vojenství* published in 1953.

Within the Soviet bloc, Czech historians were not alone in such perception of history. In neighbouring socialist Hungary, the 1973 work by Antal Fekete Nagy and Gábor Barta framed the so-called revolt of György Dózsa (ca. 1470-1514), taking place in 1514 within the Kingdom of Hungary, in a similar light.<sup>7</sup> A part of the crusading forces, originally assembled for an anti-Ottoman enterprise orchestrated by Archbishop Tamás Bakócz (1442-1521), rebelled against the order to demobilize and cancel the original war-plan. Led by Dózsa, probably a lower-ranking cavalry captain at that time, the rebels managed to score a few military victories but were ultimately defeated by royal forces by mid-July of 1514. Nagy and Barta conceptualized the rebels' motivation as stemming from the economic exploitation of peasants by greedy Hungarian nobility. Concomitantly, the armed struggle of Dózsa and his followers was lauded as a heroic, yet tragic instance of early class-conscious struggle.

### The Traditional Hussite-Crusader Dichotomy and Recent Revisionist Perspectives

The traditional narrative surrounding the genesis of Hussite warfare is thus largely rooted in the foundational work of the nationalist-era historian František Palacký and further elaborated by Jan Durdík's Marxist perspective. It is from the synthesis of these two authorities that we derive the now-standard dichotomy between the crusading forces and the Hussite warriors.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Barta Gábor – Fekete Nagy Antal, *Parasztháború 1514-ben* [The Peasant War of 1514] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1973).

<sup>8</sup> Since a significant portion of the source evidence was written in medieval Czech—an obscure source language for most of the international academia—the German version of Jan Durdík's monograph has been and still is of great interest to military historians abroad. Indeed, *Hussitisches Heerwesen* can be found among major military history monographs well into the 2000s. See, for example, the multiple references in the following works: Bert S. Hall, *Weapons and Warfare in Renaissance Europe: Gunpowder, Technology, and Tactics* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp. 248-249. Uwe Tresp, *Söldner aus Böhmen* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2004), pp. 22-31. János B. Szabó, 'A huszita hadviselés hatása és adaptációja Kelet-Közép-Európában' [The Impact and Adaptation of Hussite Warfare in East-Central Europe] in Attila Bárány – László Pószán (eds), „Causa unionis, causa fidei, causa

This dichotomy is based on three main premises:

1) The Hussite forces employed innovative military technology and methods of warfare, whereas the Catholics and Crusaders were more conservative and, by extension, ineffective.

2) The opposing forces had radically different social compositions and, consequently, military organizations.

3) The opposing camps were driven by divergent ideological imperatives, which, in turn, shaped the quality of morale among the respective adversaries.

However, recent research in the Czech Republic and elsewhere is gradually starting to deconstruct these three fundamental pillars of the dichotomy.

### **War-wagons, Wagon-forts and Early Firearms**

First and foremost, the primary role of Jan Žižka of Trocnov and the innovative approach to warfare based on war-wagons cannot be solely attributed to Žižka's military genius nor to the unique social conditions of the Taborite faction. Reinforced wagons used for defensive battles, manned by warriors armed with early firearms as well as traditional missile and hand-to-hand weapons, can be found in various military cultures across Latin Christendom, predating the Hussite wars.

At the Battle of Crécy in 1346, Edward III (1312–1377), King of England, deployed a defensive formation resembling a horseshoe for the English forces. The English army's wagons, along with additional carts captured during their campaign in France, formed a barricade protecting the flanks and rear of the army, leaving only a narrow front open. Each wagon, bound together by iron chains, was manned by archers. The wagons were reinforced with strong cloth to resist enemy crossbow quarrels. The English men-at-arms, engaging in hand-to-hand combat on foot, were positioned on the open narrow front facing the enemy. When the French attacked, these men-at-arms were supported by archers shooting from the wagons, and an

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reformationis in capite et membris" *Tanulmányok a konstanzi zsinat 600. évfordulója alkalmából* [Studies on the Occasion of the 600th Anniversary of the Council of Constance] (Debrecen: Printart-Press Kft, 2014), pp. 432.

additional unit of archers hidden in a nearby wheat field sprang into action after the battle commenced. Matteo Villani (1283–1363), a chronicler of the period, even reported the English using a cannon (*bombarde*) to shoot into the French ranks and terrify their horses.<sup>9</sup>

By the end of the fourteenth century, primary sources increasingly describe the use of firearms mounted on wagons or specially designed carts. According to Jean Froissart (ca. 1337–1405), during the Battle of Beverhoudsveld in 1382, the army of Ghent deployed, among more traditional troops, “three or four small cannons, pointing forward, mounted on high carts ... with two or four wheels.”<sup>10</sup> The ensuing barrage from these wagon-mounted cannons caused havoc among the forces of Bruges and Count Louis of Male (1330–1384). In Italy, similar developments were occurring, albeit with regional variations. At the Battle of Castagnaro in 1387, the *Cronaca Carrarese* reports that a Veronese army deployed three very large carts (each cart allegedly holding 144 small guns) against their Paduan foes.<sup>11</sup> It thus appears that well before the outbreak of the Hussite wars, a series of military experiments involving wagons and firearms were already taking place.

However, the most important conflict to mention in the context of pre-Hussite warfare is the “Great War” (1409–1411) between the Polish-Lithuanian alliance and the Order of the Teutonic Knights. It is this war that formed the principal experience of large-scale military operations for warriors who would subsequently form the building blocks of both Hussite and Catholic forces. Mercenaries from Bohemia, in fact, took part on both sides of the conflict. According to the most credible Polish source – *Cronica conflictus* – the Battle of Grunwald (1410) was initiated by the forces of the Teutonic Order by firing salvoes from their cannons (*pixides*). In addition, once the majority of fighting was done and the Order’s forces started to retreat from the battlefield, they made “a rampart out of their wagons” (*ex curribus quoddam propugnaculum facientes*). The Czech units that partook

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<sup>9</sup> Maurizio Campanelli, ‘The Anonimo Romano at his Desk: Recounting The Battle of Crécy in Fourteenth-Century Italy’, *The Medieval Chronicle* 9 (2014): 33–77. Campanelli’s study makes use of newly found Italian eye-witness reports on the battle and reconciles them with the well-known narratives from English and French sources.

<sup>10</sup> Hall, *Weapons and Warfare in Renaissance Europe*, p. 49.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 47.

during this battle had thus gained ample combat experience with both artillery fire and a wagon-fort.<sup>12</sup>

Last but not least, Czech scholars Alena Černá and Petr Čornej, who worked on Czech manuscripts since the 1980s, have proven that the primary source evidence of Žižka's early battles such as Nekmír (1419) and Sudoměř (1420), from which the foundational historiography reconstructed Žižka's novel tactics, were written long after the Hussite wars during the reign of Jagellonian kings of Bohemia (1471-1526). The intention of the anonymous author (who finished his work in the closing years of the fifteenth century at the earliest) was to create a series of didactic texts on warfare during his own time period rather than compile a factual chronicle on the Hussite wars.

The texts are, in principle, fictive accounts of Žižka's military encounters that borrow elements from older traditions but ultimately serve as a kind of "best practices" for Czech military commanders of the Jagellonian period. Rather than speaking from an ego-perspective, the anonymous created a pseudo-historical narrative that lends itself credibility through the authority of Jan Žižka, who was – in the collective memory of that time – considered not only a legendary military commander but also a religious saint.

Furthermore, it appears that instead of being a desperate invention of badly equipped Taborites, war-wagons (and concomitantly wagon-forts) were likely present in the Bohemian royal army during the rule of King Wenceslas IV of Luxembourg (1361–1419). Peter Čornej provides a strong argument in this regard, highlighting the work of Konrad of Kyeser (1366-1405) in particular. An inventor with clear connections to the Bohemian court, Kyeser depicted two types of war-wagons in his illustrated work *Belifortis* (1410). The first type is a depiction of an open fighting platform for infantry.

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<sup>12</sup> Sven Ekdahl, 'Quellenaussagen über die Taktik in der Tannenbergsschlacht', in Werner Paravicini et al (eds.), *Tannenberg – Grunwald – Žalgiris 1410: Krieg und Frieden im Späten Mittelalter* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012), p. 290 note 30, p. 297 note 69. On presence of warriors from Bohemia in the "Great War" see Uwe Tresp, 'Söldner aus den Ländern der Böhmisches Krone in den Kriegen zwischen dem Deutschen Orden und PolenLitauen zu Beginn des 15. Jahrhunderts', in Werner Paravicini et al (eds.), *Tannenberg – Grunwald – Žalgiris 1410: Krieg und Frieden im Späten Mittelalter* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012), pp. 135–158.

The second represents an enclosed fortified vehicle with internally installed cannons.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the traditional argument that the Taborites, under Žižka's leadership, invented a whole new approach to warfare *de novo* cannot be sustained based on period evidence. Most probably, some innovations in warfare and incremental improvements in military technology took place during the Hussite wars. Yet, the extent of this evolution remains obscure due to the paucity of primary sources. At best, one could conclude that the Hussite coalition forces used wagons and firearms in defensively styled encounters. However, they were neither the first nor the only military culture to do so. Additionally, Hussites were not limited to defensive wagon-based tactics, as there is sporadic but credible evidence of offensive action by the heretics' infantry and cavalry units alike.<sup>14</sup>

### Knights, Cavalry Forces and the Issue of Social Composition

The second premise of the dichotomy between Hussite and Crusading forces is connected to the differing social compositions of the respective armies and, consequently, troop composition. The stereotypical image of Hussite forces painted by formative historians, such as Palacký and Durdík, is that of farmers and urban poor who fought mostly on foot with sub-optimal equipment and military experience. In contrast, the crusaders enjoyed superiority in both the numbers and quality of their cavalry forces.

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<sup>13</sup> Petr Čornej, *Jan Žižka: život a doba husitského válečníka* [Jan Žižka: The Life and The Times of a Hussite Warrior] (Praha: Paseka, 2019), especially pp. 106-110, 181-189, 199-219, 535-541. On *Belifortis* and related manuscripts depicting period war-machines see: Rainer Leng, *Ars belli. Deutsche taktische und kriegstechnische Bilderhandschriften und Traktate im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert*, (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2002). While the two-wheeled field artillery made the "gun-wagons" somewhat redundant by the end of the fifteenth century, they still appear in visual and written sources of Central European origin, at least until the beginning of the early sixteenth century. Compare: Hall, *Weapons and Warfare in Renaissance Europe*, pp. 105-133, 157-200.

<sup>14</sup> See a summary of source evidence in: Konrad Ziółkowski, *Husyckie wojska polne. Kształt i organizacja armii* [The standing armies of the Hussites: their structure and organization] PhD Dissertation, Adam Mickiewicz University. Poznań, 2015, pp. 193-223 (<http://hdl.handle.net/10593/13944>)

However, the retinues of Czech Hussite barons and their knights played a significant role in numerous military engagements against the Crusader forces. The cavalry units, particularly those of the lords of Kunštát and Poděbrady, fought alongside Žižka and other Hussite forces on many occasions. These noble cavalymen and their followers often bore resemblances to their Catholic counterparts in several respects. The Hussite nobility and their followers were organized in a modified form of classic feudo-vassallic ties. They also engaged in traditional “chivalric” combat, being well-armoured and mounted, wielding lances and swords from horseback.<sup>15</sup> However, this represented a method of combat and military organization that was derided by both Palacký and Durdík as archaic, further challenging the overarching narrative of socially progressive and militarily innovative Hussites.

### **Ideological Imperatives**

The final pillar of the dichotomy relates to the ideological imperatives that influenced the morale of the opposing forces. Palacký perceived the entire Hussite movement as a proto-democratic force, breaking away from the “medieval” dogmas that plagued the Catholic forces. According to Palacký, the Czech Hussites possessed unparalleled *élan*, born from their struggle for socio-political emancipation. From his perspective, it was only logical that an army of national volunteers would defeat the forces of individualistic feudal knights and conscripted peasants on almost every occasion.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. pp. 23-96, 168-192. In connection with the battle of Kutná Hora (1421), the Chronicle of Lawrence of Březová (composed around the late 1430s) mentions that the Prague urban militia and Žižka's own forces fought side by side with other Czech barons, lords, and knights – see Thomas A. Fudge, *Origins of the Hussite Uprising The Chronicle of Lawrence of Březová (1414–1421)* (London: Routledge, 2022), pp.253-254. As evidence from later period shows, cavalry units – both mobile light cavalry and more heavily armored men-at-arms alike, could easily be integrated in a wagon-based system of warfare. See Samuel Beňa, ‘Naučení o šikování jízdních, pěších i vozů z pera českého rytiera Václava Vlčka z Čenova (cca 1440 – 1500) ako vzácny prameň pre skúmanie taktiky jazdeckých oddielov na sklonku stredoeurópskeho stredoveku’ [„Instructions on the battle order of cavalry, infantry and battle wagons“ written by the Czech Knight, Václav Vlček from Čenov, as a rare source for exploring the tactics of the cavalry units in late medieval Central Europe.] *Vojenská história*, 3 (2020): 19-32.



Similarly, Durdík and other Marxist historians of the 1950s argued for the moral superiority of the Hussites over their opponents. Fighting as liberators of the oppressed, the Hussites continually sacrificed their lives and limbs for a vision of a classless society. This, in turn, helped them exhibit extraordinary courage. On the contrary, the timid and less cohesive armies of the crusaders were ruled by greedy privileged classes, and within the Catholic forces, military discipline and cohesion were not voluntarily self-imposed but rather coerced through the fear of punishment.<sup>16</sup>

However, these explanations fall apart when confronted with credible primary sources. Leading scholars on Hussite mentalities reveal that both groups primarily saw themselves as *milites Christi* – that is, God’s warriors. The issue of religious reform and life-after-death took the forefront in the Hussite manifestoes and founding charters of their military-political unions. The secular agenda of social justice and an egalitarian community, while present in sources pertaining to some of the radical factions, always took a secondary place.

While both the Hussites and the Catholics regarded themselves as God’s warriors, there were also marked differences. The Hussites saw their struggle as an effort to form an ideal Christian community that would please the eye of God and thus ultimately lead to the salvation of Christian souls. In contrast, the Catholic forces legitimized their crusades on the basis of the unity of the Church and the protection of believers from heresy – a spiritual danger that would lead to eternal damnation.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Palacký, *Dějiny národu českého* III, pp. 536-542; Durdík, *Husitské vojenství*, pp. 63-69; Graus, ‘Recense: Husitské vojenství’, p. 212.

<sup>17</sup> For a state of the art on this issue see Zdeněk Beran, ‘Válka a násilí jako sociální kód české pozdně středověké šlechty’ [Warfare and Violence as a Social Code amongst the Bohemian Late Medieval Nobility] *The Czech Historical Review* 2 (2017): 319-345. Similar conclusions can be drawn from the “peasant revolt” of the crusading leader György Dózsa (1514), mentioned earlier. As recent Hungarian historiography points out, the rebellion was motivated by religious convictions hand-in-hand with disaffection with noble political leadership, rather than economic exploitation and class struggle. See Norbert C. Tóth – Tibor Neumann (eds.), *Keresztesekből lázadók. Tanulmányok 1514 Magyarországról* [From Crusaders to Rebels: Studies on Kingdom of Hungary in 1514] (Budapest, MTA BTK, 2015).

## **Conclusion**

The traditional narrative surrounding the uniqueness of Hussite art of war has been significantly influenced not only by the available primary source material but also by the political and ideological inclinations of foundational historians. While acknowledging the enduring value in the works of both František Palacký and Jan Durdík for contemporary scholarship, it is crucial to recognize the impact of their political convictions on the semi-historical narrative they constructed about the origin of Hussite warfare. This influence, coupled with their efforts, contributed to the creation of an exaggerated dichotomy between the allegedly progressive Hussite military forces and the conservative Catholic powers.

Looking back, one might be inclined to dismiss these foundational works as reflective of their respective historical contexts. However, the enduring influence of their narratives is apparent in the fact that elements of the traditional story regarding the genesis of Hussite warfare, featuring war-wagons, Jan Žižka of Trocnov, and the Taborites, endured for almost a century and a half with some variations. In fact, although recent scholarship has eroded and re-contextualized some of the elements of the traditional narrative, military historians and medievalists alike still need to reevaluate the Hussite wars from an unbiased, holistic perspective.

# The Origin of Transylvanian Romanians in Saxon Historiography (1848-1938)

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**Abstract:** The paper aims to explore how the medieval history of Romanians in Transylvania is reflected in the Saxon historiography of the second half of the nineteenth century and the first four decades of the twentieth century. In order to understand the motivations behind the different historiographical perspectives and aspects related to the political and social context of Transylvania, the text contains brief references to a number of works written in different historical and social contexts, with very different authors, methodologies, presuppositions and results. Without claiming to provide an exhaustive description of the reception of this theme in Saxon historiography, the article highlights various aspects of the way in which the theme of the origins of the Transylvanian Romanians has been treated by Saxon historians, drawing attention to the heterogeneous nature of the literature devoted to this theme in the Saxon area. Finally, my research aims at answering the question of the existence of a unitary (or at least dominant) perspective in Saxon historiography on the history of the Transylvanian Romanians in the Middle Ages, interrogating the particularities of such an approach and trying to identify its position within the inter-ethnic historiographical debate on the origin of the Transylvanian Romanians.

**Keywords:** historiography, immigrationist theory, medieval studies, ethnic history.

**Rezumat:** Lucrarea îşi propune să exploreze modul în care istoria medievală a românilor din Transilvania se reflectă în istoriografia saxonă din a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea şi din primele patru decenii ale secolului al XX-lea. Pentru a înţelege motivaţiile din spatele diferitelor perspective istoriografice şi aspectele legate de contextul politic şi social al Transilvaniei, textul conţine scurte referiri

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la o serie de lucrări scrise în contexte istorice și sociale diferite, cu autori, metodologii, presupuneri și rezultate foarte diferite. Fără a pretinde că oferă o descriere exhaustivă a receptării acestei teme în istoriografia săsească, articolul evidențiază diverse aspecte ale modului în care tema originilor românilor din Transilvania a fost tratată de istoricii sași, atrăgând atenția asupra naturii eterogene a literaturii dedicate acestei teme în zona germană. În final, cercetarea își propune să răspundă la întrebarea privind existența unei perspective unitare (sau cel puțin dominante) în istoriografia săsească asupra istoriei românilor din Transilvania în Evul Mediu, interogând particularitățile unei astfel de abordări și încercând să identifice poziția acesteia în cadrul dezbaterii istoriografice interetnice privind originea românilor din Transilvania.

**Cuvinte cheie:** istorie etnică; istoriografie; studii medievale; teoria imigraționistă.

The continuity of Romanian settlement in Transylvania from the Roman period to the present has been a commonplace in Romanian historical literature ever since the seventeenth century, when Moldavian chroniclers emphasize the Latin origin of the Romanians, whom they identify with the descendants of the colonists brought by the Roman emperors to Dacia. Beyond its purely epistemic value, the theory of continuity has often been invoked to legitimise various political claims made by the Romanians. If Moldavian and Wallachian chroniclers and intellectuals implicitly valued this theory in order to emphasise the noble (imperial) origins of the Romanians, thereby trying to strengthen the reputation of the voievodal courts of Iași or Bucharest, in Transylvania, the issue acquired an immediate pragmatic significance: the antiquity of the Romanians in the region and the prestige associated with Roman imperial origins, considered illustrious at the time, would be exploited – starting with the generation of the Școala Ardeleană – for political purposes. In the second “*Supplex Libellus Valachorum*”, the famous memorial submitted to the Viennese imperial court in 1792 by the two bishops of the Romanians of Transylvania, it is explicitly stated – for the first time in an official document of such importance – that the primacy of the Romanians’ settlement in the region should be the basis for the imperial authorities’ recognition of their right to be counted among the official nations of Transylvania, alongside the Hungarians, Saxons and Szeklers. Accepted until then by the main historians of the time, the theory of continuity found more and more opponents,

especially among Austrian and Hungarian historians and intellectuals, who put forward the idea of a Wallachian migration from the south of the Danube in the first centuries of the second millennium (it is important, however, to mention that there is no unanimity among any of these historiographies in disputing the continuity of the settlements of Romanians in Transylvania).<sup>1</sup> This trend culminated in the theory of the Austrian Eduard Robert Roesler, who published his work “*Romänische Studien*” in Vienna in 1871.<sup>2</sup> His book, based on the hermeneutics of ancient and Byzantine sources and on philological arguments, became the main landmark of pro-immigrationist historiography in the following decades. The discussion of continuity extends to this day, and political undertones can be discerned in the positions taken by historians on the subject.

The Saxon historians of the second half of the nineteenth century and the first four decades of the following century do not avoid the subject of continuity, which they approach from different perspectives, depending both on their research interests and on the political and social context of the time. Their contributions are, however, generally lacking in originality or, at any rate, a solid theoretical structure. Most of the time, they consist of positions which recycle previously formulated points or punctual additions to arguments already outlined in the historiography of the problem.<sup>3</sup> The relatively small number of articles devoted specifically to this subject indicates the relatively low interest of Saxon historiography in the question of the origins of the Transylvanian Romanians, which – as Professor Adinel Dincă observed in a

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<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive – though apologetic – account of the history of the debate, see Nicolae Stoicescu, *O falsă problemă istorică – discontinuitatea poporului român pe teritoriul strămoșesc* [A False Historical Question - the Discontinuity of the Romanian People on the Ancestral Territory] (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 1993), especially, pp. 7-102.

<sup>2</sup> Eduard Robert Roesler, *Romänische Studien. Untersuchungen zur älteren Geschichte Rumäniens* (Leipzig: Druck von Duncker & Humboldt, 1871).

<sup>3</sup> In his article on Alexander Philippide's book “*Originea Românilor*” [The Origin of Romanians], the germanist Kart Kurt Klein calls the Saxon contributions to the history of discussion “dilettante attempts”: “Die Menge sächsischer Beiträge zur rumänischen Herkunftsfrage darf nicht zur überheblichen Annahme verleiten, dass sie etwa auf die Linie mit der Arbeit Philippides zu stellen seien. Das ist nicht entfernt der Fall. Es sind Dilettantenversuche; Philippide ist Berufsgelehrter, und einer der ersten seines Faches”, Karl Jurt Klein, “*Originea Românilor*” [“The Origin of Romanians”], in *Korrespondenzblatt des Vereins für siebenbürgische Landeskunde*, 51/6 (1928): 90-101, especially 101.

recent paper<sup>4</sup> – began to be of increasing interest to Saxon historians after the integration of Transylvania into the Greater Romania, without, however, becoming a very frequent subject in Saxon historical writing. Thus, it can be said that the contribution of Saxon historiography to the knowledge of the origins of the Transylvanian Romanians is directly proportional to the importance of the subject for Saxon historians. However, an analysis of the attitude of the Saxon intellectual elite towards this subject is not without epistemic value: a radiography of the positions of the main Saxon historians concerned with the Romanian question could reveal both aspects relating to inter-ethnic relations between the nations inhabiting Transylvania and the way in which the various historiographical discourses interact on a sensitive terrain, marked by deep rifts and strewn with numerous trouble spots. Last but not least, a survey of the Saxon historiography devoted to this topic provides an opportunity to reflect on the factors that influence the adoption of certain historiographical premises or theses.

An exhaustive exploration of Saxon historical literature from this period dealing with Romanian issues would be impossible within the scope of this paper. In the following lines, therefore, I shall confine myself to making some methodological observations on how the intentions behind the positions of Saxon historians in relation to the two conflicting theories about the settlement of Roman Dacia in the first centuries after the Aurelian retreat can be interrogated by selectively reviewing some of the positions of the main Saxon historians who have spoken on this issue. I will primarily consider the writings specifically devoted to this topic, but I will also analyse at length the position of Bishop G. D. Teutsch, whose figure has been prominent not only in the “professional” historical discourse of the period under consideration here, but also in the wider Saxon historical imagination, his writings being received beyond the formal limits of historiography. Towards the end of the paper I will attempt to formulate an answer to the question of the existence of a unitary (or at least dominant) position of Saxon

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<sup>4</sup> Adinel Dincă, *Români și sași în Ardealul medieval: contextele documentare și cadrele teoretice ale unei investigații* [Romanians and Saxons in Medieval Transylvania: Documentary Contexts and Theoretical Frameworks of an Investigation], paper presented at the conference *Zilele Academice Clujene. Societățile și instituțiile lor. Aspecte metodologice și abordări istoriografice* [The Cluj Academic Days. Societies and Their Institutions. Methodological Aspects and Historiographical Approaches], Cluj-Napoca, 18-20 October 2023.

historiography in relation to the subject of the origins of the Transylvanian Romanians.

Often having an external motivation, the positions of Saxon historians on the subject of Romanian continuity cannot be explained without understanding the political-administrative realities faced by the Saxon community in southern Transylvania in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the following century: the events of 1848/49 (in which the Saxon community felt betrayed by the imperialists); the gradual decline of Saxon autonomy (a phenomenon that had been ongoing since the last decades of the eighteenth century), until the complete disappearance of the Saxon University as a political body (1870); the reversal of demographic relations on the former *fundus regius* (abolished in 1867) to the detriment of the Saxons and in favour of the Romanians; the aggressive policy of centralisation and cultural standardisation pursued by the government of Pest after the Ausgleich of 1868; the First World War – when the territories inhabited by the Saxons became a vast theatre of military operations; the integration of Transylvania in the Kingdom of Romania in 1918 and – last but not least – the disappointment of the Saxons at the failure of the Romanian state to honour the promises of autonomy made on the eve of the Great Union. As Andreas Möckel has noted, the entire Saxon historiographical tradition has been directed, since the end of the eighteenth century, towards the protection of Saxon political freedoms, so that Transylvanian political realities cannot be ignored in the process of understanding the motivations behind certain theses formulated in the Saxon area.<sup>5</sup>

However, a strictly socio-political interpretation of Saxon historiographical positions would be reductionist. The existence in the Saxon area of old and sometimes contradictory historiographical traditions, the different professional backgrounds of the Saxons that participated in the debate on the origin of the Romanians and the personal convictions of each historian are factors that have certainly contributed to the shaping of positions on the subject. Last but

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<sup>5</sup> Andreas Möckel, 'Istoriografie și conștiință istorică la sașii ardeleni' [Historiography and Historical Consciousness among the Transylvanian Saxons], in *Transilvania și sașii ardeleni în istoriografie. Din publicațiile Asociației de Studii Transilvane Heidelberg* [Transylvania and the Transylvanian Saxons in Historiography. From the Publications of the Transylvanian Studies Association Heidelberg] (Sibiu – Heidelberg: Editura Hora and Arbeitskreis für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde e. V. Heidelberg, 2001), pp. 9-23.

not least, it is important to remember that Saxon historiography does not exist in isolation from external influences, but is in constant dialogue with other historiographies. Taking into account the above-mentioned aspects, it can be said that treating Saxon historiography as a unitary block is not hermeneutically profitable. In order to understand the motivations behind the Saxon texts on the topic of the Romanian continuity – whose peripheral character in Saxon historiography we have already discussed – it is necessary to analyse each individual historiographical context, an approach that also involves an important prosopographical component. Such an approach goes beyond the limits of this presentation, but the awareness of the heterogeneity of the motivations and personal contexts in which the studies on the topic of Romanian continuity were written could prevent us from unwarranted generalizations, which would alter the epistemical quality of the effort to understand the deep structures at the basis of the different points of view expressed by Saxon historians.

Georg Daniel Teutsch's seminal work on the history of the Transylvanian Saxons, suggestively entitled *„Geschichte der Siebenbürger Sachsen für das sächsische Volk“* (1852),<sup>6</sup> in which the author explicitly assumes a pro-Saxon biased perspective, begins with a brief excursus on the history of Transylvania before the arrival of the Saxons. The Saxon historian – then rector of the Saxon gymnasium in Sighișoara and a politician involved in the events of 1848/49 – adheres to the theory of continuity, which he succinctly summarises in a paragraph:

Länger als andrethalbhundert Jahre blieb Dakien in harter römischer Knechtschaft. Kaiser Aurelian endlich räumte das von allen Seiten durch Barbaren bedrohte Land (im Jahre 274) und zog die römische Ansiedler über die Donau zurück. Also wurden die Daken der drückenden Herrschaft ledig; doch zur frühern Freiheit und selbstständigkeit sind sie nicht mehr gekommen. Von den zurückgebliebenen romanisierten Daken, die im 9. und 10. Jahrhundert mit Slaven und germanischen Stämmen sich vermischten, nicht aber von den Römern die aus dem Lande gezogen, stammt das heutige Volk der Walachen.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Georg Daniel Teutsch, *Geschichte der Siebenbürger Sachsen für das sächsische Volk* (5 vols, Braşov: Druck und Verlag von Johann Gött, 1852-1858).

<sup>7</sup> Although he adheres to the theory of continuity, Teutsch does not fully adopt the Romanian perspective on the matter, denying the Roman descent of the Romanians (whose ancestors



Although the subject of the continuity of Romanian settlement in Transylvania was not of particular concern to Teutsch, the insertion of this paragraph in his work may have played an important role in the acceptance of the continuity theory by the non-specialist Saxon public (to whom the book is dedicated in several editions). Teutsch's intention in writing these lines is difficult to identify. In the absence of a rigorous critical apparatus, it is almost impossible to determine the historiographical source from which he drew his inspiration (in this respect, it is possible that research into his personal fonds in the custody of the National Archives of Sibiu will provide us with more information). Without being able to state with certainty that this position of the Saxon historian is based exclusively on considerations external to the Saxon historian's interest in the knowledge of history, we can suppose that the favourable attitude towards the Romanians is also motivated by political developments in Transylvania in the mid-nineteenth century. Very involved in the political events of 1848/49 – when he became a deputy for the Saxons in the Parliament of Pesta – the future bishop began to foresee the benefits of appealing to the Romanian minority, which he perceived as a potential ally in the struggle of the Saxon community to preserve its old privileges. The good ties during his episcopate with the Orthodox intellectual and ecclesiastical elite,<sup>8</sup> as well as the troubled context in which they were developing (the revolution of 1848/49, the relative demographic decline of the Saxons in the Christian Lands in favour of the Romanians and the pressure exerted by the Austrian and, later, the Hungarian authorities on the Saxon community) could be one of the keys to explaining the motivations for such a position. In spite of the great influence of Teutsch's book on the Saxon historical imagination of the time (as indicated by the large number of new editions), the position of the Saxon scholar in relation to the hypothesis of the continuity of the Romanians was not unanimously shared by his contemporaries and successors in historiography.

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are, as the above quotation shows, Romanized Dacians), Teutsch, *Geschichte der Siebenbürger Sachsen*, vol. I, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Well documented by Mircea-Gheorghe Abrudan in a monograph dedicated to the connection between Teutsch and the metropolitan Andrei Șaguna, Mircea-Gheorghe Abrudan, *Ortodoxie și Luteranism în Transilvania între Revoluția pașoptistă și Marea Unire. Evoluție istorică și relații confesionale* [Orthodoxy and Lutheranism in Transylvania between the Revolution of 1848 and the Integration of Transylvania in Romania. Historical evolution and confessional relations] (Sibiu/Cluj-Napoca: Editura Andreiană/Presă Universitară Clujeană, 2015), especially pp. 377-403.

The articles written in the Saxon area in the second half of the nineteenth century broadly reiterate the thesis of Roesler, without, however, contributing to the historiographical debate with their own counter-arguments, except to a very small extent. In the last decades of the twentieth century, studies devoted in particular to the question of the origins of the Transylvanian Romanians mainly took the side of immigrationist historiography, polemicising with the partisans of the continuity theory – both Romanian and French or Austrian. Even if it was not written by a Saxon historian, it is worth mentioning the study by Johann Heinrich Schwicker, a politician from Banat, entitled ‘Ueber die Herkunft der Rumänen’, published in 1877,<sup>9</sup> as it also had repercussions in the German-speaking south of Transylvania. Schwicker had successfully integrated into the Saxon political environment, which he represented in the Parliament of Pesta from 1887. In this article, the historian reiterates the main arguments in favour of the Roesleerian theory, insisting on the ecclesiastical subordination of the Transylvanian Romanians to the Bulgarian hierarchy. For him, this subordination – deduced from the Romanians’ adoption of Middle Bulgarian as a language of worship – is a testimony to the Romanian presence south of the Danube in the first Christian millennium. Karl Goos, an archaeologist from Sighișoara, also takes a similar view in two highly polemical articles published in the ‘Korrespondenzblatt des Vereins für siebenbürgische Landeskunde’.<sup>10</sup> In the first paper, published a year after Schwicker’s, Goos attempted to demolish each of the arguments put forward by the Austrian Julius Jung, a proponent of the continuity theory, in Jung’s study entitled ‘Die Anfänge der Romaenen. Kritischethnographische Studie’<sup>11</sup> and in the book *Roemer und Romanen in den Donauländer*,<sup>12</sup> citing both Roesler and the Hungarian professor Paul Hunfalvy. Goos contributes little to strengthening the immigrationist position: his original contribution to the historiographical dispute consists of a few archaeological observations; he

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<sup>9</sup> J. H. Schwicker, ‘Ueber die Herkunft der Rumänen,’ in *Das Ausland. Ueberschau der neuesten Forschungen auf dem Gebiete der Natur-, Erd- und Völkerwissenschaften*, 39 (1877): 761-768.

<sup>10</sup> Karl Goos, ‘Die neueste Literatur über die Frage der Herkunft der Rumänen,’ in *Korrespondenzblatt des Vereins für siebenbürgische Landeskunde*, 1/1 (1878): 17-22 and 1/3 (1878): 28-39; Karl Goos, ‘Zur Rumänen-Frage,’ in *Korrespondenzblatt des Vereins für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde*, 2/1 (1879), 26-32.

<sup>11</sup> Julius Jung, ‘Die Anfänge der Romaenen. Kritischethnographische Studie,’ in *Zeitschrift für die österreichischen Gymnasien* 27/1 (1876): 1-19; 27/3 (1876): 81-111; 27/6 (1876): 321-342.

<sup>12</sup> Julius Jung, *Roemer und Romanen in den Donauländer* (Innsbruck: Verlag des Wagner’schen Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1877).

notes the lack of material traces produced in the early medieval period by the autochthonous population, which would attest to the absence of the Romanised population in Dacia during the migration period.

But the immigrationist direction is not the only position taken by the Saxons in the period under consideration here. Starting from philological positions, authors such as Gustav Kisch,<sup>13</sup> in an article published in *Korrespondenzblatt des Vereins für siebenbürgische Landeskunde* in 1924, formulated a series of observations on the Slavonic borrowings from Romanian, which he attributed to the coexistence of Romanians and Slavs in Transylvania before the arrival of the Saxons. Far from being a polemical article, the paper consists, for the most part, of a list of Saxon terms of Slavic origin taken, according to the author, on a Romanian route. The existence of these words in the Saxon lexicon would be explained by the coexistence of Romanians and Slavs in Transylvania before the arrival of the Saxons. It is also worth mentioning the study of Karl Kurt Klein,<sup>14</sup> which was occasioned by the publication of Alexandru Philippide's book *Originea Romînilor*.<sup>15</sup> Written in a less polemical tone, Klein's article presents the methodology and the main ideas presented by the Romanian historian in a praiseworthy manner, while also outlining a history of the question in the Saxon intellectual space, where he reviews the main contributions written by Saxon historians up to the mid-nineteenth century on the subject of the origin of the Transylvanian Romanians.<sup>16</sup> By declining to judge the validity of Philippide's theories (which accept the immigrationist hypothesis in a different form from that put forward by Roesler),<sup>17</sup> Klein demonstrates that the Romanian question was a point of interest for Saxon historians even before the historiographical confrontations with Romanian historians in the second half of the eighteenth century.

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<sup>13</sup> Gustav Kisch, 'Zur Wortforschung. Erloschenes Slawentum in Siebenbürgen,' in *Korrespondenzblatt des Vereins für siebenbürgische Landeskunde*, XLVII/1-3 (1924): 1-9 and XLVII/4-6 (1924): 25-41.

<sup>14</sup> Klein, "'Originea Romînilor'".

<sup>15</sup> Alexandru Philippide, *Originea Romînilor* [The Origin of Romanians] (2 vols, Iași: Tipografia „Viața Românească”, 1923-1927).

<sup>16</sup> Klein, "'Originea Romînilor'", 97-101. He also selectively refers to a few later studies, without attempting to provide an account of all the contributions on the Romanian question written by Saxon historians after 1860.

<sup>17</sup> For Philippide, the repopulation of the territories north of the Carpathians took place during Slavic settlement south of the Danube.

All the above attempts interrogate – by philological, archaeological, or hermeneutical means – the period between the Aurelian retreat and the first centuries after the Hungarian settlement in Transylvania. Another type of approach to the question of the continuity of Romanians in Transylvania comes from legal historiography. I will limit myself to mentioning the main works that fall into this category, both written by Georg Eduard Müller, the most significant Saxon legal historiographer in the first four decades of the XXth century: *Die ursprüngliche Rechtslage der Rumänen im Sachsenlande* (1912)<sup>18</sup> and *Die mittelalterlichen Verfassungs- und Rechtseinrichtungen der Rumänen des ehemaligen Ungarn*.<sup>19</sup> The Saxon historian succeeds in describing in great detail the legal relations that characterised the situation of the Transylvanian Romanians in the Middle Ages, highlighting the inferior status of the Romanians and their dependence on other legal categories. He does not limit his research to the medieval period, but extends it to the mid-nineteenth century, justifying his approach by the small number of primary sources that bear witness to the early medieval centuries. His approach thus follows the structure of legal writings written by both Romanians and Saxons from the eighteenth century onwards, which present a pragmatic history of legal traditions from the first centuries of the Hungarian kingdom. Müller is, moreover, identified with this tradition by a couple of Romanian historiographers<sup>20</sup> who accuse him of admiringly and uncritically quoting polemical writings of no scientific value<sup>21</sup> and of referring to Romanian historiography as a homogeneous bloc incapable of producing reliable scientific works.

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<sup>18</sup> Georg Eduard Müller, *Die ursprüngliche Rechtslage der Rumänen im Sachsenlande. Eine bürgerliche Vorstudie, zugleich ein Beitrag zum deutschen Kolonistenrecht in seinem Verhältnis zu fremdnationalem Recht in Ungarn* (Sibiu: Verlag von W. Krafft, 1912).

<sup>19</sup> Georg Eduard Müller, 'Die mittelalterlichen Verfassungs- und Rechtseinrichtungen der Rumänen des ehemaligen Ungarn,' in *Siebenbürgische Vierteljahrschrift*, 62/1-2 (1938): 1-47.

<sup>20</sup> Ilarion Pușcariu – Ioan de Preda – Lucian Borgia – Ioan Lupăș – Ion Mateiu – Silviu Dragomir, 'Studiu critic în legătură cu cartea dlui G. Müller, arhivarul universității săsești' [A Critical Study of the Book Written by G. Müller, the Archivist of the Saxon University] in Ilarion Pușcariu et al. (eds.), *Contribuțiuni istorice privitoare la trecutul Românilor de pe pământul crăiesc* [Historical Contributions Concerning the Past of the Romanians on the Crownland] (Sibiu: Tiparul tipografiei arhidiecezane, 1913), VII-LXXXI, especially XIII-XIV.

<sup>21</sup> It refers first of all to Wilhelm Bruckener's polemical book about the memorandum of the Romanians of the Romanian seats Șăliște and Tălmăciu Land *Beleuchtung dem hohen Abgeordnetenhause in Pest überreichten Denkschrift der angeblich zum Königs-Boden gehörigen*

The themes of the continuity of the Romanians' settlement in the Crownland and their legal status in the Middle Ages are related not only by their potential implications for immediate political developments in Transylvania, but also by their very nature: by stressing the inferior status of the Romanians in the medieval kingdom of Hungary, Müller is, in fact, in line with the supporters of the immigrationist theory, to which, moreover, he explicitly adheres. For him, the lack of rights of the Romanians in southern Transylvania attests to their later arrival in the region. Apparently and, perhaps, paradoxically, local Romanian historiography – which has offered a very polemical response through the voice of several intellectuals, including Ilarion Pușcariu, Ioan Lupaș and Silviu Dragomir,<sup>22</sup> imbued with numerous political comments hostile to the Saxons and even *ad hominem* attacks – interprets the same argument in reverse: if the Romanians had come from south of the Danube after the integration of Transylvania into the Hungarian Crown's patrimony, they would have benefited from privileges specific to *hospites* groups, which may be an argument in favour of the political motivation of both their positioning and Müller's – both predictable in the political context of the time. Successor of Georg Daniel Teutsch on the episcopal seat (and his follower in historiography as well), historian Friedrich Müller takes a similar – and equally foreseeable – position, accepting the hypothesis that the Romanians of southern Transylvania did not enjoy the status of citizens of Brașov or Sibiu<sup>23</sup> at the end of the thirteenth century. Although he agrees with this theory, Georg Müller will virulently criticize the bishop for accepting the Romanian hypothesis concerning the identity of the Romanians mentioned in the documents of 1210 and 1288 and for falsely attributing to

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*Gemeinden der sogenannten Filialstühle Szelistye und Talmatsch wegen Regelung ihrer staatsrechtlichen Verhältnisse* (Sibiu: S. Filtsch's Buchdruckerei, W. Krafft, 1869).

<sup>22</sup> Pușcariu et al., 'Studiu critic' [A Critical Study] and Ilarion Pușcariu et al., 'Părerile dlui Müller privitoare la incorporarea celor două scaune filiale, Tâlmăciu și Săliște, la pământul crăiesc' [Mr Müller's views on the incorporation of the two subsidiary seats Tâlmăciu and Săliște in the Crownland] in Pușcariu et al. (eds.), *Contribuțiuni istorice* [Historical Contributions] (Sibiu: Tiparul tipografiei arhidiecezane, 1913), LXXXII-XCV.

<sup>23</sup> Friedrich Müller, 'Haben 1288 im Hermannstädter Gau und im Burzenland neben den Sachsen auch ungarische Adlige, Szekler und Rumänen gewohnt?,' in *Siebenburgische Vierteljahrsschrift*, 58/4 (1935): 281-296.

him the claim that Romanians had enjoyed citizenship in Saxon towns in the thirteenth century.<sup>24</sup>

Instead of concluding, I will return, as promised in the first part of this paper, to the question of the existence of a Saxon point of view on the topic of Romanian continuity in Transylvania. Taking into account the diversity of opinions expressed by Saxon historians, the peripheral nature of this topic in Transylvanian German-language historiography, and the limited contribution that Saxon historiography brings to this discussion (with the notable exception of Müller's studies), I would be inclined to give a negative answer: Saxon historians do not have a common point of view, and the positions expressed in this debate rather indicate their affiliation to traditions already existing in the Romanian or Central European historiographical space. Without making an exhaustive record of Saxon writings on the origins of the Transylvanian Romanians, it can be said that the general tendency among Saxon historians of the period is to adhere to the immigrationist theory, but the way in which the period preceding the Hungarian conquest of Transylvania is understood differs not only according to the authors' position on the nationalist or political spectrum, but also according to their intellectual and professional training and, implicitly, the premises and methodologies on which they base their historical or philological research. Divergent in terms of their methodology, intentions and epistemic value, and plural in terms of their results, the articles written by Saxon historians do not manage to achieve a sufficient degree of homogeneity to be able to contribute to the formation of a Saxon historiographical view of the origins of the Transylvanian Romanians.

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<sup>24</sup> Georg Müller even maliciously asserts that Friedrich Müller would not be aware of his earlier work, although it is quoted abundantly in the bishop's study; Georg Eduard Müller, 'Die mittelalterlichen Verfassungs- und Rechtseinrichtungen': 11.

# The Genesis of the Legend of Saint Ladislav in the Light of Historical Revisionism

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**Abstract:** This paper analyses the historiography regarding the origin of visual narratives dedicated to the legend of Saint Ladislav, aiming to identify shifts in interpretative paradigms within Hungarian and Romanian scholarly traditions. By situating these paradigms within their political and social contexts, the study examines how changing interpretations reflect broader cultural phenomena. The argument is organised chronologically, incorporating both traditional and revisionist perspectives, to provide a clearer understanding of the motivations behind these hypotheses in their historical context.

**Keywords:** visual narratives; St Ladislav; Revisionism; Turanism; historiography.

**Rezumat:** Lucrarea analizează istoriografia referitoare la originea naraţiunilor vizuale dedicate legendei Sfântului Ladislav, cu scopul de a identifica schimbările în paradigmele interpretative din tradiţiile academice maghiare şi române. Prin situarea acestor paradigme în contextul lor politic şi social, studiul examinează modul în care interpretările în schimbare reflectă fenomene culturale mai ample. Argumentul este organizat cronologic, incorporând atât perspective tradiţionale, cât şi revizioniste, pentru a oferi o înţelegere mai clară a motivaţiilor din spatele acestor ipoteze în contextul lor istoric.

**Cuvinte cheie:** istoriografie; naraţiuni vizuale; revizionism; Sf. Ladislav; turanism.

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The mural paintings dedicated to the legend of Saint Ladislav are regarded as some of the most significant contributions of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary to the cultural and artistic heritage of Central Europe. These narrative cycles, which depict the tumultuous battle of Kerlés, can be found in numerous churches across the Hungarian kingdom. The visual narratives documented within the territory of this former medieval kingdom were painted between the fourteenth century and the second half of the fifteenth century. They were composed in two main forms: extensive cycles featuring six or more episodes, and more concise representations consisting of three central episodes. This artistic manifestation was widely promoted by the Angevine dynasty, reaching its peak in quantity during the reign of King Sigismund of Luxembourg.

A comprehensive examination of the historiography surrounding the narrative cycles dedicated to the legend of Saint Ladislav reveals two noteworthy observations: firstly, these depictions have been the focal point of scholarly scrutiny within both Hungarian and Romanian historiographical traditions, attracting the collective interest of art historians, historians, archaeologists and ethnologists; secondly, they have been essential in fostering paradigm shifts and their interpretation.

This analysis commences with a remarkable commonality: both historiographical traditions exhibit a pronounced interest in one predominant theme: the origin of these visual narratives. Based on the hypotheses proposed by Hungarian and Romanian researchers, this study aims to situate these paradigms within the political and social context of the era in which they were formulated. Given the limited scope of the analysis, which focuses solely on the genesis of the legend of Saint Ladislav,<sup>1</sup> the argument will be structured chronologically, considering both traditional and revisionist perspectives identified within the two historiographies. This historiographical approach is deemed beneficial, as it facilitates a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of both the paradigms and the political and social phenomena that influenced them.

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<sup>1</sup> Over time, these frescoes have been studied by both historians interested in the evolution of the cult of Saint Ladislaus and art historians. Their focus has primarily been on the morphology, style, and dating of the compositions, as well as the significance of the narrative cycle and the depicted costumes. However, this analysis will be limited to discussions regarding the genesis of the paintings, as this aspect provides the richest insights for the purpose of the study.



Regarding the origin of visual narratives dedicated to the legend of Saint Ladislás, scholarly interest in this specific topic can be traced back to the early twentieth century when the traditional point of view was formulated. The period spanning the late nineteenth to early twentieth century was marked by an intellectual crisis, prompting a search for origins.<sup>2</sup> In Hungarian historiography, this gave birth to a Central European phenomenon known as Hungarian Turanism.<sup>3</sup> This nationalistic movement sought to orient Hungarian culture towards Central Asia, aiming to identify the original, ideal homeland and unite the Ural-Altaic and Finno-Ugric peoples.<sup>4</sup> Traditional perspectives on the genesis of the fresco cycles in Hungarian historiography are deeply rooted in this ideology, thus influencing historical writing throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The first hypothesis regarding the origin of this narrative sequence, dating back to the early twentieth century, affirms that the *historia* of the knightly king originated in the Eurasian steppes. This hypothesis was first proposed by Nagy Géza, a supporter of Hungarian Turanism<sup>5</sup> and also a student of Ármin Vámbéry, a founding figure of Hungarian Turkology and a key influence on the development of Turanism.<sup>6</sup> In 1913, Nagy analysed a range of material evidence from the Migration Period and earlier eras. Notably, he conducted an in-depth study of a Scythian gold plaque featuring a funerary motif. The artwork depicts two horsemen dismounted from their horses: one lies on the ground, resting his head on a woman's lap. The woman sits beneath a weeping willow, accompanied by a servant and two small, broad-headed horses. From this archaeological evidence, the author argued that the scene closely resembles episodes depicted in medieval

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<sup>2</sup> Eric Storm, 'Art History,' in (ed.) Diana Miskhova and Balázs Trencsényi, *European Regions and Boundaries: A Conceptual History*, (New York and Oxford, Berghahn, 2017), p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Michal Kowalczyk, 'Hungarian Turanism. From the Birth of the Ideology to Modernity – an Outline of the Problem,' in *Historia i Polityka*, 20/27 (2017), p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> Attila Gökhun Dayıoğlu, 'Hungarian Nationalism and Hungarian Pan-Turanism until the Beginning of the Second World War,' in *Politics in Central Europe*, 18/2 (2022), p. 230.

<sup>5</sup> Mykola Melnyk, 'From Admiring the Nomads to Moving Away from the Steppenfixierung: Paradoxes of the Hungarian Historiography in the Study of Pechenegs, Uzes, and Cumans,' in ed. L. V. Voytovych, *Українсько-Угорські Етюди* [The Ukrainian-Hungarian Studies] (Lviv, 2019), p. 40.

<sup>6</sup> Balázs Albó, *Go East! A History of Hungarian Turanism* (Indiana University Press, 2021), p. 23.

church frescoes, particularly the rest of Saint Ladislav, in which the knightly king, after rescuing the maiden, ties his horse to a tree and rests on her lap. Nagy concluded that the pictorial representations of the Legend of Saint Ladislav have pagan origins, traceable to the 4th-5th centuries BC, as evidenced by the Scythian plaque. His study, published in a leading Hungarian scientific journal of the time, introduced a hypothesis that Hungarian historians have embraced in subsequent years.<sup>7</sup>

It is not at all surprising that this paradigm, suggesting the Eurasian origin of the narrative cycles, was adopted and embraced by these scholars in the following decades, as the motivation can be traced to the political context of the era. Shortly after the publication of the study as mentioned earlier, World War I broke out, marking the golden age of the Turanist movement.<sup>8</sup> This period would turn out to be the calm before the storm, as the aftermath of the war would profoundly alter the country's geopolitical landscape, leading to severe reactions within society. The experiences that followed after the disintegration of 'The Great Hungary' after the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, were often seen as a result of "betrayal" by the Western Powers and the "ungrateful Europe".<sup>9</sup> This led to boundless feelings of loneliness and general pessimism, which, in turn, fuelled the emphasis on a self-orientalising ideological tradition<sup>10</sup> and also the desire to seek friends and allies in the East as a means to escape self-imposed isolation.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, the tendency to associate with Eurasian populations remained constant during World War II, as evidenced by the study published

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<sup>7</sup> Munkácsy Mihály, Nagy Géza, Orosz műemlékek és régiségek, *Archaeológiai Értesítő* 33, (Budapest, Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1913), p. 255-261.

<sup>8</sup> Péter Balogh, 'Clashing geopolitical self-image? The strange co-existence of Christian bulwark and Eurasianism (Turanism) in Hungary,' in (ed) Croig Young et al, *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 63/6 (2020), p. 736-737. During World War I, Hungarian Turanism gained significant importance, increasing public awareness of the East. In these years, Hungarian expeditions to Anatolia and the Balkans were funded, Hungarian businesses accessed markets in the so-called "Turanian States", a Hungarian Institute was opened in Istanbul and several streets in Hungary were renamed.

<sup>9</sup> Balázs Trencsényi, 'Turanism, Eurasianism, and the Hungarian Radical Right,' in (ed.) Mark Bassin, Gonzalo Pozo, *The Politics of Eurasianism. Identity, Popular Culture and Russia's foreign policy*, (London and New York, Rowan Littlefield International, 2017), p. 243.

<sup>10</sup> Umut Korkut, 'Resentment and Reorganisation: Anti-Western Discourse and Making of Eurasianism in Hungary,' in *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 38 (2017), p. 71-72.

<sup>11</sup> Balogh, Clashing geopolitical self-images?..., p. 737

by archaeologist Fettich Nándor in 1939. The author aims to analyse the material culture and cultural heritage of the steppe peoples, starting with the Cumans but extending to related groups, including the Hungarians. Like the researcher Nagy Géza, Fettich also believes there are similarities between the gold plaque and the resting scene. Moreover, he seeks to persuade us that this latter episode of the visual narrative is absent from the textual narrative. In this context, the author argues that the episode in which King Ladislás rests in the lap of a young woman is represented in churches both in the Szeklerland region and across the Danube, attributing this depiction to the influence of the Eurasian cultural heritage of the Magyars. Although the paradigms dominating the two studies are similar, we find that their methodologies differ. While Nagy's conclusion stems from an analogy based on the comparison of object and image, Fettich expands on this method by comparing the object with the image and text.<sup>12</sup> In 1944, in the very last years of World War II, László Gyula also noted the similarities between Eurasian manifestations. He believes that the Hungarians took over the old oriental legend depicting the struggle between good and evil at the time of their arrival in Europe, and later transposed it into the story of King Ladislás.<sup>13</sup> He also agrees and supports Nagy Geza's hypothesis that the representations of the *Historia Sancti Ladislai* find their analogies in the art of the Steppes, returning to the same primary source – the Scythian Golden plaque.<sup>14</sup> We can thus observe that Eurasianist paradigms remained deeply ingrained in the narratives of historians even at the end of World War II.

World War II dealt another blow to Hungarian Turanists. After the Arrow Cross Party's brief rule, Hungary became a Soviet-occupied communist state, making any official Turanist activity nearly impossible until 1989.<sup>15</sup> One might expect that, with the war's conclusion, the nationalist and self-

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<sup>12</sup> Fettich Nándor, 'A Kunok és rokonnépek kultúrájáról,' in ed (Blaskovich Lajos), *A kunok 700 éves betelepülésének emlékére rendezett Jász Kun Kongresszus*, (Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun vármegye közönsége 1939), p. 28-30.

<sup>13</sup> László Gyula, *A honfoglaló nép élete. Második kiadás*, (Magyar Élet Kiadása, Budapest, 1944), p. 415.

<sup>14</sup> In the late 1970s, Gyula László proposed the hypothesis of the "double conquest," arguing that when the Hungarians entered the Carpathian Basin in the ninth century, they did not arrive in unfamiliar territory but encountered their kinsfolk who had settled there centuries earlier, alongside the Huns. See Trencsényi, 'Turanism. Eurasianism,' p. 247.

<sup>15</sup> Kowalczyk, *Hungarian Turanism*, p. 55.

orientalizing discourse of various scholars would fade from the historiographical landscape. However, the Iron Curtain only served to isolate Hungarian historical writing from Western trends further.<sup>16</sup> Trencsényi argues that Hungary's realignment toward the Soviet Union led to an "eastern turn" in historiography, enabling scholars to access both significant territories tied to Hungarian ethnogenesis and specialised literature on these topics. As a result, discussions surrounding the Eastern origins of visual narratives related to the legend of Saint Ladislav remained constant in Communist Hungary.<sup>17</sup>

In this context, it is essential to acknowledge the comprehensive research conducted by the Hungarian ethnologist Vargyas Lajos in 1960.<sup>18</sup> From a methodological point of view, the author primarily analyses textual (folkloric) sources, such as *The Ballad of Molnár Anna* and various Eurasian traditions, which are corroborated with material documents, like the Scythian gold plaque, and visual testimonies, including the legend of Saint Ladislav. Vargyas also acknowledges the stylistic and formal similarities between the Scythian ornament, the resting episode from the knight king's story, and the same scene depicted in *The Ballad of Molnár Anna*.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, the author identifies significant parallels between the heroic epics of Inner Asia, such as the *Manas Epic*, and the fresco cycles dedicated to the knightly king. The initial congruence is evident in the combat scenes, wherein the protagonists initially engage in armed conflict but transition to close-quarters combat. Furthermore, the author highlights another similarity in the depiction of resting scenes, which finds numerous analogies in the heroic poems of the Altaj-Sajan region, where the tree that shelters the protagonists who seek respite is symbolically linked to the tree of life, and the entire sequence bears a striking resemblance to the resting scene.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Stephen Borsody, 'Modern Hungarian Historiography,' in *The Journal of Modern History*, (24/4, 1952), p. 405.

<sup>17</sup> Balázs Trencsényi, 'Politics of History' and Authoritarian Regime-Building in Hungary,' in *National History and New Nationalism in the Twenty-First Century: A Global Comparison* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2021), p. 172.

<sup>18</sup> Vargyas Lajos, 'Kutatások a népballada középkori történetében,' in *Etnographia. Magyar Néprajzi társaság folyóirata*, (71/4 Budapest, 1960, p. 479-523.

<sup>19</sup> Vargyas, p. 501.

<sup>20</sup> Vargyas, p. 502-503.

The above-mentioned patterns of interpretation regarding the origin of the narrative cycle are embraced by the research of Bálint Sándor. In his study on the iconography of the mural paintings dedicated to the legend of Saint Ladislav, published in 1977, the author adopts a similar interpretative approach, drawing on the same primary sources: the Scythian gold plaque housed at the Hermitage Museum (Figure 1), *The Ballad of Molnár Anna*, and the murals depicting the legend of Saint Ladislav (Figure 2). Ultimately, Bálint argues for the Eurasian and pagan origins of these murals.<sup>21</sup>



**Figure 1.** The Scythian Gold plaque in the Ermitage Museum. Source: <https://eng-archive.aawsat.com/theaawsat/lifestyle-culture/london-holds-exhibition-highlight-scythian-culture/attachment/scythians-with-horses-under-a-tree-gold-belt-plaque-siberia-4th-3rd-century-bc-the-state-hermitage-museum-st-petersburg-2017> .

<sup>21</sup> Bálint Sándor, *A cserhalmi ütközet ikonográfiája. Szekvencia Szent László királyról (Csanád Béla fordítása)*, in *Vigilia*, (1977, 42/6), p. 379-382.



**Figure 2.** *The rest scene in the church of Poniky, ca. 1478. Photo: The author*

These traditional perspectives on the genesis of the visual narratives surrounding the knight-king continued to persist in historical discourse even after the fall of the communist regime in 1989. While the collapse of the Iron Curtain was seen as a “return to the West”,<sup>22</sup> it also allowed for the re-emergence of the Turanist movement due to the right, and far-right political parties like FIDESZ and Jobbik.<sup>23</sup>

One of the first post-communist researchers worth mentioning is László Gyula. In his comprehensive 1993 work, which catalogues the narrative cycles dedicated to the Legend of Saint Ladislav, he reinforces the claims made by earlier-mentioned researchers, further supporting the hypothesis of

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<sup>22</sup> Trencsényi, *Turanism, Eurasianism*, p. 249.

<sup>23</sup> Zakir Rzazade, *Jobbik's Neo-Turanism and Eurasianism: contradictions and the problem of coexistence*, draft paper from 2021, p. 4-5. The source can be consulted at the following link: [https://www.academia.edu/45068065/Jobbiks\\_Neo\\_Turanism\\_and\\_Eurasianism\\_contradictions\\_and\\_the\\_problem\\_of\\_coexistence](https://www.academia.edu/45068065/Jobbiks_Neo_Turanism_and_Eurasianism_contradictions_and_the_problem_of_coexistence). Accessed at 22/10/2024, 19:2-0.

the legend's pagan origins.<sup>24</sup> Although Gyula acknowledges other plausible influences, such as Western (manuscript painting) and Byzantine traditions, notably through the frontier hero *Digenis Akritas*, he remains constant in the paradigm he originally expressed in 1944.<sup>25</sup>

The last historian worth mentioning in this discussion, who embraces Turanist tendencies and shows a strong interest in the origins of the knight-king legend, is Tamás Sashalmi Fekete, a researcher at the Magyarorsághoz tartozó Intézet.<sup>26</sup> In a study published in 2020, he dedicates a subsection to explore the connections between the visual narrative of the knightly king and the Caucasus region. Sashalmi Fekete argues that the narrative cycle of Saint Ladislav exhibits specific traits that suggest links with the Caucasus and Iran, drawing an analogy with the Batraz cycle, an ancient heroic saga from these regions.<sup>27</sup>

We can conclude that traditional views on the origins of visual narratives related to the legend of Saint Ladislav in Hungarian historiography have been shaped by Turanist ideology, which emerged in the early twentieth century. This perspective gained strength after World War I and the Treaty of Trianon, as scholars looked for a sense of identity amid significant upheaval. Even though challenges arose during and after World War II, including the suppression of Turanist ideas under Soviet occupation until 1989, the core concepts about the knight-king's visual narratives remained unchanged. The fall of communism sparked renewed interest in these themes, prompting further exploration of the legend's connection to Eurasian and Caucasian cultures. As a result, the interpretation of the origins of the knight-king's visual narratives continues to be influenced by a combination of

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<sup>24</sup> László Gyula, *A Szent László-legenda középkori falképei*, (Tájak Korok Múzeumok Könyvtára, Budapest, 1993), p. 24.

<sup>25</sup> Gyula, p. 188, 194.

<sup>26</sup> The Magyarorsághoz tartozó Intézet (Hungarian Research Institute) is a government-funded research institution in Hungary, established in 2019, and it aligns with nationalistic and Turanist ideologies. The institute's main goal is to research Hungarian national history, culture, ethnogenesis, and identity, with a particular focus on Hungary's ancient and medieval past, including the origins of the Magyars). The institute is part of the broader cultural and political project of the ruling Fidesz party, led by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, which seeks to promote a more traditional, nationalist interpretation of Hungary's past. Accessed at 22/10/2024, 19:41.

<sup>27</sup> Tamás Sashalmi Fekete, 'Újabb kutatási eredmények a Szent László-legenda falképeiről,' in *Székelyek a keleti végeken. Harckészültségben minden időben*, (Molioris-Arany Griff Rend-Székelyderzsi Unitárius Egyház, Székelyudvarhely-Székelyderzs, 2020), p. 38-39.

historical, cultural, and ideological factors that have shaped Hungarian historiography over the past century.

The first revisionist tendencies, in historiographical terms, emerged at a time when Turanism was reaching its peak. The first researcher to break away from this paradigm was Horváth Cyrill, and considering his professional background, it is clear why he did not embrace or promote the Eurasianist ideas. Cyrill was a historian, member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and also a member of the Cistercian order. With a consistent Christian education, pursuing theological studies in centers like Eger, Innsbruck and Budapest.<sup>28</sup> His education, grounded in both scientific and theological environments, profoundly influenced his research methods on the one hand, and the sources he considered and relied upon for his findings on the other.

In a study published in 1928, he set out to identify the literary origin of the narrative cycle, drawing on many sources from the Byzantine world, which he analysed chronologically.<sup>29</sup> These include: *The life of Saint Mercurius*, as set out in the *Vitae Patrum* (fourth-seventh centuries), *The account of Saint Dimitrios by Anasthasius Bibliothecarus* (ninth century), *The Miracles of St. Emmeramus*, where the bravery of his namesake on the battlefield against the pagans is shown (ninth century), *the account of the miracle of Saint Olaf*, appearing on the battlefield to save the Christian army (ninth century), *the battlefield appearance of Saint Albinus during a Norman siege of Guerranda* (twelfth century), *testimony to the military conflicts of Henry II* against the Dutch, Czechs and Moravians, where he was also aided on the battlefield by Saint George, Saint Lawrence and Saint Adrian (twelfth century), *the testimony of Caesarius Heisterbachius* that the Crusader armies were aided in the fight against the Saracens by Saint James and Saint Vincent of Saragossa (thirteenth century).

The author distinguishes common thematic elements within these textual narratives, particularly evident in their collective endorsement of military saints who actively safeguard and collaborate with Christian forces in their encounters with various encroaching entities. For instance, the narrative

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<sup>28</sup> Kenyeres Ágnes, *Magyar életrajzi lexikon A Z*, accessed on Arcanum at the following link: <https://www.arcanum.com/en/online-kiadvanyok/Lexikonok-magyar-eletrajzi-lexikon-7428D/h-75B54/horvath-cyrrill-75E63/?list=eyJxdWVyeSI6ICJob3J2YXRoIGN5cmIsbCJ9.22/10/2024>

<sup>29</sup> Horváth Cyrill, 'Középkori László-legendáink eredetéről' [On the origin of our medieval Ladislav-legends], *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* (38/22–56), 1928, 161–181.



devoted to Saint Ladislav, a recurring subject of depiction in numerous churches throughout the Kingdom of Hungary, exemplifies this prevailing motif. Despite the author's omission of explicit citations of the sources he utilised, a discernible thematic congruence between these written accounts and the visual *historia* of the knightly king is unmistakably highlighted, alongside a suggestion of Byzantine origins for the legend. Furthermore, Horváth Cyrill introduces an innovative method by comparing textual legends from the Byzantine world with the legend of Saint Ladislav, contextualising their proliferation within the prevailing chivalric ethos that characterised the medieval world.<sup>30</sup>

Until the final years of the communist regime in Hungary, alternative interpretations of the genesis of narrative cycles were totally absent from scholarly discourse, as the historiographical scene remained dominated by traditional interpretive paradigms. However, the mid-1980s saw a relaxation of the regime, which influenced and facilitated a "Europeanization" of historical discourse, marked by a growing interest in examining various themes within a broader European context.<sup>31</sup>

Therefore, the study of medieval art in the former Kingdom of Hungary was also situated within these circumstances.<sup>32</sup> Wehli Tünde, in discussing the saints of the kingdom's nobility, argues that the proliferation of visual narratives dedicated to the legend of Saint Ladislav was driven by the chivalric culture promoted by the monarchy from the fourteenth century onward. Regarding the *historia* of the holy king, she suggests that its origins lie in Western Europe, with *The Song of Roland* as a key source of inspiration.<sup>33</sup> Later, Marosi Ernő embraced this interpretive framework, arguing that the spread of the visual narrative was linked to the flourishing of chivalric culture in medieval Hungary, especially under the influence of the Anjou dynasty.

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<sup>30</sup> Horváth, 'Középkori László legendák', p. 181.

<sup>31</sup> Balázs Trencsényi, Péter Apor, 'Fine-Tuning the Polyphonic Past: Hungarian Historical Writing in the 1990s,' in *Narratives Unbound. Historical studies in post-communist Eastern Europe*, Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007, p. 6-8.

<sup>32</sup> See Ernő Marosi et al, *Magyarországi Művészet 1300-1470 körül*, (Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1987).

<sup>33</sup> Wehli Tünde, 'Tematikai és ikonografiai jelenségek. A szentek ábrázolása a 14-15. századi művészetben,' in Ernő Marosi et al, *Magyarországi Művészet 1300-1470 körül* (Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1987).

He claimed that the narrative cycle had Western origins, offering analogies primarily from contemporary manuscripts, such as the *Manesse Codex*.<sup>34</sup>

These lines of interpretation were important for the new generation of scholars, such as Iván Gérát and Zsombor Jékely, who have followed and at times expanded upon the above-mentioned paradigms. Gérát, in his analyses, does not focus heavily on the origin of the narrative cycle, but acknowledges its Western roots,<sup>35</sup> whereas Jékely takes a different approach. In examining the narrative structure of the fresco cycles, the author argues that the rapid spread of these artworks across Hungary can be attributed to the powerful patronage of the royal court, where the original narrative was shaped. He highlights artworks created in the courtly environment, such as the Angevine Legendary and the *Chronicon Pictum* as well as frescoes found in the churches of the nobility. Furthermore, he draws parallels between the *historia* of the knight-king and the artistic production within the Crusader milieu, referencing examples like the Morgan Picture Bible, the Arsenal Bible and the *Manesse Codex*.<sup>36</sup> The author also argues that this ideological and artistic convergence played an important role for the members of the Anjou dynasty, particularly in legitimizing the contested reign of Charles Robert.<sup>37</sup>

Concluding, the revisionist perspectives in Hungarian historiography began by challenging the dominant Turanist narrative. These revisionist efforts focused on reinterpreting the origins of the legend of Saint Ladislav, by examining parallels with Byzantine and Western European sources. These reinterpretations emphasised the influence of chivalric culture and military saints in shaping these fresco cycles. Over time, especially with the relaxation of political control in the 1980s, a 'Europeanization' of historical discourse

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<sup>34</sup> Ernő Marosi, *Kép és hasonmás: művészet és valóság a 14-15. századi Magyarországon*, in *Művészettörténeti füzetek* (23), Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1995, p. 67, 205, 250.

<sup>35</sup> Iván Gérát, 'Pictorial Cycles of St. Ladislav - Some Problems of Interpretation.' In (ed.) M. Homza, J. Lukačka, *Slovakia and Croatia: Historical Parallels and Connections (Until 1780). Slowakei und Kroatien. Historische Parallelen und Beziehungen (bis zum Jahre 1780)* (Bratislava – Zagreb, 2013), p. 296.

<sup>36</sup> Zsombor Jékely, 'Narrative structure of the painted cycle of a Hungarian Holy Ruler: The legend of St. Ladislav,' in *Hortus Artium Medievalium, Journal of the International Research Center for Late Antiquity and Middle Ages*, 2015, p.72; Jékely, 'Szent László kunok elleni csatájának képciklusai a középkori falfestészetben' (The story of Saint Ladislav in medieval wall painting). In (ed) Bódvai András (ed), *Szent László emlékkönyv* (Budapest 2021), p. 147.

<sup>37</sup> Jékely, 'Transylvanian Frescoes in a New Light,' in *The Hungarian Historical Review* (2014), p. 106; Jékely, 'A Kunok...', p. 151.; Jékely, 'Narrative structure...', p. 63-65.

emerged, encouraging scholars to place Hungarian medieval art and history within a broader European context. This shift allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the connections between Hungarian and Western European traditions, highlighting the role of western medieval art, especially the one created in the crusader milieu.

Compared to the extensive specialised literature produced by Hungarian historiography, the Romanian field of research displays significantly less focus on the origins of the visual narratives related to the legend of Saint Ladislav. Nonetheless, the few available studies allow for the identification of both traditional and revisionist perspectives. However, revisionist views tend to be limited to brief mentions rather than detailed analyses.

The emergence of a traditional perspective on the genesis of the narrative cycle in Romanian historiography can be attributed exclusively to Valsile Drăguț.<sup>38</sup> This perspective must be seen as a *sui generis* framework because similar hypotheses about the genesis have been found in Hungarian historiography since the beginning of the last century, being introduced by Horváth Cyrill and later taken over by Vlasta Dvorakova,<sup>39</sup> claiming that the narrative cycle is Byzantine in origin. To better understand the motivations behind the perspective put forward and undertaken by the Romanian art historian, we need to take a brief but closer look at the period in which the thesis was proposed, as well as the researcher's academic and professional background. Drăguț was a prominent figure in the Romanian visual arts scene, particularly during the communist era. He graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Bucharest and later from the Nicolae Grigorescu Institute of Fine Arts. However, he faced obstacles to enrollment due to his anti-communist stance. He subsequently held key positions in heritage preservation and the visual arts, serving as both editor for numerous specialised journals and authoring significant studies on medieval art in Romania and beyond.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Vasile Drăguț, 'Legenda 'eroului de frontieră' în pictura medievală din Transilvania,' in *Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor – Monumente Istorice și de Artă*, (44/1), 1975, p. 21–38.

<sup>39</sup> Vlasta Dvořáková, 'La légende de Saint Ladislav découverte dans l'église de Velká Lomnica,' in *Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice* (41/4), 1972, p. 25–42.

<sup>40</sup> Caterina Preda, 'Vasile Drăguț în dosarele Securității. Robert, Drăgan. Dragu,' în *Manuscriptum* 1 (2016), p. 351.

The study that is of significant interest to this research was published at an opportune moment, considering the historical and social context, particularly during the last two decades of the Ceaușescu regime in Romania. According to researcher Crina Preda, the 1970s and 1980s were characterised by sustained connections with foreign researchers and individuals within Romania.<sup>41</sup> It is highly likely that this 'liberalisation', which facilitated the formation of connections between foreign and local researchers, laid the groundwork for art historian Vasile Drăguț's view on the origins of the legend of Saint Ladislav. In this context, Drăguț embraced the hypothesis proposed by Vlasta Dvorakova in her 1972 study published in the *Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice*, where he also served as a member of the editorial board.<sup>42</sup> Considering the fresco discovered in the sacristy of the church in Velka Lomnica (Spis County), it is suggested that this historical tradition has its origins in the Byzantine world, finding its equivalent in the figure of the frontier hero.<sup>43</sup> Four years later, Vasile Drăguț joins the same interpretative direction. He suggests that the legitimization of the cult of Saint Ladislav required the development of a hagiographical motif, deriving from the exemplary archetype embodied in the legend of Digenis Akritas, a tale of an ideal Byzantine warrior.<sup>44</sup> Drăguț's analysis of the *historia* of Saint Ladislav suggests that the composer of the fresco cycle possessed a sympathetic understanding of the Byzantine-Arabic legends of the frontier hero. Judging from the geographical spread of these paintings, the author believes that Saint Ladislav also continued to be a hero of the kingdom's eastern borders, and that's why the fresco cycles were painted in those regions during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>45</sup>

Regarding the revisionist points of view expressed by Romanian historians are relatively limited and primarily articulated through brief statements that clarify their positions on the origins of the narrative cycle. For example, Dragoș Gheorghe Năstăsioiu, in his undergraduate thesis, aligns with Hungarian revisionist perspectives by proposing a Western

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<sup>41</sup> Preda, 'Forms of collaboration of visual artists in communist Romania of the 70s and 80s,' in *Hungarian Historical Review*, (4/1, 2015), p. 177.

<sup>42</sup> Iozefina Postăvaru, Vasile Drăguț. 'Repere Biografice. Opera,' in *BCMASI*, (12-16/1, 2005), p. 170.

<sup>43</sup> Dvorakova, 'La légende de Saint Ladislav,' p. 32.

<sup>44</sup> Drăguț, 'Legenda Eroului de frontieră,' p. 24.

<sup>45</sup> Drăguț, 'Legenda Eroului de Frontieră,' p. 24, 28.

origin for the narrative.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, Dana Jenei claims that the legend of Saint Ladislav developed within the theological environment of the Oradea Cathedral, supported by the Angevin kings, where the king's relics were housed. However, she provides no further supporting evidence for her assertion.<sup>47</sup>

In examining the origins of the visual narratives dedicated to the legend of Saint Ladislav, it becomes clear that Hungarian historiography has been significantly influenced by Turanist ideology since the early twentieth century. This ideological framework emerged during a period of intellectual crisis in Hungary, prompting historians to search for roots that would reinforce national identity. Figures such as Nagy Géza and Feticsch Nándor proposed the hypothesis that the narrative cycles find pertinent analogies in the Eurasian steppes, aligning their interpretations with the broader nationalist and self-orientalizing sentiments prevalent during and after World War I. These early interpretations laid the groundwork for a persistent paradigm in Hungarian art history that continues to resonate in contemporary scholarship.

As the political landscape shifted throughout World War II and into the Soviet occupation, the narrative around Saint Ladislav did not change. Instead, the discourse surrounding the knight-king remained dominated by Turanist perspectives, as scholars like Vargyas Lajos and László Gyula reinforced the idea of Eurasian influences on the visual narratives. Even as Hungary faced isolation under communist rule, these interpretations endured, showing resilience in the face of changing political ideologies. The 1980s relaxation of political control sparked a renewed interest in reevaluating these narratives, leading to a 'Europeanization' of historical discourse that emphasized the connections between Hungarian medieval art and Western traditions. The post-1989 era marked a significant turning point, as the fall of communism allowed for the re-emergence of Turanist themes alongside new scholarly explorations. Researchers like László Gyula and Tamás Sashalmi Fekete continued to draw connections between the visual narratives of Saint Ladislav and Eurasian cultural heritage, while also exploring the influence of Caucasian and Iranian traditions. This dual focus on both the historical roots

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<sup>46</sup> Dragoş Gheorghe Năstăsioiu, *Reprezentări ale Sfântului Ladislav în pictura murală din Transilvania*, Bachelor thesis defended at the National University of Arts in Bucharest, (Bucharest, 2007-2008), p. 11.

<sup>47</sup> Dana Jenei, *Pictura murală gotică din Transilvania*, (Noi Media Print, Bucureşti, 2007), p. 49.

of the legend and its potential connections to broader cultural narratives illustrates the complex interplay between national identity, ideology, and historical interpretation in Hungarian historiography.

In contrast, Romanian historiography presents a more limited exploration of the origins of the visual narratives related to Saint Ladislaus. While Vasile Drăguț initiated a traditional perspective echoing earlier Hungarian scholarship, revisionist viewpoints in Romania are sparse and often lack comprehensive analysis. This disparity underscores the need for further research in the Romanian context, as well as a more thorough examination of the influences and connections that have shaped both Hungarian and Romanian narratives of the holy-king. As historiographical discourse evolves, it is essential to consider how historical, cultural, and ideological factors continue to influence the interpretation of Saint Ladislaus's legacy in both countries.

# Disruptive History: Reflections from a Siberian Interdisciplinary Research Lab

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**Abstract:** In the late 2010s a Russian business school launched a radical experiment in higher education. The School of Advanced Studies (SAS) in Tyumen was intended as a ground-breaking greenfield project, hiring researchers to work in interdisciplinary teams and address problems of relevance to the widest possible audience. Within this environment, an exciting new strain of revisionism emerged: Disruptive History, which aimed to challenge some of the core methods and principles of the field, while using the past to upend and reframe discussions in other branches of the humanities. Giving an intellectual genealogy of this experiment, in this article I trace its origins to two separate discussions taking place among the post-Superpowers in the 1990s. Exploring these two seemingly disparate ideas — the logic of disruption, first diagnosed at Harvard Business School, and the logic of Methodology, which influenced Russian intellectual and political culture in the immediate post-Soviet era — I show how they fused to create the unusual research ethos of our school. And, by reflecting on the historical scholarship produced at SAS Tyumen, I offer a candid analysis of the general historical principles they suggested. At work in this experiment, I suggest, was not just a critique of traditional methodologies, but also an affirmative sense that history must be seen as a chain of radical transformations.

**Keywords:** disruptive history; interdisciplinarity; methodology; post-Soviet.

**Rezumat:** La sfârșitul anilor 2010, o școală de studii economice și gestiunea afacerilor din Rusia a lansat un experiment radical în învățământul superior. Școala de Studii Avansate (SAS) din Tyumen a fost concepută ca un proiect inovator, angajând cercetători pentru a lucra în echipe interdisciplinare și a aborda probleme relevante pentru un public cât mai larg posibil. În acest context, a apărut o nouă tendință interesantă de revizionism: istoria disruptivă, care avea ca scop să conteste unele dintre metodele și principiile de bază ale domeniului, utilizând în același timp

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trecutul pentru a răsturna și a reformula discuțiile din alte ramuri ale științelor umaniste. Prezentând genealogia intelectuală a acestui experiment, în acest articol urmăresc originile acestui fenomen până la două discuții separate care au avut loc între superputeri în anii 1990. Explorând aceste două idei aparent disparate – logica perturbării, diagnosticată pentru prima dată la Harvard Business School, și logica metodologiei, care a influențat cultura intelectuală și politică rusă în perioada imediat post-sovietică – arăt cum s-au contopit pentru a crea etosul de cercetare neobișnuit al școlii noastre. Și, reflectând asupra cercetării istorice produse la SAS Tyumen, ofer o analiză sinceră a principiilor istorice generale pe care le-au sugerat. În acest experiment, sugerez, nu a fost doar o critică a metodologiilor tradiționale, ci și un sentiment afirmativ că istoria trebuie văzută ca un lanț de transformări radicale.

**Cuvinte cheie:** istorie disruptivă; interdisciplinaritate; metodologie; post-sovietism.

## Introduction

For four years I was part of an interdisciplinary research team at the University of Tyumen in Siberia. My colleagues were Anthropologists, Literary Critics, Political Theorists, Philosophers, and other Historians. Our faculty was organized into several research teams, each of which worked on a different philosophical problem. One team, whose members included a physicist, a lawyer, and another historian, worked on the puzzle “Do humans have free will?”. Another, which had a Shakespearean, an IT specialist, a management scholar, and an archaeologist, was answering the question “Is rationality a cultural construct?” For a while I was a member of a team focusing on the problem “What is love?” And to be honest, I have never enjoyed research more. But unfortunately, life in our team was cut a little short. Some of our members lost their contracts, others quit academia altogether, and others found new jobs far away from the ice and snow.

What was the point of our interdisciplinary adventure? And what might it reveal about how revisionism operates in the field of History today? Our institution was a small liberal arts college called the School of Advanced Studies (SAS), an island of English-language research and teaching within the wider state university. We existed to produce cutting-edge interdisciplinary articles and books, the type of work that was supposed to catch the attention



of global academic audiences. And although we were a scrambled set of teams, within this wider goal we shared another common mission. It was a mission our director underlined for us in regular faculty meetings, and which many of us took to heart: “*Disrupt your disciplines!*” Only by breaking the codes of our formal training, we were told, could we begin to generate truly ground-breaking work in our fields.

What did “disrupting our disciplines” mean in practice? While the idea was perhaps intentionally open, over the course of my four years at SAS I developed an increasingly vivid sense of what this involved. It meant sidestepping the technical vocabulary of our training, and trying to write in terms that would be understood by intellectually-engaged readers everywhere. It meant working in teams and addressing ourselves to problems that mattered not only to academics but also to wider stakeholders, especially in politics and industry. And it meant flipping all our old departmental colleagues’ dogmas on their heads and experimenting with doing the opposite. If they drank coffee, we should drink tea. If they crunched statistics, we should do qualitative research. If they were Hegelians, we should pick up Carla Lonzi’s book *Let’s Spit on Hegel!* We were to be true “revisionists”, challenging received wisdom and breaking hegemonic paradigms wherever we found them. As a brief, to me it seemed almost irresistible.

Of course there was a catch to all of this. But at least, it seemed, it was an obvious catch. *The impracticality of it all.* We were based in a small Siberian city, we had no proper English-language library, and nearly all of us were recent PhD graduates. While not being cossetted at a place like MIT seemed to be an advantage for launching a disciplinary revolution, our handicaps of location, accumulated faculty wisdom, and resources seemed a little steep. But as I continued working in Siberia a larger problem swam into view; a problem that might be familiar to anybody who has either studied at or experienced the functioning of Russian institutions in the Putin era.<sup>1</sup> Our disruptive academic project was itself disrupted; it was beset by obstacles, with a spate of firings and job cuts, perhaps motivated by the need to cut costs or perhaps by the pressure of being forced to meet extraordinary high standards, deflating the idealistic spirit of our first few months.

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<sup>1</sup> This observation, connecting our school to wider Russian institutional challenges, was later made in print in Vladimir Gel’man, *The Politics of Bad Governance in Contemporary Russia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2023), p.132.

In this article I will contextualize our school's revisionism by exploring how it was influenced by two forms of "disruption": one inherited from the American business world, and the other from Late-Soviet theories of pedagogy. This will involve a deep dive into the 1990s, and an appreciation of how globalizing visionaries at Harvard Business School and post-Soviet management scholars on the outskirts of Moscow crafted complementary theories of institutional reform that have, arguably, mapped the educational dilemmas of the present moment. Addressing mechanics, I will next explain how these two revisionist principles operated in the day-to-day practice of our school, offering reflections on my own experiences and the research I produced while I was working at SAS. Finally, I will try to reflect on the larger logic of the "disruptive history" we produced in Tyumen, suggesting how some of these ideas of disruptive scholarship reflect current movements in the organization of academic research globally.

## **Disruption**

"Disruption" first entered public discourse as a concept in 1995, with the publication of an article in the journal *Harvard Business Review*, "Disruptive Technologies: Catching the Wave," by Joseph Bower and Clayton Christensen. According to Christensen, whose later book *The Innovator's Dilemma* sketched out the theory's parameters, disruption is a model of business innovation that favours under-resourced entrants into a market. Disruption begins when a small company enters at the lowest end of a market, with the specific mission of targeting new users or consumers. And disruption culminates when that company then builds up enough resources to scale up so that it can outcompete existing companies, both in terms of sales and performance. At its essence, therefore, disruption is one of the archetypical strategies of the business start-up. It is a foundational method for unsettling existing industries, characterized by introducing simpler or cheaper products as a way of making space for new revenue streams within markets.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Joseph L. Bower and Clayton M. Christensen, 'Disruptive Technologies: Catching the Wave,' *Harvard Business Review* (January-February, 1995); and Clayton M. Christensen, *The Innovator's Dilemma: When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1997). For more recent discussion, which points out among other details a spike of interest in

Netflix is a classic example of disruption. Founded in 1997, the same year as Christensen published *The Innovator's Dilemma*, Netflix set out to target the minority of consumers interested in obscure back-catalogue films. But this was only the opening gambit of the company's larger strategy. While building up resources from this stream of offbeat consumers, the directors were simultaneously pumping investment into advanced technological capabilities for processing and distributing video directly through the internet. All of this meant that when online streaming became a possibility in the late-2000s Netflix was primed to eviscerate their competitors, and notably the market-leader Blockbuster Video. From 9,000 stores worldwide in 2004, Blockbuster dwindled to just a single outlet still in operation today (located in Bend, Oregon, USA).<sup>3</sup> And few would disagree that this change in fortunes was down to Netflix's ruthless strategy. It should be clarified that disruption is more often a temporary process than a state of perpetual revolution; and after achieving market hegemony Netflix ultimately came to rely on the more established and stabilized business structures that had once characterized Blockbuster. Nevertheless, their disruptive approach was decisive, allowing them to blindside their opposition, capitalize on customers who wanted to pay the lowest prices, and then use those resources to capture the mainstream and high-end markets for themselves.<sup>4</sup>

Why dwell on Netflix like this? One of the defining assumptions of disruptive thinking, as this case shows, is that success is a zero-sum game. And "disrupters" often speak about corporate strategy using a "survival-of-the-fittest" vocabulary. As the scholar Joshua Gans has put it, businesses who confront disruption often find themselves in the position of "pandas and polar bears," struggling "to survive the depredations of humanity."<sup>5</sup> For

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disruption around 2018, the first full calendar year of our school's operation, see Steven Si and Hui Chen, 'A Literature Review of Disruptive Innovation: What It Is, How it Works and Where it Goes,' *Journal of Engineering and Technology Management* 56 (2020). For the characterization of disruption as a method in start-ups, see Simone Sehnem et al., 'Disruptive Innovation and Circularity in Start-Ups: A Path to Sustainable Development,' *Business Strategy and the Environment* 31: 4 (2022): 1292–1307.

<sup>3</sup> Stephanie Clifford, 'Other Retailers Find Ex-Blockbuster Stores Just Right,' *The New York Times* (April 8, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> For a critical discussion of Netflix through the disruption model, making this same caveat, see Hendrik Michael, Sophie Reitmeier, and Miriam Czichon, 'Netflix and Kill?,' *Medien & Kommunikationswissenschaft* 68: 4 (2020).

<sup>5</sup> Joshua Gans, 'The Other Disruption,' *Harvard Business Review* (March 2016).

the disrupter to win, in this logic, it is automatically assumed that rival incumbent businesses will have to lose. As a consequence, the principle of disruptive innovation often ends up producing a business landscape in which creation is implicitly predicated on destruction, growth is built upon decline, and creation is based on extinction.

But disruption has another facet; a pattern that, on reflection, made it ideally suited for our under-resourced school in Siberia. Strategies of disruption are uniquely designed to suit the underdog. Whitney Johnson, the CEO of a company called Disruption Advisors, argues in her book *Disrupt Yourself* that resource constraints are usually considered productive advantages among disruptive companies, as they give businesses “something to push against.” If a start-up doesn’t have enough time, this can be an advantage as it allows them to strip down and focus on a single challenge. If they are short of money, this only “make[s] business owners impatient for profits,” and consequently incentivizes rapid progress. Likewise, a lack of expertise can be useful as it introduces a fresh take on old challenges, empowering thinkers unencumbered by tired industry dogmas. Constraints, in other words, are “valuable tools of creation;” tools that can help disruptors gain ground on the established leaders within their industry.<sup>6</sup>

Over the past two decades, this Harvard theory of disruptive innovation has gradually become hegemonic at business schools globally.<sup>7</sup> This includes the Skolkovo School of Management, the developer of SAS Tyumen, which I will come to below. But the Harvard theory of disruption is not sufficient for understanding the logic of revisionism at our liberal arts college in Siberia on its own; it is also necessary to supplement it by exploring a second theory of disruption. Rather than a business model, this disruption originated in the sphere of education itself. And rather than the sunny optimistic climate of Clinton-era America, it emerged from the Soviet Union of Nikita Khrushchev, before being brought to institutional practice in the 1990s of Boris Yeltsin.

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<sup>6</sup> Whitney Johnson, *Disrupt Yourself* (London: Routledge, 2015), chapter 3.

<sup>7</sup> John Bessant, ‘Disruptive innovation in the Higher Education Sector: The Case of the One Planet MBA,’ in *Practicing Responsibility in Business Schools*, edited by Bjørn T. Asheim, Thomas Laudal, and Reidar J. Mykletun (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023), pp.214–225.

“Methodology” was a transformative theory of institutional and educational reform, first developed in the late 1950s by the philosopher Georgiy Petrovich Shchedrovitsky (known to his followers as GP). It reached its highest articulation in the writings and organizational events produced by the Moscow Methodological Circle (MMC), which continued to publish and promote its work after Shchedrovitsky’s death in 1994. At its essence, Methodology was a system for grounding all human projects in holistic, co-operative, and interdisciplinary problem-solving. As well as a radical blueprint for restructuring education and research in Russia and beyond, it stood as a Soviet-friendly alternative to the hegemonic western approaches that were then already dominating global approaches to the sciences and humanities.

What precisely did this mean? While it is difficult to reduce the complexity of either GP’s thought or the MMC’s vision to a core set of principles, a survey of Shchedrovitsky’s keystone lecture series, *Organization, Management, Control* (*Организация. Руководство. Управление*), suggests the following three maxims:

- 1) Researchers should take a problem-oriented approach, rather than a discipline-centric one. That is, instead of thinking about questions that have emerged internally within their disciplines, they should pay attention to larger real-world challenges that need solving, while remaining open about the academic or research techniques that may be required for solving them.
- 2) Researchers should operate within organized systems (or polysystems) of teams, structured around their problem-oriented approach. As different problems may require different systems, prompting different configuration of both organization and management, these systems should be agile, so that they may be adapted and customized fluidly.
- 3) Researchers should work co-operatively, blending the insights of different disciplines so that the product of one person’s work may become the source material for others in a series of supportive connections.<sup>8</sup>

Methodology, therefore, was an attempt to “disrupt” all mental activity, from research and teaching to engineering projects, work programmes, and government policy. It demanded an enormous cultural shift, away from individualistic expertise and towards an interdisciplinary, systematized, and

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<sup>8</sup> Г.П. Щедровицкий, *Организация. Руководство. Управление* (Москва, 2003).

co-operative intellectual praxis. Or rather, it sought out “the development of new means, methods and forms of *supra-subject* and *trans-professional* thinking”.<sup>9</sup>

A few general philosophical points can be drawn from this brief overview. Methodology was, first of all, a theory that explicitly subordinated the individual to the team, as well as to the project or problem with which they were engaged. “In production,” as GP put it, “I must make myself a cog and be extremely disciplined.”<sup>10</sup> Addressing this specific problem of teambuilding, the MMC organized a series of popular “problem solving” seminars in Moscow in the 1980s. At these events, a group of participants (for example, the team members of a single university department) gathered together to play “organizational games,” in which they experimented with their working methods by engaging in hypothetical solutions for often unsolvable problems. In one game, for example, participants were asked to come up with a way to decommission the power unit of the Beloyarsk Nuclear Power Plant.<sup>11</sup> Another involved coming up with ways to get the bodies of frozen mountain climbers down from the upper reaches of the Himalayas. By playing these games, teams were expected to become newly conscious of how they operated in the process. But they could also use these experiences to identify non-cooperatives, or otherwise troublesome team players, allowing for new techniques of organization or management control.

Reflecting on Shchedrovitsky’s theory of Methodology from the vantage point of sixty years later, it’s tempting to compare it to another experiment in “disruptive innovation” from the Soviet era: *Perestroika*, the attempt to restructure the economic system under Mikhail Gorbachev in the 1980s.<sup>12</sup> Like Gorbachev, GP was passionately committed to reinvigorating what he believed was the lost spirit of Soviet collectivism. And like *perestroika*,

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<sup>9</sup> А.Ч. Зинченко, *Путеводитель по основным понятиям и схемам методологии Организации, Руководства и Управления* (Москва: Дело, 2004), p.169. Also, for wider context and a retrospective reflection on the contribution of the MMC from a member, see Vadim M. Rozin, ‘The Moscow Methodological Circle: Its Main Ideas and Evolution,’ *Social Epistemology* 31:1 (2017), pp.78–92.

<sup>10</sup> Г.П. Щедровицкий, *Организация. Руководство. Управление*, p.34.

<sup>11</sup> This example is from Илья Венявкин, ‘Человек, который придумал деукраинизировать Украину,’ *Холод* 10/06/22 [Илья Venyakvin, “The Person Who Conceived the Destruction of Ukraine”], <https://holod.media/2022/06/10/sergeitsev/> [Accessed March 2024].

<sup>12</sup> Chris Miller, *The Struggle to Save the Soviet Economy: Mikhail Gorbachev and the Collapse of the USSR* (UNC Chapel Hill Press, 2016); Vladislav Zubok, *Collapse: The Fall of the Soviet Union* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021).

Shchedrovitsky's Methodology was an ambitious and wide-ranging attempt to unify something that had become fractured. It was meant to "integrate the split off branches of science and technology," GP claimed, in a bid to devise both a "common language and homogenous methods of thinking for all spheres of activity and work" to "finally create a single reality for modern science, technology, and practical activity."<sup>13</sup> Finally, both Gorbachev and GP wanted a type of reform that would embrace technological acceleration. While *perestroika* sought to shock the USSR out of its Brezhnev era stagnation and into a rapidly emerging, technologically-dependent world, advocates of Methodology embraced new technologies, to the point (critics have argued) of seeing the human itself as a technological entity to be engineered and manipulated.<sup>14</sup>

But *perestroika* hardly translated into the Russia of Yeltsin, let alone the Russia of Putin's fourth or fifth term as president. By contrast, GP's core ideas were still proving decisively influential in educational practice in Russia in the 2010s. One latter-day disciple of the MMC, a lecturer at Baikal State University named Uri Beryozkin, described in a 2016 lecture series to his graduate students how GP's problem-based, interdisciplinary agenda was currently being adopted by "a number of institutions" across Russia. He singled out the Skolkovo School of Management in Moscow, where he said the Methodological approach was still being used to "unstuck" (or disrupt) practices of knowledge that were otherwise at risk of becoming static.

In Russia before the revolution, and even now, in today's Russia — in particular in the Skolkovo business school, for example — they use such a technique: They invite experts working with different, sometimes directly opposed approaches to give alternative lectures discussing the same discipline. One speaks from his own position, while the other speaks from the opposite position about the same thing. And due to such a "clash" of consciousness, it is possible to peel off what is "stuck" and tear it off.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Г.П. Щедровицкий, "Принципы и общая схема методологической организации системно-структурных исследований и разработок" [G.P. Shchedrovitsky, "Methodological organization of system-structural research and development: principles and general framework"], *Sistemnyie Issledovaniia*, 1981: 193-227. Translated by Anatol Rapoport, <https://www.fondgp.ru/old/lib/int/4/> [Accessed March 2024].

<sup>14</sup> This criticism is made in Венявкин, "Человек."

<sup>15</sup> Ю.М. Берёзкин, *Методология Научных Исследований (Деятельностный Подход)* (Иркутск: БГУ, 2016), 8. [Uri Mikhailovich Beryozkin, *Methodological Scientific Studies*]

How could a fifty-year-old theory still be so influential? Beryozkin made a point of noting that GP's son Pyotr ("a Methodologist since childhood," as he describes him) was a key mover and shaker in Russian academia, working hard to promote his father's model of innovation. As well as presiding over a foundation dedicated to GP's thought, Pyotr was head of a department at the Moscow Engineering Physics Institute, a member of the Board of Trustees of the Siberian Federal University in Krasnoyarsk, and a professor at Skolkovo School of Management. Most importantly, he was an advisor on education policy at the Kremlin, where he was so influential, at least according to Beryozkin's assessment, that "whatever the Minister of Education and Science is doing now with universities is largely his prompting."<sup>16</sup> Pyotr, it should be noted, resigned any affiliation with Russian governmental institutions on February 24<sup>th</sup> 2022, hours after the invasion of Ukraine.<sup>17</sup>

But the most direct link, connecting the approach I experienced at the School of Advanced Studies in Tyumen with GP's theory of Methodology, was a man named Andrei Volkov. An intellectual with extraordinary energy, Volkov once climbed Mount Everest and often used this as a metaphor for overcoming challenges in the world of education. Originally trained in engineering, he first attended one of GP's organizational games in 1990. He soon became a passionate advocate for Methodology and began putting the principles into practice, first working as part of a team that built and remodelled the Togliatti Academy of Management in Russia's Samara Oblast between 1992–96.<sup>18</sup> Volkov went on to become the founding Dean at Skolkovo Business School in 2006, where interdisciplinary teaching and research and real-word problem-based learning became foundational.<sup>19</sup>

By the 2010s Volkov was advocating an even more ambitious shift in the structure and approach of universities in Russia. And although he was doing so largely along GP's lines, he also at this point began blending in the kind of agenda more familiar to the Harvard Business School. Russia's

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<sup>16</sup> Берёзкин, *Методология*, 19–20.

<sup>17</sup> See Pyotr's interview with Mikhail Zygar, dated June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2022: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQxR4PPj\\_9Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQxR4PPj_9Y) [Accessed March 2024].

<sup>18</sup> Details from Andrei Volkov's profile at the website dedicated to the Moscow Methodological Circle, <https://www.fondgp.ru/mmk/persons/волков-андрей-евгеньевич/> [Accessed March 2024].

<sup>19</sup> See comments by Elizabeth Redden, 'Reform at the Top,' *Inside Higher Ed* (January 29, 2013), <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/01/30/new-russian-technical-university-has-high-aspirations> [Accessed March 2024].



university policy was far too centralized, he argued, and greater autonomy and space for experimentation would be required for institutions to compete on the global stage.<sup>20</sup> An important motivator for this shift, Volkov felt, was the fact that universities needed to begin training people for a transforming economy. What Russia needed, he said, was “an increase in practice-oriented education under the control of employers,” and a teaching environment where education would be “tailored to [the] needs” of corporations. In this new university future, Volkov believed that “educational standards” themselves should no longer be “developed by the ministry,” but rather built by measuring up to “professional standards.”<sup>21</sup>

And this is where we come to my own institution in Tyumen. Volkov’s passion for reform found a new outlet in 2016, when one of his colleagues at Skolkovo, a PhD graduate from Berkeley named Andrey Shcherbenok, began collaborating with the rector of Tyumen State University Valery Falkov to set up the School of Advanced Studies.<sup>22</sup> Conceived as a Greenfield project, both in the sense that it was to be an entirely new institution and that it would be built in the relatively underexploited location of western Siberia, SAS Tyumen was effectively a laboratory for putting Volkov’s revolutionary schema to the test.<sup>23</sup> It was propelled by funding from Russia’s 5–100 Project, the state-backed initiative to get five Russian universities ranked among the global top 100 by the year 2020.<sup>24</sup> And it set about hiring faculty with a distinctly Shchedrovitsky-inspired approach. Candidates for permanent academic positions were invited to a Project Design Session in Tyumen in March 2017. Led by Shcherbenok, the candidates were

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<sup>20</sup> Andrei Volkov and Dara Melnyk, ‘University Autonomy and Accountability in Russian Higher Education,’ *International Higher Education* 94 (2018), pp.31–33.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Нерешаемые задачи как основа высшего образования,’ *Вопросы Образования* 1:1 (2013), pp.273–278. [“Unsolvable Problems as a Basis of Higher Education,” Interview with Andrei Volkov conducted by E.N. Penskaya].

<sup>22</sup> For an overview of SAS and its mission, see Victoria Burnside Clapp, Alexandra Kozulina, and Nikki Lohr, ‘Reimagining Russian Higher Education: Could an experiment in progressive education in Siberia help transform Russia’s universities?’, *Stanford Us-Russia Forum Journal*. 12: 1 (2020).

<sup>23</sup> See the pamphlet, Andrei Volkov and Denis Konanchuk, *Greenfield Era in Education* (Moscow: Skolkovo Education Development Centre, 2014).

<sup>24</sup> Andrei Volkov, Yaroslav Kuzminov, and Maria Yudkevich, ‘A Project for the Elite that Changed the System as a Whole: A Case Study of Project 5–100,’ in *Academic Star Wars: Excellence Initiatives in Global Perspective*, edited by Maria Yudkevich, Philip G. Altbach, Jamil Salmi (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2023), pp.203–225.

given three days to form teams and devise collaborative interdisciplinary projects of their own. Presentations were filmed and broadcast over a local network, and a month later more than a dozen individuals, from Belgium, Ireland, Poland, the UK, and the USA, as well as Russia, were offered jobs to join the new institution in the coming September.

## **A Siberian Research Lab**

So far, I have outlined two very different principles of “disruption”. One — inherited from the American business world and typically associated with Silicon Valley start-ups — takes disruption as the tool of the underdog, weaponizing a lack of resources in a strategic approach to cornering markets and destroying commercial opponents. The other — inherited from Late-Soviet Russia — takes disruption as a mode of radical institutional reform, in which an old system, defined by conventional disciplinary thinking, individualistic project efforts, and the pursuit of knowledge for knowledge’s sake, is upended by an interdisciplinary, collaborative, system-based and problem-oriented approach to knowledge. But how did these two approaches impact the research of those who worked at the School of Advanced Studies in Siberia? And how, for those of us who were historians, did they influence our revisionism?

At this point I am going to provide a series of personal anecdotes and reflections. While they represent my own experiences, they also form a partial dialogue with the view of our institution sketched in an article published by my colleague, Natalia Savalyeva.<sup>25</sup> Some of what I have to say may sound critical, and some of it may sound like an apology for the institution. I have to admit, I was a passionate advocate of the type of scholarship (and the revisionist history it produced) while I worked in Siberia, and I genuinely believed that as a community of scholars we could build academic bridges, open international dialogues, and even maybe contribute to the making of an alternative Russian future. But I also admit that the whole experience sometimes wore me down to the point of depression, exasperation, and even

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<sup>25</sup> Natalia Savalyeva, ‘How ‘Love What You Do’ Went Wrong in an ‘Academic Sweatshop’ in Siberia,’ *Open Democracy* (13 Marc 2020): <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/how-love-what-you-do-went-wrong-in-an-academic-sweatshop-in-siberia/> [Accessed March 2024].

despair. All the same, I hold no ill will towards anybody at SAS, past or present, and with respect to my former colleagues, the students, to the staff, and to the management of our school, I will try to be as candid and objective as I possibly can.

The first time I sensed any influence of Harvard's "disruptive innovation" agenda at SAS was in an early faculty meeting in late 2017. Our director had encouraged us all to watch the movie *Moneyball* (dir. Bennett Miller, 2011), and he had set aside time for us to meet and discuss our reactions. In the film, Brad Pitt plays the role of Billy Beane, an unorthodox baseball general manager in charge of a struggling team named Oakland Athletics. With weaker players than their rivals, and poorer resources, the Athletics are obviously disadvantaged. But, through statistical in-game analysis pioneered by Beane in conjunction with a Yale economics graduate named Peter Brand (Jonah Hill), they manage to win a record 20 consecutive games and top the American League West. Essentially, they achieve this by exploiting the peculiar strengths of their existing players, while crunching analytics of match scenarios to reveal the simple hacks that will give their team marginal gains. *Moneyball* is therefore a classic "rags to riches" tale, although with the twist that it is cunning and logical skill, rather than moral probity or inherent talent, that is shown as the key ingredient of success.

After we all shared our initial responses to *Moneyball*, our director made the analogy to our own situation crystal clear. "Look at yourselves" he said. "Aren't you also the underdogs, like them? Aren't you the underdogs of global academia? I mean, have any of you published your books with Cambridge University Press yet?" This may have been an awkward thing to say, but it was also technically true. Given that we were scholars near the bottom of the pile, though, what were we supposed to do about it? What was *Moneyball's* inspirational message, exactly? For an underdog Siberian institution to compete with Harvard or Oxford, we needed to find a similar method for capitalizing on our strengths and exploiting marginal gains. And that day, in that overheated seminar room of a Soviet-era library building, we were told that we as a group currently had two unique assets. We had an unexpected cohesion, as a set of outsiders all gathered in a relatively strange place. And we had our unique research team model, which compelled us to work outside our disciplines. What we needed to do now, it seemed, was to enter the relatively under-developed "market" of interdisciplinary group projects in the humanities. Then our start-up could begin to grow wings.

If this business model was easy enough to grasp from the start of my time at SAS, our school's Methodological agenda only dawned on me gradually. My first vivid awakening came on Christmas Day 2017. Two men flew over from Skolkovo in Moscow that morning, offering to run a workshop for our research team. At that time, our team's question was "What is Love?" Standing next to a flipchart, one of the two men asked the five of us "What is the problem you want to solve? The real-world problem?" And then he motioned out of the window, towards the cars below our building. "*The problem out there.*" For three hours, as my colleagues explained the value of new theories of materiality in the humanities, I tried to make medieval ideas of love fit a distinct real-world challenge. It was refreshing, daunting, and felt counter-intuitive to my academic training. But what I eventually came up with, although both awkward and naïve, was an idea I was attracted to. *Theories of love in the 1100s were about overcoming the self through a mystical engagement with the natural world; Can we reimagine our relation to the climate by reading Bernard of Clairvaux?*

An important maxim at SAS was striving to work harder than our counterparts back in our home countries. Our director had previously been a Society of Fellows scholar at Columbia University in New York, and his contention was that their formula — giving scholars ideal amounts of time, money, and space to work — ended up producing lazy professors and mediocre research. He believed, understandably for a product of Skolkovo and GP's framework of Methodological theory, that academics needed to be managed. And so consequently our faculty's time was highly organized. Aside from a packed teaching schedule (our quota ultimately rose to 256 hours per year for each professor), we were asked to pitch videos for popular science websites and produce open lecture series. We were also invited to do tours of schools and festival talks in Moscow, where we would make the case for our innovative teaching and group projects. For my part, I was asked to make a YouTube video series on the Seven Deadly Sins, with 24 lectures thinly spread across a seven-week period. As I loved giving lectures, this was probably good management of me as a resource. But as I often had to stay up until 3am preparing, it may not have been the best management of me as a human.

For many of us at SAS, all these research and teaching commitments came to disrupt our personal lives. But what happened to those of us who felt burned out? An important feature of the movie *Moneyball* is that Brad Pitt's coach character ruthlessly protects the team spirit at all costs. If he butts

up against an uncooperative player he fires him, especially if that player otherwise commands the respect of the team. The logic of these firings, at least in the movie, dovetails with a major principle of disruptive innovation: trimming away elements that hinder a company's ability to focus on its collective goals.<sup>26</sup> At SAS Tyumen, the faculty were expected to buy into the interdisciplinary project idea wholesale, and to focus on it with a similar intensity. Our contracts contained a stipulation: any faculty member in the second year of their contract or later who failed to publish at least one article per year in a Q1 or Q2 journal would have their bonus salary removed for the following year, an intervention that amounted to an effective 80% pay cut. Unfortunately, these pay cuts (or similar punitive measures) were imposed on quite a few colleagues.

From a business standpoint, there may be nothing shocking about this type of intervention. Within the sphere of academic research, the threat of an 80% salary reduction seemed like an unwelcome novelty; especially as some journals could slip from Q2 to Q3 in the time it took to accept an article for publication. It was certainly a double-edged sword from a management perspective, as it drove faculty to apply for new jobs while desperately trying to crank out articles. Overall, however, this policy made total sense within the framework of Harvard's disruptive innovation. Because the real untapped market the school wanted to exploit — their secret weapon against the big hitters — was not so much the interdisciplinary research, or the Methodological system-based teaching model (although both were genuinely valuable). It was the abundance of well-qualified and talented English-speaking PhDs, who, due to low demand for permanent positions in the US and UK throughout the late 2010s and early 2020s, had few alternative job prospects.

But it would be too simplistic and cynical to reduce SAS to this logic. While many of us who worked under these conditions were tempted to blame our immediate bosses, the real problem was much more likely systemic. As Vladimir Gel'man's recent study of Russian institutional change in the Putin era has observed, ambitious projects like SAS have been hampered by short-term thinking and by the general instability of the Russian political landscape. With "time horizon[s] ... limited by the terms and conditions of personalist rule," such initiatives often clash against those in power, who tend to choose only "those policy priorities that may bring quick and visible returns

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<sup>26</sup> Johnson, *Disrupt Yourself*, ch.3.

accompanied by a number of demonstrative effects.”<sup>27</sup> In other words, the ambitions of SAS were likely beset by resource issues, and by a funding model that favoured immediate results rather than the kind of slow-burning investment in researchers that the best institutions typically rely upon. Although the underdog logic of disruptive innovation may have initially justified this approach, making a truly innovative Shchedrovitsky experiment work might have required, like Netflix, a more gradual and patient approach.

### **Disruptive Research Outputs**

Up to this point in the article I have spoken exclusively about methods and theories, models and initiatives. But what about the actual historical research itself? What kind of writing came out of our experiment at SAS? And did it manage to disrupt anything at all, or else help to advance any innovative species of historical work? Detailing the historical methods of our teams in Tyumen, I am going to reflect both on the published writing and the ongoing research of myself and my colleagues. Ultimately, I will try to evaluate where — if at all — this work fitted within James Banner’s recent taxonomy of revisionism.

At SAS I was a member of two research teams: *Material Relations* (2017–2019), which attempted to find new approaches to materiality and especially the ontology of the nonhuman; and *Laboratories of Democracy* (2019–2021), which aimed at providing reinvigorated perspectives on democracy’s value and definition. Working with both these teams I discovered two specific applications for historical work, one more disruptive (in both the senses I have discussed above) than the other. The first of these I came to think of as “historical spadework”. Most often this involved using history as a tool for situating present-day problems in a wider or deeper context. Along with my colleague, the historian of pre-modern Russia Evgeny Grishin, I was often asked to add background colour, advising team mates to make sure their debates were sufficiently grounded. While one colleague was writing a piece on the materiality of love, for example, we discussed how loving relations had been mediated through objects in pre-modern Europe, such as relics or pilgrimage badges. Admittedly this was

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<sup>27</sup> Gel’man, *Politics of Bad Governance*, pp.123–124.

not always the most demanding use of a historian's skill set, and sometimes it felt a little like we were adding nothing more than window dressing. But if it was ever useful, it was when it could help colleagues challenge assumptions that contemporary problems were entirely unique to the conditions of capitalism.<sup>28</sup>

But within these teams we also found a second, and far more "disruptive" application for history. Case studies from the deep past, we believed, could become theory-making tools for the present, upending the "presentism" of contemporary philosophical discussions by exposing radical alternative approaches.<sup>29</sup> I tried to practice exactly this method of history in an article I wrote for *The Journal of Material Culture*, a journal outside my field.<sup>30</sup> Our discussions in the *Material Relations* team had suggested it would be worth trying to "disrupt" a conversation taking place among anthropologists, political theorists, and philosophers about the ontology of nonhumans. Debates among these scholars, our team noticed, tended to reduce "western" thought to a set of canonical philosophers from the modern capitalist era, and if they considered medieval thinkers at all they only produced the most likely names, such as Augustine, Aquinas, or Duns Scotus. Adjoined to this point, we also noticed that most of the major theorists in this field — from Graham Harman to Jane Bennett — used a critical vocabulary that lacked either religious metaphysical sophistication or historical contextualization. The debate was ripe, in other words, for some historical disruption. So, in the article I explored three medieval encounters with material objects, illustrating how these perspectives could add something new for thinking about the emotional life of things. As I argued, they revealed an assumption deep within western thought of the need for self-erasure in the process of accommodating the nonhuman; an

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<sup>28</sup> One article along these lines was published by my teammate, Zachary Low Reyna, 'Toward a More Robust New Materialist Politics: How the Practice of Criminal Animal Trials Can Inform Contemporary Politics,' *Stasis* 1: 9 (2020), pp.105–127. Reyna's article doesn't cite any of our team's historical input, and it's not clear whether we influenced his discussion at all. But his concluding claim, that theorists now need to "deliver on the conventional humanist dreams that have long inspired Western thinking," acknowledges the importance of these historical perspectives, and owes a broader debt to our group work.

<sup>29</sup> François Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

<sup>30</sup> Peter J.A. Jones, 'Bones, Fire, and Falcons: Loving Things in Medieval Europe,' *Journal of Material Culture* 26: 4 (2021), pp.433–450.

assumption that, while it needn't be embraced, could be useful both for reframing and for situating contemporary philosophies.

We adopted a broader goal of historical disruption in the other research team I worked with at SAS, "Laboratories of Democracy". Under the rubric of surveying alternative theories and practices of democracy, we interrogated a series of case studies from marginal experiments in communal living across American, European, and Russian history. Motivated in part by an idea from Jo Guldi and David Armitage's *History Manifesto* — "a longer history of international government" might reveal "a fuller expression of the concept of democracy itself" — our ambition was to save democracy from what we saw as a restrictive historical myopia, one that typically fixed the concept to the narrow scope of Pericles and Toqueville.<sup>31</sup> With this (rather grand) aim in mind, I wrote an article for *Past & Present* on a twelfth-century democratic revolution, attempting to retrieve an implicit medieval philosophy of egalitarian politics hidden within the chronicles, sermons, and poems of ecclesiastics.<sup>32</sup> As a piece of revisionism, this struck at an orthodoxy in the field of medieval history. Using the word "democracy" to describe political mechanisms in the pre-modern west, leading historians had argued, was always a form of teleology.<sup>33</sup> And although this article was unlikely to punch through to readers beyond my own field, its wider aim was not so much to challenge medievalists but to provide an alternative conceptual framework for contemporary political theorists to use themselves.

And yet perhaps the biggest disruption our research groups sought to implement was methodological. In 2018, our *Material Relations* team began work on what we called the "Love Tree," a project that wanted to introduce a nonlinear and provisional way of reading scholarship. Approaching the impossible philosophical question "What is Love?", this book project would be structured like a choose-your-own-adventure novel. At the end of each page of writing (which might be a piece of history, philosophy, anthropology,

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<sup>31</sup> Jo Guldi and David Armitage, *The History Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp.75–76; Paul Cartledge, *Democracy: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), e.g., pp.305–312.

<sup>32</sup> Peter J. A. Jones, 'Is Paradise a Democracy? The Heavenly City as Political Paradigm, c.1140–50,' *Past & Present*, 262:2 (2024), pp.#.

<sup>33</sup> See for instance Chris Wickham, *Sleepwalking into a New World: The Emergence of Italian City Communes in the Twelfth Century* (Princeton, 2015), pp.4–6.



or political theory), the reader would be given a choice. Which angle would you like to take on this issue next? Following their choices through the branches of thought, each reader would come away having read a totally unique book. The *Love Tree* was never completed at SAS; but it is a project two of us — myself and the anthropologist duskin drum — are still working on, and although it may take us a further twenty years to complete, our intention is not so much to finish but to continue challenging our own disciplinary boundaries and modes of thought as we grow into the project.

Where do any of these projects fit into ideas of revisionism in the field of History today? While I have been impressionistic on the question of revisionism up to this point, I would like to finish by engaging with categories recently established by the American historian James Banner. According to his book *The Ever-Changing Past*, historical revisionism usually comes in five varieties. The first and most radical is “Transformative revisionism,” which he defines as “an interpretive revolution that forever alter[s] the entire culture of a major segment of the world’s population.”<sup>34</sup> What Banner specifically has in mind here are huge civilizational models, such as Christianity or Marxism, which offer entirely new and independent frameworks and systems of thought for interpreting historical processes. Equally seismic, in Banner’s view, is a second form, which he calls “Philosophical revisionism.” As a type of disruptive historical writing, this form of revisionism attacks pre-existing rationales for studying history itself. As Banner sees it, philosophical revisionism usually operates in a cycle, whereby historians either defend the critique first introduced by Thucydides, who “thought the study of political power more important” in history, or defending Herodotus, who instead had prioritized “thought, culture, and society”. At essence, this form of revisionism is really a referendum on what historians value, and where they place emphasis in processing the cultural and political shifts of the past.<sup>35</sup>

If Banner’s first two strains disrupt history’s meaning, his third disrupts its shape. “Conceptual revisionism” occurs when distinct social categories provide new historical standpoints — such as social history, gender history, Black history, or LGBTQ+ history — that provide alternative lenses for viewing the past. Beyond simply uncovering overlooked avenues of

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<sup>34</sup> James M. Banner, Jr., *The Ever-Changing Past: Why All History is Revisionist History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), p.144.

<sup>35</sup> Banner, pp.150–151.

enquiry, these forms of historiography ultimately seek to revise received narratives, exposing how those narratives have been predicated on a set of normative assumptions (usually of white, wealthy, educated, enfranchised, and male subjectivities).<sup>36</sup> Beyond this, Banner's final two strains are more technical and practical in nature. "Evidence-based revisionism" is the form of critique whereby the discovery of new sources of primary material upends pre-existing discussions.<sup>37</sup> Finally, "Method-driven revisionism" is the type of disruption in which historians adopt novel tools (such as econometrics or DNA analysis), or else insights from other disciplines (such as psychological theory or the anthropological method), to construct new narratives of the past.<sup>38</sup>

Where precisely does the revisionism we conducted as historians at SAS Tyumen fit into this web? I am tempted to add a sixth column to Banner's schema, related to the professional status of the historian him or herself. "Profession-based revisionism," as I might call it, encompasses the disruptive work of historians who, compelled by precarious employment contracts to moonlight in other fields, to write provocative articles, and to attempt to remake historical methods in the process, end up expanding our sense of what a historian is for. But to work with Banner's diagnosis of our discipline, it seems our experiment in "disruptive history" was really intended first of all to produce works of "Method-driven revisionism." Adopting novel tools and insights, we were meant not only to supplement the knowledge basis of our disciplines but also to push at their working frameworks, developing formats — such as the *Love Tree* — that would bend the typical rules of the genre.

But beyond this technical requirement, our larger goal at SAS was to produce something more like a thoroughgoing philosophical critique of our discipline, or Banner's category of "Philosophical revisionism". We were prompted to reflect on the biggest themes: What is history *for*? *Who* is it for? And who or what does it fix as the stars of historical transformation? And our projects were meant to produce history for new and wider audiences, explaining the past in ways that made sense to a technologized, globalized, and networked world. We emphasized rupture and experimentation, transnational encounters and systems of thought, creating a prism through which history came to seem like a chain of radical and transformative innovations. Guiding this philosophy, as I have shown, were two models inherited from

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<sup>36</sup> Banner, pp.152–162.

<sup>37</sup> Banner, pp.162–163.


<sup>38</sup> Banner, pp.163–172.

the post-Cold War superpowers of the 1990s: the collectivist ethos spread by Shchedrovitsky's disciples and the competitive logic of the Silicon Valley start-ups; both of which embodied logics of global free enterprise and a radical sense of technological and institutional progress. From the perspective of invigorating the discipline, these experiments may seem refreshing. "Interpretive orthodoxy," according to James Banner, "is the diagnostic of intellectual rigor mortis."<sup>39</sup> But what else were we helping to do to the body of history?

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<sup>39</sup> Banner, p.264.

# A Pastime for the Emotions. Different Approaches to Interpreting Private Photo Albums

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**Abstract:** From the 1980s onward, with the rise of feminist art history, a new type of discourse emerged in art history that enabled the exploration of family and private imagery while legitimizing research on topics within a broader socio-historical context. Although these concepts had surfaced earlier, feminist art historians were pivotal in highlighting the links between gender constructs and artistic works, including their interpretation and legacy. Consequently, research into the social aspects of art and creation began to gain momentum in the 1980s and 1990s, and the practical application of these findings expanded in the twenty-first century. By the 2000s, museum, archiving, and collecting practices increasingly began to focus on female artists and art related to women. My interest in feminist art history research led me to engage with its concepts and perspectives, making their use essential for me.

**Keywords:** album research; feminist art; photography; Transylvania.

**Rezumat:** Începând cu anii 1980, odată cu apariția istoriei artei feministe, a apărut un nou tip de discurs în istoria artei, care a permis explorarea imaginii familiei și a vieții private, legitimând în același timp cercetarea unor teme într-un context socio-istoric mai larg. Deși aceste concepte apăruseră mai devreme, istoricii feministi de artă au jucat un rol esențial în evidențierea legăturilor dintre construcțiile de gen și operele artistice, inclusiv interpretarea și moștenirea acestora. În consecință, cercetarea aspectelor sociale ale artei și creației a început să câștige avânt în anii 1980 și 1990, iar aplicarea practică a acestor descoperiri s-a extins în secolul XXI. Până în anii 2000, practicile muzeale, de arhivare și colecționare au început să se concentreze din ce în ce mai mult pe artiste de femei și pe arta legată de femei. Interesul meu pentru cercetarea istoriei artei feministe m-a determinat să mă implic în conceptele și perspectivele sale, făcând utilizarea lor esențială pentru mine.

**Cuvinte cheie:** analiză de album; artă feminină; fotografie; Transilvania.

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## Introduction

My interest in photography dates back to my childhood, and it was also during this time that my love for handicrafts grew stronger. Although it wasn't a conscious decision, these early influences have certainly shaped my professional interests as well. As an art historian, I specialised in the history of photography, and in my PhD thesis,<sup>1</sup> I explored the history and use of private photo albums from Transylvania. Assembling the source material was not easy, as institutions do not have large collections of photo albums, and it is also challenging to locate these albums in private collections. Still, I aimed to create a representative selection that included a wide social range. I sought out and analysed albums created from their first occurrence, the second half of the nineteenth century till the 1950s by individuals not only from the nobility and bourgeoisie, but also from the working class and the peasantry. Although I couldn't find an example for the last social class, the collection includes an album from a young girl living in a village, which adds diversity to the material studied. While the selection may not be representative in a sociological sense, I believe it successfully reflects how photography as a technology was used in general. This study contains a summary of the theoretical section of my doctoral thesis—which focuses on the intersection of photographic album research and feminist art history—as well as a case study. I believe that illustrating the theoretical argument is essential; therefore, the second part of my study introduces and analyses a two-volume scrapbook album created by baroness Vilma Kemény, the widow of the Transylvanian Hungarian aristocrat Géza Kuun, during her widowhood.

## Feminist art history: establishing the theoretical foundation and research subject

Linda Nochlin's 1971 essay, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?*<sup>2</sup> is one of the key guiding texts in feminist art historical research. In

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<sup>1</sup> Dorottya Újvári, *Privát fényképalbumok erdélyi hagyatékokban: történet, gyakorlat, használat az 1950-es évekig* [Private photo albums in Transylvanian collections: history, practice, use until the 1950s], PhD dissertation, Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Linda Nochlin, 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?,' in *Women, Art, and Power: and Other Essays*, 1st ed, Icon editions, 145–178 (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

this work, she pointed out that dominant male-centric institutions, rooted in societal structures, hindered women's ability to succeed. Since the oppression of women is systemic, she argued that it is pointless to analyse women's artistic activities within the same dominant, elitist and male-oriented framework. Therefore, Nochlin asserted that it is far more important to uncover the workings of social systems and create new theoretical frameworks that are inclusive and do not consider the duality of high art or the creative genius as the primary standard in the field of art.<sup>3</sup>

From the perspective of traditional art history writing, art is hierarchical, with painting and sculpture (preferably in the form of works with monumental internal and/or external characteristics) occupying the top of this hierarchy. Works related to everyday life, which may even consider usability as a criterion, are placed on a lower level in this framework. This is reinforced by terms such as applied arts, decorative arts, and industrial arts, which also serve to separate them from fine arts or visual arts. This perspective, developed during the Renaissance, is connected to the establishment of art academies, which elevated certain art forms into the realm of intellectual professions. The division between fine arts and applied arts deepened in subsequent centuries and even acquired social implications—craftsmen and artists belonged to different social classes. Gender-based categorization soon followed, leading to the emergence of specifically female subjects and techniques. By the late eighteenth century, for example, embroidery and sewing had become distinctly female crafts, and flower painting had become a specifically female subject. This separation also allowed for the exclusion of women and their works from the field of fine arts: women and the flowers they painted became “reflections of each other.” The activity of painting flowers was often seen as stemming from the nature of women, rather than from any cultural or intellectual pursuit.<sup>4</sup>

When distinguishing between branches of arts and establishing a hierarchical system, the space of creation and the target audience also played a role. It is self-evident that works created within the space of the home and for one's own family could not be included in the world of fine arts. Family

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<sup>3</sup> Nochlin, 152.

<sup>4</sup> Rozsika Parker, Griselda Pollock, *Old mistresses: women, art and ideology*, New edition (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 58.

photographs and albums, on the other hand, are precisely products of this environment. Classical art history and the traditional concept of art, which is based on aesthetic criteria and strives for the exclusion or at least the marginalization of alternatives with its hierarchical system, do not offer opportunities for the research and interpretation of such artefacts.

As a result of the Marxist perspective, some representatives of feminist art history incorporated theories of consumption and production into their artistic investigations. According to Griselda Pollock's observations, this approach eliminates the narrative that the genius artist creates while driven by personal needs. Artworks are also products, and a characteristic of such products is that they generate an audience, in this case, one that appreciates art. Following this line of thought, art-related production is dual in nature: it consists of the creation of objects and the creation of an audience.

One of the fundamental principles of art interpretation, which states that the interpretation of a work can only be realised by considering its social environment and the context of its creation, also contradicts the myth of the genius. In an effort to obviate the extremities, we cannot but point to one of Pollock's other remarks, namely that interpreting art solely through the logic of consumption and production is also incomplete: it is more effective to approach artistic works as practices rather than as objects.<sup>5</sup> Despite the diversification of the topics of art history and research itself since the publication of her essay in 1988, her findings remain relevant to this day. Caution is still characteristic of Eastern European and especially Hungarian art history: feminist analyses of visual arts are rare, and when such approaches appear, they are often categorised as social-historical investigations.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Griselda Pollock, 'Feminist Interventions in Art's Histories,' *Kritische Berichte-Zeitschrift Für Kunst- Und Kulturwissenschaften*, nr. 1. (1988): 5–14, 6–7.

<sup>6</sup> In the last years different publicans appeared about women in the art field and women's art in Hungarian, for example: Bordács Andrea, *Múzsák lázadása. Válogatott írások nőművészekről és női művészekről* [Muses in revolt. Selected writings on women artists] (Szombathely: Savaria University Press, 2021), Martos Gábor, *Önarckép nyakláncal. Női alkotók a műkereskedelemben* [Self-portrait with necklace. Women artists in the art market] (Budapest: Typotex, 2021.). Griselda Pollock's important essays were translated to Romanian and published in 2024: Griselda Pollock, *Modernitatea și spațiile feminității* [Modernity and the spaces of femininity]. (Cluj-Napoca: IDEA, 2024.)

Feminist art history (or, as Pollock calls it, feminist intervention within art history)<sup>7</sup> not only provides theoretical frameworks but also offers guidelines for the study of private albums and photographs, among which the understanding of creation as a practice is one of the most essential. Pollock suggests two analytical perspectives: firstly, it must be recognized that artistic practice, like other areas of representation, is part of social struggle (between races, classes, and genders); secondly, discussing an artistic practice, one must take into account the meaning this has produced together with the target audience and the means of creation.<sup>8</sup>

### **Researching private photo albums – short conclusions instead of a short introduction**

The first significant art historical study on women's albums was published in 1987 by American art historian Anne Higonnet.<sup>9</sup> Higonnet found that creating albums containing watercolours, drawings, and photographs was common among middle- and upper-class women in Western Europe. However, these works are among the least recognized forms of female self-expression. This is partly because such creations do not fit into the mainstream concept of high art. The albums serve as tools for women's self-representation shaped by gender conventions, meeting what could be called other or alternative criteria: elements of amateur painting or album-making stem from femininity and the female experience.<sup>10</sup> Everything has its own unique set of relationships and rules that create a women's visual culture. The study presents the nineteenth-century forms and transformations of this female visual culture, emphasising that the women creating these albums considered

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<sup>7</sup> Pollock, 'Feminist Interventions in Art's Histories', 14.

<sup>8</sup> Pollock, 9.

<sup>9</sup> Anne Higonnet, 'Secluded Vision: Images of Feminine Experience in Nineteenth-Century Europe,' *Radical History Review*, nr. 38. (1 May 1987): 17–36, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-1987-38-16>. Her research later appeared in *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, a collection of essays published in 1992, highlighting that this topic is part of the expanding discourse in art history.

<sup>10</sup> Anne Higonnet, 'Secluded Vision. Images of Feminine Experience in Nineteenth-Century Europe,' in *The Expanding Discourse. Feminism and Art History*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, 171–185 (New York: IconEditions, 1992), 171.



their works to be secondary compared to those displayed in galleries and museums. Nonetheless, they deemed it important to express their experiences in visual form, even though this marginality influenced both their work and its reception. There are also differences in the materials used in objects created by women: these are generally less durable, typically made with watercolour on paper, and much smaller in scale than the high art intended for museums and exhibitions. High art, in contrast, tends to use more enduring materials, such as oil on canvas. “High art is ‘high’—that is, dominant—precisely because it so completely denies alternatives that it becomes normative even for those it excludes,” observes Higonnet.<sup>11</sup>

Since Anne Higonnet’s 1987 publication, research has expanded beyond a purely gender-based focus, aiming to uncover objects and practices that, within the framework of classical art, have traditionally been defined in opposition to high art. Since the format of this study does not allow me to present and analyse all the studies on private albums included in my PhD thesis, I will only summarise my conclusions and I’ll focus solely on the results connected to the research dedicated to scrapbook albums and handicraft.<sup>12</sup> It can be stated that primarily British, American, and Canadian researchers have focused on photo albums over the past three decades, and almost without exception, these studies have been authored by women. Jennifer M. Black also noted this phenomenon, and in her 2018 study, she attempted to analyse the underlying reasons, exploring how the fact that the authors are women may have influenced the research. Her observation is, that despite the diverse and rich body of literature, research on albums has

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<sup>11</sup> Higonnet, 183.

<sup>12</sup> The methodology for my PhD research was primarily based on and inspired by the studies of Anne Higonnet, Martha Langford, and Patrizia Di Bello. The two most comprehensive monographs to date were authored by Martha Langford and Patrizia Di Bello. Both Langford and Di Bello focus their research on albums made in the 19th and the first half of the 20th Century, now being in the collection of museums or other public institutions. When categorizing albums, Langford emphasizes that the creator’s intent is as important to consider as the technical execution, and she focuses on unraveling and understanding how albums narrate and convey the memories of their creators. Patrizia Di Bello exclusively presents and analyzes Victorian-era collage albums created by women. Her central thesis is that albums are both tactile and visual objects, and understanding them requires insight into the period’s culture of touch and physical interaction. See: Patrizia Di Bello, *Women’s Albums and Photography in Victorian England: “Ladies, Mothers and Flirts”* (Ashgate, 2007), Martha Langford, *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums*. (McGill-Queen’s Press – MQUP, 2001).

been pushed to the margins of historical studies due to gender-based hierarchies within academia and the sidelining of activities associated with amateurs.<sup>13</sup> In the 1980s and 1990s, research on albums focused on photographs and their connection to autobiography, on telling one's life story through images. Thus, the parallel between albums and diaries, or the idea that albums serve as visual representations of life stories, is a recurring theme in these articles.

For example, Marilyn F. Motz, who's article appeared in the late 1980s, treated albums created by women as a form of visual autobiography through which women could express and articulate their views on their environment, past, and personal choices. Motz regarded these qualities as distinguishing women's albums from family photo albums, which aimed to portray family cohesion.<sup>14</sup> But there is another important aspect in her study: she established a connection between album-making and quilting—the creation of patchwork quilts. Irregular-pattern quilts became fashionable in the late nineteenth century, using fabric pieces from familiar or no-longer-worn garments from friends and family. This design was similar to collage-like albums filled with photographs. Beyond the external similarity, there was also a thematic connection: albums often contained images referencing people close to the creator, evoking emotions and memories, just as fabric pieces from a favourite skirt on a quilt could do.<sup>15</sup>

A shift in the album-research came in the 2000s: albums began to be seen as complex objects—mediums—whose study requires considering historical, social, and technical contexts. Thus, the new research also began to examine the role these albums play in memory, what narrative tools they use, how they become identity-forming in the lives of their creators, and so on. For example, the history and various forms of the scrapbook (the arrangement of various paper-based ephemera into albums) is discussed in the book *The Scrapbook in American Life*, which was created through the collaborative work of three editors—Susan Tucker, Katherine Ott, and Patricia B. Buckler. The book, which includes numerous essays, also covers the history and use of nineteenth-century photo albums. Case study-like writings in the volume illustrate the diverse American album-making practices, touching upon their

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<sup>13</sup> Jennifer M. Black, 'Gender in the Academy,' *Material Culture*, vol. 50., nr. 2.(2018): 38–52, 47.

<sup>14</sup> Marilyn F Motz, 'Visual Autobiography: Photograph Albums of Turn-of-the-Century Midwestern Women,' *American Quarterly*, vol. 41, nr. 1. (1989): 63–92, 63.

<sup>15</sup> Motz, 75.

early modern predecessors and discussing scrapbooks made by both well-known and everyday individuals. Additionally, the book explores the albums of various social and ethnic groups, as well as personal collecting activities.

### **Kuun Gézané Kemény Vilma's commemorative scrapbook albums**

The phenomenon and history of scrapbooking has a rich body of English-language scholarship, yet a more extensive exploration of collections containing illustrations, clippings, and other paper-based materials, ephemera has yet to be conducted in a Hungarian or Romanian context. Although studies on collections of clippings have been published, they primarily focus on those associated with famous individuals, especially writers. Vilma Kemény (1837–1917), created two large albums in which she collected photographs, illustrations, letters, clippings, and various typed and handwritten notes. Although it is not a photo album in the strict sense—since it contains more written documents than photographs—it serves as an excellent source that I consider essential to address. This example highlights an alternative form of album-making and photography use, which was also present in the practices of the 1800s and the turn of the century. Scrapbooks can also be considered a transitional form between the early photo albums, which contained mainly studio photographs (usually the *carte de visite* type) and those that became widespread after photography became more accessible—namely, those with plain pages and pasted-in images. Here, in addition to portraits, photographs on other themes begin to appear. Alongside lineage-based organisation, a personal life story emerges, shifting the focus away from a narrative of “these are the ancestors, and this is me/us” and instead foregrounding the self and its personal experiences as the central message of the albums.

Both scrapbooks and *carte de visite* albums are fundamentally based on collecting, and in both cases, the contents are most often composed of images or materials not created by the compiler. The collector simply arranges these into a personal collage—making it interpretable as a “paper museum.”<sup>16</sup> The selection and arrangement of these ephemera provide a space for self-

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<sup>16</sup> Martha Langford uses this expression in her monograph, Martha Langford, *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums* (McGill-Queen's Press – MQUP, 2001).

expression in a far more visually striking form than traditional *carte de visite* albums. Scrapbooking, a practice also typically associated with women, became fashionable in the mid-nineteenth century, around the same time as the creation of photo albums.

Kemény Vilma set a well-defined theme for her scrapbooks and paid great attention to arranging the clippings on each page, also incorporating photographs. This careful composition aligns with Vilma Kemény's broader artistic interests, as her name appeared several times in connection with various arts and crafts exhibitions. There has not yet been a contemporary analysis or evaluation of her activities. She is generally mentioned alongside her husband, the linguist and scholar Géza Kuun (1838–1905),<sup>17</sup> and is also discussed in two ego-documents—János Kemény writes about her at length in his memoir *Kakukkfőókák*, and Lajos Kelemen mentions her in his diary. Géza Kuun and Vilma Kemény had known each other since their youth, but both were nearly 50 years old when they married in 1885.<sup>18</sup> By this time, her husband was already well-known in both academic and public circles, but Vilma also had a sort of career behind her. From the late 1870s, she appeared as a participant in various industrial exhibitions in Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár) and Budapest. In 1877, she displayed her woodcarvings at the applied arts exhibition organized by the Kolozsvári Nőegylet (Cluj Women's Association)—specifically, a decorated cabinet and two chairs.<sup>19</sup> A few years later, at a Budapest exhibition, her "flower-wreathed plates" were displayed alongside her carvings.<sup>20</sup> Her interest in porcelain painting may have been sparked by Vilmos Farkasházi Fischer, who had a porcelain manufactory in Cluj at the time. Sándor Teleki notes that Fischer "practically founded a school" in the city, as several people—such as Aubin Róza, Vilma Bethlen, Ádám Bánffy, and Béláné Wesselényi, in addition to Vilma—learned from him.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Géza Kuun was a Hungarian aristocrat, a linguist and orientalist, he travelled intensively in Europe, wrote several articles and books mainly about linguistics and history.

<sup>18</sup> 'Hymen' [Weddings], *Pesti hírlap*, 7, nr. 4 (29 December 1885): 357.

<sup>19</sup> H. L., 'A kolozsvári iparművészeti tárlaton' [The arts and crafts exhibition in Kolozsvár], *Fővárosi Lapok*, 14, nr. 287 (16 December 1877): 1373.

<sup>20</sup> 'A nőipari kiállításnak...' [The women's arts and crafts exhibition...], *Fővárosi Lapok*, 18, nr. 193. (26 August 1881): 1139.

<sup>21</sup> Sándor Teleki, *Egyről-másról. Újabb emlékeim* [About this and that. My latest memories] (Budapest: Révai Testvérek Kiadása, 1882) 199.

Lajos Kelemen also recounts an anecdote about her porcelain-painting activities, as told by Polixénia Bethlen, the wife of János Nemes. It reveals that she and Karolina Bethlen used a room in her home kept empty for her brother as a makeshift studio, so that only one space would be filled with the smell of turpentine.<sup>22</sup> Some of the artefacts created by Vilma have survived; they were transferred from the Gyulay Castle in Mintia (Marosnémeti) to the collection of the Erdélyi Múzeum Egyesület (Transylvanian Museum Society), and eventually to the Transylvanian National History Museum. The museum currently preserves a carved chair and a hand painted drinking glass attributed to her.<sup>23</sup>

János Kemény provides a longer account of the relationship between Géza Kuun and Vilma Kemény in his memoirs, describing their marriage as characterized by “perfect harmony and undisturbed happiness.”<sup>24</sup> After Kuun’s death, his wife dedicated her remaining years to rituals of remembrance: every Saturday, dressed in “full widow’s attire,”<sup>25</sup> she would visit his grave for a few hours, arrange his papers and estate, publish parts of his manuscripts,<sup>26</sup> and even assembled two scrapbooks. “I want to remember every object, picture, and piece of furniture in our beautiful home...”<sup>27</sup> Vilma Kemény expresses in her subjective inventory of the Mintia (Marosnémeti) castle. This sentiment equally applies to her motivation for creating the scrapbooks, which served as the most personal expressions of her grief alongside her hours at the cemetery, giving tangible form to her emotions.

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<sup>22</sup> Lajos Kelemen, *Napló. 1: (1890-1920)* [Diary I. 1890–1920] ed. Péter Sas (Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Múzeum Egyesület, 2017) 648.

<sup>23</sup> Some artefacts attributed to Kemény Vilma are available in the Culturalia database: <https://culturalia.ro/search;q=%22kem%C3%A9ny%20vilma%22;mode=FUZZY> (2024. 01. 30.)

<sup>24</sup> János Kemény, *Kakukkfőőkák* [Cuckoo chicks] (Bukarest: Kriterion Könyvkiadó, 1972), 172.

<sup>25</sup> Kemény, 174–176.

<sup>26</sup> Kuun Gézáné Kemény Vilma, *Marosnémetiben. Emlékezés Gróf Kuun Géza otthonára* [In Mintia. Remembering the home of Count Géza Kuun] (Kolozsvár: Ajtai K. A., 1909); ed. Kuun Gézáné Kemény Vilma, *Gróf Kuun Géza görögországi jegyzetei 1881* [The letters from Greece of count Géza Kuun] (Kolozsvár: Ajtai K. A., 1911); ed. Kuun Gézáné Kemény Vilma, *Gróf Kuun Géza és neje marosnémeti vendégeinek emlékkölteményei 1870–1905* [Commemorative poems by the guests of Count Géza Kuun and his wife in Mintia] (Kolozsvár: Ajtai K. A., 1907).

<sup>27</sup> Vilma Kemény published a book about their home, the Mintia (Marosnémeti) Castle, located today in Hunedoara county, Romania. This contains her description of the ensemble and also some texts written by their friends and visitors. Kuun Gézáné Kemény Vilma, *Marosnémetiben. Emlékezés Gróf Kuun Géza otthonára* [In Mintia. Remembering the home of Count Géza Kuun] (Kolozsvár: Ajtai K. A., 1909).

The two identical albums are bound in fabric (46×31 cm), contain blank pages, and were originally designed for collecting calling cards. On one cover, the title “Visiting Cards” is visible, though it was covered over, but the accompanying illustration has since fallen off. This volume became a collection of various texts related to Kuun’s death and his remembrance. The other album still has its cover illustration intact, a printed graphic that hints at the collection’s theme: it depicts a romanticized, ancient-inspired sacrificial altar on a tripod adorned with a ram’s skull, with flames and swirling smoke. In this scrapbook, the widow pasted clippings that commemorate Kuun Géza’s professional achievements. In the more detailed analysis and presentation of the albums, I will focus on their design and the use of photographs and other illustrations, omitting an in-depth content analysis of the clippings.

The scrapbook adorned with the altar graphic begins with three pages featuring only photographs, printed graphics, and a poem in German. The first page originally held three illustrations, of which one has been removed, leaving a printed graphic and a photograph depicting the Mintia (Marosnémeti) Castle. Between the photos, there is a poem by a friend and visitor, Mrs. Amelie Flotow, which is a clipping from the Mintia (Marosnémeti) Castle’s commemorative book.<sup>28</sup> Vilma added individual frames for each pasted element and decorated the page with flower illustrations, shading some with graphite pencil. These embellishments likely come from a publication dedicated to decorative elements, as similar frames and floral ornaments appear frequently on the following pages.

On the second page, there are fourteen photographs of Géza Kuun and Vilma Kemény, including studio portraits, with Géza’s cabinet card size photograph positioned in the center, below which is her bridal portrait. A few candid shots of the couple and their friends taken around Marosnémeti Castle are also included, along with three photos clipped from a publication, presumably a magazine—two depicting Géza and the third his bust sculpture. Since the photographs cover the entire page, only a few decorative elements were added.

The third photo page combines elements of the previous two, featuring a frontal image of Mintia (Marosnémeti) Castle and an interior scene, alongside three group photos, likely of guests at the castle. Here, frames and illustrations reappear, filling the available space with intricate details.

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<sup>28</sup> Kemény, 48.

Following the introductory pages with images, the scrapbook continues with pages filled with newspaper clippings. These are from a wide range of sources, including articles from daily and weekly papers as well as German and French academic publications. This collection of clippings can be viewed as an archive, containing all writings that report on Kuun's activities. There are no added comments on the articles, only occasional notations of the year or the title if it wasn't included in the clipping. However, Vilma took care to underline her husband's name in longer articles that did not exclusively discuss Géza Kuun.

Here and there, a few pencil notes appear, interspersed among the pasted articles. These notes indicate where she planned to place certain photographs or illustrations. Some clippings are more broadly connected to her husband's work, such as several articles about the Hunyad County Historical and Archaeological Society (Hunyad Megyei Történeti és Régészeti Társulat), next to which she placed photographs and postcards of Deva (Déva). There are also clippings about their relatives and friends; for instance, the album includes the obituary of Géza Jósika, written by Kuun, along with a studio photograph of him. This arrangement remains unfinished, as she penciled in "Géza Jósika's picture and his residence in Brănișca (Branyicska)," but nothing beyond the portrait appears.

It is notable that the clippings are not arranged in chronological order but grouped thematically. On the initial pages, Vilma highlighted the key individuals and locations relevant to the album's theme through photographs. These are followed by Kuun Géza's publications and reviews of his articles by others, and then reports on his activities within various societies. Lastly, she included articles concerning family members and relatives, among which are contemporary news items about Gyulay Lajos's diaries.<sup>29</sup>

In the middle third of the album, there is a page dedicated to the personal relationship between Géza Kuun and Vilma Kemény. Here, she included four letters sent to her by Géza during his travels abroad in the early 1880s. Instead of pasting the originals, she used the printed versions published by the *Erdélyi Múzeum* journal.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, she attached two

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<sup>29</sup> Géza Kuun published some parts of Gyulay Lajos's (1800–1869) diaries, who was his relative, a writer, collector and a politically active aristocrat from the 19th century Transylvania.

<sup>30</sup> It's likely that she also handed over the original letters to the Transylvanian Museum Association (EME) along with other documents, which is why the published versions were

portraits to the page—a photo of herself that also appears at the beginning of the album, and a printed photo of Géza. She framed both with ornate floral decorations and painted the background in gold. This page can be seen as a kind of marriage commemoration.

The following clippings document her husband's travels: she pasted an article by Gábor Téglás about his scientific expedition to Romania, along with two photos of the Romanian royal couple. On the next page, there are two additional portraits, labeled as Prince Nikita of Montenegro and his wife, along with an account of their joint trip through the Balkans. It's likely that the portraits of King Nicholas I of Montenegro and his wife were given to them during their personal meeting with the monarch. In her descriptions of the rooms in the Mintia (Marosnémeti) castle, Vilma frequently mentions that various tables displayed albums—although she doesn't specify their contents,<sup>31</sup> it's likely that these included *carte de visite* albums, which often held portraits of notable figures of the time. Since they visited Montenegro in 1888, the photographs received then would have needed a place to be kept until they were eventually used in the scrapbook.

The structure of the second volume of Vilma Kemény's scrapbook is quite similar to the first, though it features even more decorative elements and contains many handwritten notes alongside the usual newspaper clippings. This collection is also entirely about Géza Kuun, but here, the focus shifts more toward posthumous tributes to the scholar, rather than solely on his lifetime achievements. Like the first volume, the opening pages showcase numerous photos and illustrations. Vilma compiled a catalog of portraits of Kuun Géza, spanning from his earliest known likeness through to his later years. Alongside the portraits, she included various clippings that commented on these images. Among these is an article by Lajos Szádeczky,<sup>32</sup> offering a detailed account of the count's life, as well as excerpts from an unidentified publication. This is likely from a volume edited or written by Vilma herself, where she had already published some of the portraits, as the opening text in the album reads: "There are no portraits of Count Kuun Géza

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included here. 'Gróf Kuun Géza levelei br. Kemény Vilmához' [Count Géza Kuun's letters to baroness Vilma Kemény], *Erdélyi Múzeum*, volt. 22, nr. 8 (1905): 445–448.

<sup>31</sup> Kuun, Marosnémetiben. Emlékezés Gróf Kuun Géza otthonára, 41.

<sup>32</sup> Lajos Szádeczky, 'Dr. gróf Kuun Géza emlékezete' [In the memory of Dr. count Géza Kuun], *Erdélyi Múzeum*, 22., nr. 8 (1905): 401–431.



from his earliest childhood, but I have two letters in my possession in which the ‘little Géza’ is warmly mentioned. Let these relevant sections of the letters serve as an ‘introduction’ to the following series of portraits...”<sup>33</sup>

In the first six pages of the album, there are sixteen portraits in total, among these are original photographs and printed images cut from publications, many of which were based on photographs—just like in the previous volume. Since no visual representations of Géza Kuun from his childhood have survived, his wife replaced this absence with an illustration depicting a group of playing children. According to the clippings in the album, the earliest known image of the scholar is a wax portrait from 1846, which was kept in the Mintia (Marosnémeti) Castle — a photograph of this wax portrait has been pasted into the album. The slightly damaged photograph still clearly shows the profile, which was the most common pose for wax portraits, as well as the fact that the wax was painted.

In his young adult years, Géza Kuun is portrayed in four photographs, one of which was taken in Venice and another in a studio in Naples. Since a sentimental inscription was added to the Neapolitan portrait’s back, referencing a place he had visited, Vilma decided to cut the photograph into two, allowing her to paste both parts separately. For images of the grown man, the accompanying clippings now focus on their relationship. These were cut from Szádeczky’s article as well as from letters Géza had written to Vilma, which she had published herself.

The border decorations and frames are also a prominent feature in this album, and Vilma uses a variety of patterns to surround the pasted material. For example, one of Géza Kuun’s later life photographs is framed with a design in which two hands hold the image from the left and right sides. This visual effect breaks up the flat surface, adds depth, and introduces a playful element to the “paper museum.” To make the story of the count’s life even more personal, Vilma also added two short handwritten texts next to the images, one of which includes Kuun’s signature. Additionally, she pasted in his *ex libris* as part of the collection, further personalizing the scrapbook and connecting it more directly to its subject.

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<sup>33</sup> Scrapbook made by Vilma Kemény, 1. National Archives, Cluj County Service, Kuun family archive, 351/697.

In this album, Vilma again dedicates several pages to the Mintia (Marosnémeti) Castle, expressing her attachment to the place. Some photographs are repeated, but this time there are more images of the garden and the archaeological artifacts displayed there. Newspaper clippings—mostly poems—are used to complement the photographs, along with multi-page descriptions and various frame and edge decorations. Four interior photographs are also included, two of which are original and two cut from printed sources. These images align perfectly with the work *Marosnémetiben. Emlékezés gróf Kuun Géza otthonára* (“In Marosnémeti. A Memory of Count Kuun Géza’s Home”), written by Vilma herself, where she describes the castle’s furnishings and the use of each room in detail. However, no excerpts from this work were pasted into the album since it was published in 1909, after the scrapbooks had already been completed.

The last part of the volume contains eulogies, obituaries, and funeral announcements, followed by later commemorations of Géza Kuun. These pages are visually distinct: each column of text is separated by thick black paper strips, and some sections are adorned with black floral decorations. The longer texts, which were published as booklets, were also included, with one page pasted into the album and then secured with string to prevent it from opening. Five photographs from the funeral are included, showing the mortuary chapel in Házsongárd and the crowd accompanying the coffin. The final part of the album consists of pages dedicated to commemorations. It includes every publication related to Kuun Géza—school bulletins, prayers recited on the first anniversary of his death, Szádeczky’s already cited study, etc. At the very end of the album, there is an envelope containing sympathy cards collected by Vilma.

The scrapbooks dedicated to Géza Kuun can indeed be described as a curated “paper museum”. The curator’s work involves selecting, combining, and integrating images and texts in meaningful ways. Vilma Kemény tailors the photographs to the themes she wants to emphasize, modifying them freely: sometimes she glues them together, frames them, and even creates painted backgrounds to complement them. She does not distinguish between studio portraits and candid snapshots; she uses whatever materials she has available. The photographs are placed closely together on the pages, often framed, reflecting the atmosphere of their home in Mintia (Marosnémeti).

The walls were adorned with portraits of family ancestors, pastels, and various photographs of close relatives. There were also photos above the fireplace and on small tables: "As many as could fit, placed in ornate frames,"<sup>34</sup> as she put it.

The two scrapbooks were created with a strong personal motivation and need, with the goal of establishing the memory of her husband, Géza Kuun, as an esteemed researcher and a very special person. Beyond the deeply personal emotions that motivated their creation, and considering Vilma Kemény's later activities, these scrapbooks can also be interpreted as preparatory material for the publications that were later printed. In this sense, they served as a way of gathering content, reflecting both the private and public dimensions of her husband's legacy.

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<sup>34</sup> Kuun, *Marosnémetiben. Emlékezés Gróf Kuun Géza otthonára*, 23, 34.



Figure 1. Portraits of Géza Kuun and Vilma Kemény. Scrapbook made by Vilma Kemény, 1. National Archives, Cluj County Service, Kuun family archive, 351/697.



Figure 2. A page from the section presenting Géza Kuun's life with photographs, newspaper clippings and border decorations. Scrapbook made by Vilma Kemény, 2. National Archives, Cluj County Service, Kuun family archive, 351/697.





Figure 3. Minta Castle's garden with archaeological findings. Scrapbook made by Vilma Kemény, 2. National Archives, Cluj County Service, Kuun family archive, 351/697.



Figure 4. Obituary of Géza Kuun and newspaper clippings about his death. Scrapbook made by Vilma Kemény, 2. National Archives, Cluj County Service, Kuun family archive, 351/697.

# Documentary Films with Ecclesiastical Themes in the Works of Pavel Constantinescu Ben-Iosef from the “Alexandru Sahia” Studio

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**Abstract:** Pavel Constantinescu Ben-Iosef (1922-1997), a film director of Jewish origin, lived a life as captivating as his films. In his youth, he was an activist in the Zionist organization “Dror Poalei Tzion”. Later on, embracing communist beliefs and dreaming of justice, happiness, equality and human dignity, he volunteered for the Soviet army, eventually becoming an officer. Upon returning to Romania, he held the position of commander at the Bumbesti-Livezeni National Construction Site and he continued his studies in film directing at V.G.I.K. in Moscow, Soviet Union. He had the privilege to direct films even in distant countries, including America in the 1970s, and served as a war correspondent in the Vietnam War. He also held numerous significant positions in the Romanian administration.

With such origins, beliefs and social position, the following question arises: why did Pavel Constantinescu become one of the few directors from the Sahia Studio who explored ecclesiastical themes, particularly at a time when films on religious subjects were generally viewed with skepticism by the authorities? (even though his films focused solely on the artistic value of churches, rather than their spirituality or religious purpose).

In our article, we aim to investigate three essential questions related to the proposed theme. Firstly, how was he able to produce so many films centered around church art during the period of 1964-1968? Secondly, what was the director’s personal motivation behind creating these films? Lastly, we will delve into the factors contributing to the high aesthetic quality of his works and their significance within the production of the “Alexandru Sahia” Studio.

**Keywords:** Pavel Constantinescu, Sahia, documentary films, V.G.I.K. Moscow.

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**Rezumat:** Pavel Constantinescu Ben-Iosef (1922-1997), regizor de origine evreiască, a trăit o viață la fel de captivantă ca filmele sale. În tinerețe a fost activist al organizației sioniste „Dror Poalei Tion”; ulterior, adoptând convingeri comuniste și visând la dreptate, fericire, egalitate și demnitate umană, s-a înrolat voluntar în armata sovietică, ajungând ofițer. După întoarcerea în România, a deținut funcția de comandant al Șantierului Național Bumbesti-Livezeni și a continuat cu studii de regie de film în cadrul V.G.I.K. din Moscova, Uniunea Sovietică. A avut privilegiul de a regiza filme chiar și în țări îndepărtate, inclusiv în America anilor '70, a fost corespondent de război în conflictul din Vietnam, a ocupat numeroase și importante poziții în administrația românească.

Având astfel de origini, convingeri și poziție socială, devine pertinentă întrebarea următoare: de ce tocmai el, într-o perioadă în care filmele cu tematică bisericească erau în general privite cu reticență de către autorități, s-a numărat printre pușinii regizori de la Studioul Sahia care au explorat aceste teme? (chiar dacă filmele sale se concentrau doar asupra valorii artistice a bisericilor, nu și asupra spiritualității sau destinației religioase a acestora).

În cadrul articolului de față ne propunem să investigăm trei întrebări esențiale pentru tema propusă: în primul rând, cum a reușit să producă atât de multe filme axate pe arta bisericească în perioada 1964-1968; în al doilea rând, care a fost motivația personală a regizorului pentru realizarea acestor filme; și, în final, care au fost factorii care au contribuit la înalta calitate estetică a operelor sale și care a fost importanța lor în producția Studioului „Alexandru Sahia”.

**Cuvinte cheie:** Pavel Constantinescu, Sahia, filme documentare, V.G.I.K. Moscova.

## Introduction

The Alexandru Sahia Documentary Film Studio was the only producer of documentary films in Romania during the communist period. However, few know that at Sahia, alongside other films, hundreds of documentaries were made about art from various fields – visual arts, architecture, music, theater, opera, ballet, etc. – which constitute the least politically involved part of the studio's production. However, due to the unfavorable times for the church, very few of the Sahia productions were dedicated to ecclesiastical art. Generally, films with church-related subjects were ignored, being very

few in number, and during stricter periods, it was not even permitted for icons or crosses to appear in films, even for a few moments. Nevertheless, even under these conditions, Sahia's production includes dozens of films with ecclesiastical themes, some of which could even be described as religious films.

What piqued our interest was the fact that between 1959 and 1971, at Sahia, one of the few directors who created films with ecclesiastical themes was Pavel Constantinescu (1922-1997). Although his films focused almost exclusively on the artistic value of churches, this endeavor seemed surprising given that the known details about him appeared to contradict such an interest.

We knew that Pavel Constantinescu was Jewish, a convinced communist who voluntarily enlisted in the Red Army and fought against the Germans for six years. After demobilization, he returned to the country and obtained the highest positions in various institutions, being among the few filmmakers who filmed in all corners of the world. From the interviews conducted with his former wife, Marion Ciobanu<sup>1</sup> – who was not only his life partner but also a college classmate and collaborator at the Sahia studio, where she served as an editor<sup>2</sup> – we learned that Pavel was not raised in a religious environment and did not practice any religion later on. We wondered what prompted him to create even more films about ecclesiastical art when this did not bring him any political, social, or material benefits. Why did a communist Jew make films about Orthodox monasteries when not even the Romanians rushed to make them? What were the factors that contributed to their realization, and what explains the artistic excellence of these films?

In the following sections, we will attempt to find answers to these questions. However, before addressing the main subject, it is necessary to mention that the most representative films made at Sahia, which can be classified as religious, are undoubtedly the documentaries by Slavomir Popovici; and if we had to choose the most remarkable documentaries from Pavel Constantinescu's filmography, we would likely select the series of films about Brâncuși rather than those with ecclesiastical themes. Why, then, did we choose to discuss these films? We are intrigued by the political context in which they were filmed and the apparent discrepancy between the director's

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<sup>1</sup> Marion Ciobanu, interview by the author, May 18, 2023, author's personal archive.

<sup>2</sup> Pavel Constantinescu, *Fapt divers* (1963).



biography and his documentaries. By researching the factors that motivated the making of these films, we will shed light on lesser-known aspects of how documentaries about churches were produced at the Alexandru Sahia studio.

We will not analyze the films but will investigate the influence of the political and cultural context on them. We will present different stages of the author's life, highlighting aspects relevant to our theme, with particular emphasis on his professional and ideological formation period at V.G.I.K. We will take into account that both his films and those of the studio are the result of collective work, where the role of consultants was enormous in terms of the accuracy of information and artistic quality. Even though the director had decision-making authority in many respects, the final result was the creation of the entire collective.

### **Dror Poalei Țion, Red Army**

Pavel Constantinescu (1922-1997), son of Kalman and Debora, was born on April 10, 1922, in Odobesti, and later moved with his family to Focșani. Coming from a poor Jewish family, he and his family members faced significant persecution, and at the beginning of World War II, they were in imminent danger of being deported. His father passed away when Pavel was very young, and his brother fled to France, leaving the rest of the family in the country.<sup>3</sup> In Focșani, Pavel first joined the Zionist organization "Dror Poalei Țion,"<sup>4</sup> which focused on preparing and emigrating Jews to Palestine with the aim of establishing a Jewish state there. The youth in this organization sought better opportunities and refuge from discrimination and anti-Semitism, while also holding patriotic goals from the perspective of Jewish national identity. Although Pavel was active in the organization, he did not emigrate to Palestine.

Like most Jews at that time, Pavel sought a force, a support that would fight against Nazism. Since the communist parties were among the most vocal and organized in the struggle against Nazism, at just 17 years old, he decided to wholeheartedly join the liberating army and enlisted in the Red Army.

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<sup>3</sup> Marion Ciobanu, interview by the author, May 18, 2023, author's personal archive.

<sup>4</sup> Iosif Petran, 'Puternic, nesupus,' in Pavel Constantinescu Ben-Iosef, *Un cineast în față cu lumea contemporană*, (limited edition, not for sale, Rodica Brunhis, 1998), p. 7.

He was tall, strong, and powerful; he felt the need to fight. It was a matter of life and death.

He was filled with romantic ideas about what communism meant: equality among people, freedom, fraternity; and coming from a very poor family, he fought for the rights of the poor and the rights to life for the Jews. Through Galați, in 1940, he crossed the Prut River, left Chișinău, crossed the Nistru River, and joined the Red Army as a simple volunteer soldier. He left without documents to avoid rejection, lying about being 18 years old.<sup>5</sup> He participated in some of the bloodiest battles on the front, including the fights at Stalingrad.<sup>6</sup>

From his journal, we know that in the winter of 1942, during a period when the Germans were attacking even more intensely on all fronts, and desertions, especially those of Ukrainians, were rampant, he lost contact with the rest of his unit one night.<sup>7</sup> It was only at dawn that he found a nearby military unit in Morozovskaia. He reported the situation and requested help, but for several days, he was grouped with deserters and was nearly executed. After many interrogations, he was eventually sent back to his unit, likely due to a journal he had found on him. After a day of recovery, he returned to the front. He fought until the end of the war, achieving the rank of officer.<sup>8</sup>

### **High-ranking positions in various institutions**

Returning to the country after demobilization, probably because he served in the Soviet Army, he benefited from certain privileges and political advantages, especially in the early years of the communist regime, when proximity to the U.S.S.R. symbolized loyalty to the new regime. Starting in the 1950s, when purges and various internal struggles within the Communist Party began in Romania, the favorable position of many Jews with connections to the Soviet Union changed. Nevertheless, those with a history of military or political collaboration with the Soviets were often spared the harshest reprisals.

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<sup>5</sup> Marion Ciobanu, interview by the author, May 18, 2023, author's personal archive.

<sup>6</sup> Petran, 'Puternic, nesupus,' in Pavel Constantinescu Ben-Iosef, *Un cineast în față cu lumea contemporană*, (limited edition, not for sale, Rodica Brunhis, 1998), p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Constantinescu Ben-Iosef, *Un cineast în față cu lumea contemporană*, 65-66.

<sup>8</sup> Petran, p. 9.

Pavel Constantinescu was appointed commander of the national youth construction site at Bumbești-Livezeni, where he proved to be very effective in managing the site. After Bumbești-Livezeni, lacking any qualifications, he was appointed deputy Minister of Construction, and from construction, he was transferred to cinema.<sup>9</sup> In 1949, with the nationalization of the film industry, the Committee for Cinematography was established, and Pavel Constantinescu was appointed vice president, working closely with the first president, Nicolae Bellu. Starting in 1952, any new film production had to receive approval from the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, which transformed this institution into the main censorship body for films in Romania. In this context, Pavel Constantinescu continued to play a prominent role, ensuring that films adhered to the ideological standards imposed by the party. At the end of 1952, the Committee for Cinematography was integrated into the Ministry of Culture and renamed the General Directorate of Cinematography, and Pavel Constantinescu remained a key player in the leadership of this institution, with Nicolae Bellu as his superior and collaborating with Mihai Novicov, another cultural activist with connections in the U.S.S.R.<sup>10</sup> Pavel Constantinescu was the general director of the Buftea Studio from 1954 to 1955.

In the immediate post-war period and throughout the 1950s, Pavel, like many others who held important positions in the state apparatus and within the party, did not have advanced formal education. Most of these individuals came from working-class or peasant backgrounds and reached leadership positions due to their loyalty to the party and their involvement in the class struggle. For instance, on February 28, 1952, during a conference with security and militia commanders, the Minister of the Interior, Teohari Georgescu, stated that loyalty and devotion to the regime were more important than professional knowledge. He emphasized that just as workers and peasants in Russia built the Soviet state without political or professional training, Romanian cadres would acquire this knowledge over time, and their initial lack of education was not an obstacle for those who supported the regime.<sup>11</sup> Later, as the communist regime solidified, there was a growing need for these

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<sup>9</sup> Marion Ciobanu, interview by the author, May 18, 2023, author's personal archive.

<sup>10</sup> Bogdan Jitea, *Cinema în RSR. Conformism și disidență în industria românească de filme*, (Iași: Polirom, 2021), p. 15, p. 30.

<sup>11</sup> C.N.S.A.S., F. D. d. nr. 199, f. 87.

individuals to legitimize their positions through formal education, in accordance with the new bureaucratic requirements of the state. Thus, many party leaders and senior officials were “guided” or almost forced to attend university courses.<sup>12</sup>

### **V.G.I.K., Moscow, professional training**

Thus, at the age of 35, Pavel was sent to university, where he chose cinematography.<sup>13</sup> He had to take an entrance exam for film directing at the Sahia studio, where the jury consisted of Ion Bostan, Mircea Popescu, and Mirel Ilieșiu,<sup>14</sup> who were then the leading figures in documentary filmmaking. Following this exam, he was sent to the U.S.S.R. Although a major event in 1958 was the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania, signaling a certain political distancing from Moscow, Romania continued to be closely linked to the Soviet Union in educational and ideological terms. Sending Romanian cadres to study in Moscow remained a common practice until the 1960s, even as Soviet influence over Romanian politics began to decline. Of the 46 Romanian students trained at V.G.I.K. known at the time of writing this article,<sup>15</sup> 43 had started university before 1960.

During the period when Pavel was a student in Moscow (1957-1961), the Soviet Union experienced significant artistic ferment. Film critic S. Freilikh noted that only six feature films were made in 1951, while the number increased to over a hundred in 1957, indicating a revival of cinema after a period of stagnation.<sup>16</sup>

The XX Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (C.P.S.U.) and N. S. Khrushchev’s speeches had a profound impact on Soviet society, including on the students at V.G.I.K., who were facing various issues related to the quality of education and the cult of personality. They decided to send

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<sup>12</sup> Viorel Patrichi, *Ochii și urechile poporului. Convorbiri cu generalul Nicolae Pleșiță*, (București: Ianus Inf, 2001), p. 153.

<sup>13</sup> Marion Ciobanu, interview by the author, May 18, 2023, author’s personal archive.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Р.Г.А.Л.И. (R.G.A.L.I.), 2384; 2900; 2944; 3160.

<sup>16</sup> С. Фрейлих, ‘Знамение времени,’ in *Вопросы киноискусства. Ежегодный историко-теоретический сборник* [Questions of Film Art. Annual Historical and Theoretical Collection], vol. 3 (Москва: 1959), 87.

a telegram to Khrushchev requesting an evaluation of the situation at V.G.I.K.<sup>17</sup> The group that drafted the telegram was composed of students from the directing faculty, including R. and Yu. Grigorievich, Yu. Kavtaradze, T. Meliava, G. Poloku, and V. Shushkina.<sup>18</sup>

Additionally, the students published an article in *Komsomolskaia Pravda* titled “In Front of the Empty Screen,” in which they expressed their grievances.<sup>19</sup> They emphasized that in order to fulfil the task imposed by the party and government to produce 120 feature films per year, there was a need for an increase in the number of specialists, especially since the film industry was also facing shortages of film stock. They required modern equipment and a laboratory for processing colour film. They lacked a cafeteria, and the V.G.I.K. building was not yet completed, although the decision to construct it had been made back in 1939. Generally, the students complained about the overcrowding of their schedules with theoretical courses and the unsatisfactory living conditions, as well as the lack of adequate financial support.

The students’ request to complete the institute’s building came at an opportune moment, as from July 28 to August 11, 1957, Moscow hosted one of the largest international youth events in the post-war period, the VI World Festival of Youth and Students. The organization of the festival took place in the context of the Cold War and was promoted by the Soviet Union as part of the efforts to present a positive image of the country and the communist regime to the international youth. The festival occurred during a period of relative openness known as the Khrushchev Thaw. This large-scale festival turned V.G.I.K. into a meeting place for filmmakers from Soviet republics and around the world; thus, the students’ request coincided with an important moment for international cinema. The telegram from the V.G.I.K. students to the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. and the article in *Komsomolskaia Pravda* acted as a catalyst, accelerating positive changes in the training of professional personnel for cinema. These events significantly contributed to improving study conditions and revitalizing the Soviet film industry.

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<sup>17</sup> О. Г. Герасимова, ‘Кузница кинокадров — ВГИК. 1950–1960-е годы’ [O.G. Gherasimova, ‘The Film Talent Factory — VGIK. The 1950s–1960s’], *Historical Journal* 4 (16) (2013): 441, ([https://nbpublish.com/library\\_get\\_pdf.php?id=25227](https://nbpublish.com/library_get_pdf.php?id=25227)), accessed October 15, 2024.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Комсомольская организация ВГИК, ‘Перед пустым экраном’ [The Komsomol Organization of VGIK, ‘In Front of a Blank Screen’], *Komsomolskaia Pravda*, April 13, 1956.

From that year, V.G.I.K. also began publishing a widely circulated magazine, *The Path to the Screen*.<sup>20</sup>

Shortly after the festival ended, student Pavel Constantinescu arrived at V.G.I.K. He was drawn to the field of documentary filmmaking due to the opening of a class led by the renowned director Ilya Petrovich Kopalin (1900-1976), an exceptional documentary filmmaker and educator of Jewish descent, considered one of the most important documentary directors in the Soviet Union during the 1930s and 1940s. He was awarded six Stalin Prizes and received prestigious titles such as Honoured Artist of the R.S.F.S.R. (1956) and People's Artist of the U.S.S.R. (1968); he was one of the first Soviet filmmakers to receive an Oscar awarded by the American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. He had been a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union since 1940 (VKP, PCUS) and of the Union of Cinematographers of the USSR since 1957.

Kopalin produced numerous propaganda films that promoted socialist ideology in communist Romania, collaborating with Romanian filmmakers. He was also the teacher who guided Mircea Săucan in developing his graduation thesis.<sup>21</sup> Pavel Constantinescu was admitted to this professor's class, engaging with the Sahia studio in 1960, and in 1961, he defended his graduation thesis in Moscow with the film *Cântecul Bârzavei* (*The Song of the Bârzava*).<sup>22</sup>

For his students, Ilya Petrovich was important both as a person and as a teacher, dedicating himself to them with a rare level of attention. He was a gentle yet demanding individual, offering students a great deal of creative freedom.<sup>23</sup> He loved theatre<sup>24</sup> and knew how to inspire his students to create originally, not just to fulfil tasks but to do so creatively.<sup>25</sup> Most of his students completed their projects in collaboration with film studios, Pavel Constantinescu at the Sahia studio.

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<sup>20</sup> В.Г.И.К., (V.G.I.K.), <https://vgik.info/publishers/path/>, accessed on 10.15.2024.

<sup>21</sup> Р.Г.А.Л.И., R.G.A.L.I., 2900-2-951.

<sup>22</sup> Constantinescu Ben-Iosef, *Un cineast în faţă cu lumea contemporană*, 64.

<sup>23</sup> Усков Валерий Иванович, 'Илья Петрович Копалин - режиссер, учитель, человек...' [Uskov Valeriy Ivanovich, 'Ilya Petrovich Kopalin - Director, Teacher, Man...'], September 26, 2000, (<https://www.film.ru/articles/ilya-petrovich-kopalin-rezhisser-uchitel-chelovek>), accessed on 10.15.2024.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Litvyakov Mikhail Sergeevich, Ibid.

Although cultural freedoms experienced a slight expansion after March 1953, the communist regime continued to exert strict control over filmmaking, aiming to promote propaganda and reinforce official ideologies. This duality created a complex environment in which students struggled to navigate between creative freedom and the demands imposed by the regime. Abandoning traditional themes and means was often perceived as hostile to the regime or even immoral. To obtain their diploma at V.G.I.K., students often found greater success by creating films on heroic-revolutionary themes rather than trying to persuade the committee to accept their innovative works, which were often drastically modified. Some graduation projects were harshly criticized for ideological inconsistency, but there are also many recorded instances where these works were defended by professors due to their professional qualities.

The K.G.B. documents suggest that students at V.G.I.K. were under close surveillance by the authorities, reflecting the climate of distrust and pressure that students faced during that period.<sup>26</sup> In some cases, students were expelled or even arrested, and those who defended them also faced severe reprisals and threats of exclusion.<sup>27</sup> Expulsion could mean the end of their careers forever,<sup>28</sup> or they could return and finish their studies with reduced attendance only after 5-6 years,<sup>29</sup> depending on the case. To understand the atmosphere in which Pavel spent his student years, we will recount an incident with dramatic consequences between students and authorities, which also involved a Romanian student from Bessarabia, Emil Lotianu.<sup>30</sup>

On November 30, 1956, the institute held a meeting where communist students alerted the leadership that deviant ideological attitudes had manifested

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<sup>26</sup> Фомин В., *Кино и власть. Советское кино: 1965–1985 годы. Документы, свидетельства, размышления* [Fomin Valeriy, *Cinema and Power: Soviet Cinema: 1965–1985. Documents, Testimonies, Reflections*] (Москва: 1996), p. 88.

<sup>27</sup> Р.Г.А.С.П.И., Ф.М.—1. Оп. 46. Д. 192. Л. 232. [R.G.A.S.P.I., F.M.—1. Op. 46. D. 192. f. 232].

<sup>28</sup> Валерий Васильевич Шорохов, Д. Смирнова, Р.Г.А.С.П.И. Ф.М.—1. Оп. 46. Д. 220. Л. 135. [Valeri Vasilievici Şorohov, D. Smirnova, R.G.A.S.P.I. F.M.—1. Op. 46. D. 220. f. 135].

<sup>29</sup> Trifonov, Ivanov, Natalia Vaysfeld, Vova Valutski, Р.Г.А.С.П.И. Ф.М. (R.G.A.S.P.I. F.M.), 1. Оп. 46. Д. 220. Л. 135.; О. Г. Герасимова, 'Кузница кинокадров — В.Г.И.К. 1950–1960-е годы' [O.G. Gherasimova, 'The Film Talent Factory — V.G.I.K. The 1950s–1960s'], *Historical Journal* no. 4 (16), 2013, ([https://nbpublish.com/library\\_get\\_pdf.php?id=25227](https://nbpublish.com/library_get_pdf.php?id=25227)), accessed on 10.15.2024.

<sup>30</sup> Emil Loteanu (1936–2003), director and screenwriter, a representative figure of Moldovan cinema, known for both fictional films and documentaries.

themselves among the students. Krivtsov reported that a first-year scriptwriting student, Zlatoverov, was engaging in anti-Soviet discussions of a counter-revolutionary nature, using insulting expressions towards the leaders of the Chinese and Mongolian people, and rejecting the study of the works of V.I. Lenin.<sup>31</sup> On December 15, 1956, the Minister of Culture of the U.S.S.R., N.A. Mikhailov, also reported to the C.C. of the C.P.S.U. that articles denying the necessity of party and state leadership in literature and art had appeared in the institute's press, praising examples of bourgeois democracy.<sup>32</sup> Reports from the City Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union noted the inappropriate behavior of several students, including Zlatoverov (V.M?), who allegedly referred to the reaction in Hungary as "a breath of fresh air" and believed that the famine in the U.S.S.R. in 1933 was specifically orchestrated to extract gold. When asked by a professor why he was not taking notes on Lenin's works, he reportedly cheekily responded that "if they are fed cakes every day, they will get sick of it."<sup>33</sup>

The students divided into two camps: some condemned Zlatoverov, while others discredited Krivtsov for his denunciation. After consulting with the leadership and professors, they decided to expel Zlatoverov from the institute, which was somewhat expected; however, what surprised the students was that on December 12, both Zlatoverov and his colleague Kafarov were arrested in the student dormitory.<sup>34</sup>

The students at V.G.I.K. were profoundly shocked by the arrest of their colleagues, especially Kafarov, who had expressed his desire to volunteer in Egypt. During a break, approximately 300-350 students spontaneously gathered in the institute's auditorium, demanding explanations about the recent arrests and discussing the actions of the authorities. Voices such as

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<sup>31</sup> Российский государственный архив новейшей истории (РГАНИ), Ф. 4. Оп. 16. Д. 1098. Л. 5–51 // Цит. по: Студенческое брожение в СССР (конец 1956 г.) // Вопросы истории 1997, №1, с. 18. [Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), Fund 4, Op. 16, File 1098, Pages 5-51 // Quote from: Student Agitation in the USSR (late 1956) // History Issues 1997, No. 1, p. 18.].

<sup>32</sup> Р.Г.А.Н.И., Ф. 4. Оп. 16. Д. 1098. Л. 56–58 // Цит. по: Кинематограф оттепели (R.G.A.N.I., Fund 4, Opus 16, File 1098, Sheets 56–58 // Quoted in *The Cinema of Détente*, Moscow, 1998, pp. 212–213.).

<sup>33</sup> Р.Г.А.С.П.И. Ф.М–1. Оп. 46. Д. 192. Л. 234. [R.G.A.S.P.I., Fund M-1, Opus 46, File 192, F. 234.]

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., f. 226.



V. Kurmanov, the Romanian E. Lotianu, and L. Golubkina criticized the brutality of the methods, which seemed reminiscent of those from the recent past. They believed that the authorities should have informed the students about the reasons for the arrests beforehand, and only if those reasons were convincing, should they have taken appropriate measures. Some of the students decided to support Zlatoverov and Kafarov and requested documents from the K.G.B. to better understand the situation. They even wanted to send a letter to high-ranking leaders like Khrushchev and Bulganin in defence of their colleagues. Mila Golubkina, the secretary of the Komsomol organization at the faculty, organized all opposition forces to ensure that the protest did not appear merely as a student rebellion. M. Golubkina, along with Iu. Perov, V. Lorentz, E. Lotianu, G. Bekarevici, T. Shevchenko, T. Meliava, and A. Gubin formed a group to gather signatures and draft the letter, in which they demanded a thorough investigation of the case and permission for students to attend the trial of Zlatoverov and Kafarov.<sup>35</sup>

On December 14, the party bureau of the institute convened a meeting where officials discussed with the students, and at the end of the meeting, the students announced that, following the discussions, they had decided not to send the letter. We do not know the reason for their withdrawal, but we do know that the secretary of the Komsomol committee in Moscow, N. G. Korolkov, reported on the consequences of the incident:<sup>36</sup> even though the students ultimately did not send the letter, Iu. Perov, E. Lotianu, and V. Kurmanov received a severe reprimand, with a warning of expulsion.<sup>37</sup> We wonder if Pavel Constantinescu was aware of these incidents. We have no direct information in this regard, but since so many students were involved, it is unlikely that he was unaware.

There were cases where students' works were considered ideologically nonconforming. For instance, Vladimir Trifonov wrote a study about an abstract artist living in Leningrad, which was besieged by fascists. Natalia Rizaņeva described an important party activist who commits suicide due to the desire not to live blindly according to others' dictates. Other students presented characters deemed "moral ugliness, wretches, schizophrenics, or

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<sup>35</sup> О. Г. Герасимова, 'Кузница кинокадров — ВГИК. 1950–1960-е годы' [O.G. Gherasimova, 'The Film Talent Factory — VGIIK. The 1950s–1960s'], *Historical Journal*, no. 4 (16), 2013.

<sup>36</sup> Gherasimova, p. 449.

<sup>37</sup> Gherasimova, p. 449.

criminals.”<sup>38</sup> All of these were severely criticized by the party leadership; however, there are cases where some professors, like E. I. Gabrilovici and N. V. Krucicenikov, instead of criticizing these works, defended them, considering that they were good in terms of “craftsmanship and execution technique.”<sup>39</sup>

The films of students from the countries of people’s democracy were evaluated with the same severity as those of Soviet students, with no allowances made for “ideologically inappropriate” cinematic works. For example, at the party bureau meeting on May 14, 1957, the situation of the Polish student from the directing faculty, Eji Ziarniak, was discussed. As his graduation project, he presented his documentary film *The Little Town* (*Городок*), a film that was essentially realistic but did not inspire optimism; it depicted the failures of the Polish economy and, more broadly, issues related to socialist ideology. The V.G.I.K. commission assessed the film as “hostile,” “an ideological defeat,” and “not only anti-Soviet but also anti-Polish.” However, some professors from the directing department, such as L. V. Kuleshov and B. G. Ivanov, considered Ziarniak a “very good, honest, and disciplined student.”<sup>40</sup> In conclusion, we can say that both artistic and documentary films at V.G.I.K. were heavily dependent on the political context and the needs of totalitarian propaganda, but there were certain freedoms and exceptions.

Despite all the difficulties faced by students in the 1950s and 1960s, V.G.I.K. was professionally recognized as the top film school in the world, attracting students from all corners of the globe. Many graduates later became the pride of the film industry in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Poland, Hungary, Germany, Romania; and undoubtedly, studying at V.G.I.K. had a significant impact on their artistic careers.

We have already discussed Pavel Constantinescu’s mentor, Ilya Petrovich Kopalin, but let’s see who the other professors were from whom Romanian students learned during that period. Besides Sergei Eisenstein, with whom they had fewer but significant meetings, all the other professors

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<sup>38</sup> Gherasimova, p. 449.

<sup>39</sup> Gherasimova, p. 449.

<sup>40</sup> ЦАОПИМ, Ф. 2948. Оп. 1. Д. 18. Л. 97, 99. [Т.А.О.П.И.М., Fund 2948, Opus 1, File 18, Sheets 97, 99.]

we will mention served as mentors for the graduation projects of Romanian students.<sup>41</sup> Many of these students, upon returning to their country, worked at the Sahia and Buftea studios.

Sergei Eisenstein (1898–1948) was an innovative genius in montage, redefining how films convey emotions and ideas as a professor at V.G.I.K. from the 1930s until 1948. Micheil Chiaureli (1894–1974) dedicated his career to Stalinist propaganda, and after Stalin's death, his films were criticized for excessive propaganda. Sergei Konstantinovich Skvortsov (1904–1983) taught at V.G.I.K. from 1938 and was honored in 1944 for his contributions to Soviet cinema during the Patriotic War. Alexandr Galperin (1907–1995) revolutionized filming techniques as a director of photography, studying under Karl Freund. In 1945, he was assigned to Germany, where he launched the newsreel "Witness." Returning to Moscow in 1946, he taught at V.G.I.K. and published scientific and educational works. Boris Izrailevich Volchek (1905–1974) frequently collaborated with M. I. Romm and taught at the State Institute of Cinematography of the Soviet Union from 1943.

Yuri Evgenievich Genika (1893–1965) focused on producing scientific films at the Sovkino studio. Since 1934, he taught at V.G.I.K. and served as prorector from 1947 to 1949 and again from 1952 to 1957, mentoring young filmmakers such as Ali Hamraev, Iskra Babich, Pavel Liubimov, Valentin Kozachkov, Mark Tolmachev, and Natalia Velichko.<sup>42</sup> Manevich Iosif Mikhailovich, an influential screenwriter and theorist, shaped generations of filmmakers as a professor at V.G.I.K., leading creative workshops. Renowned students such as Valeriy Priymeikov and Eduard Topol studied under his guidance, and he published important works on cinematography.<sup>43</sup> Lev Vladimirovich Kuleshov (1899–1970) is famous for the "Kuleshov Effect," a crucial contribution to the understanding of montage, demonstrating that an image can change its meaning based on context. He was also a co-founder of the first film school in the world, located in Moscow.<sup>44</sup> Evgeny Iosifovich

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<sup>41</sup> П.Г.А.Л.И (R.G.A.L.I.), 2384; 2900; 2944; 3160.

<sup>42</sup> 'Biography,' Kino-teatr (<https://www.kino-teatr.ru/kino/screenwriter/sov/43300/bio/>), accessed on 10.15.2024.

<sup>43</sup> 'Biography,' Kino-teatr, (<https://www.kino-teatr.ru/kino/screenwriter/sov/29204/bio/>), accessed on 10.15.2024.

<sup>44</sup> Peter Rollberg, *Historical Dictionary of Russian and Soviet Cinema* (Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2009), pp. 379–383.

Gabrilovich (1899–1993) was an influential screenwriter, playwright, and writer who began teaching screenwriting at the Soviet Cinematography Institute in 1948. He led screenwriting workshops from 1960 to 1967 and again from 1974 to 1976.

Another giant of Soviet cinema was Sergei Apollinarieвич Gerasimov (1906–1985), a director, actor, and screenwriter. As a professor at V.G.I.K., he guided the careers of prominent filmmakers, including Andrei Tarkovsky, solidifying socialist realism as a dominant style in Soviet cinema. Although initially avant-garde, his directing was predominantly influenced by socialist realism. We cannot conclude without mentioning Grigory Vasilyevich Alexandrov (1903–1983), known for his collaborations with Eisenstein and his musical comedies. His films infused Soviet cinema with humor and optimism, bringing vibrant characters and accessible stories to the big screen.

Alongside the guidance of professors, peers also play a crucial role in the professional development of a student. Interactions, collaborations, and even competition among them can be stimulating. Pavel Constantinescu developed strong relationships with both his Romanian colleagues and those of other nationalities, having the privilege of being among the students from the same period as illustrious figures of cinema, such as: Andrei Tarkovsky (1955–1960), Sergei Parajanov (1954–1959), Gleb Panfilov (1960–1966), Marlen Khutsiev (1952–1958), Otar Iosseliani (1955–1961), and Andrei Konchalovsky (1958–1965). In his memoirs, Pavel nostalgically recalls these formative years. When he returned to Moscow in 1967, making a stop on his way home from Vietnam, he was eager to reunite with former classmates and professors; to revisit the classrooms and creative laboratories that, in his opinion, played an essential role in defining his career.<sup>45</sup> At the same time, he passionately admired the works of great directors of Soviet cinema – Vertov, Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Alexandrov, Dovzhenko, and many others from the gallery of great talents. However, his fascination extended beyond cinema; music, ballet, opera, and classical Russian theatre were also rich sources of inspiration for him.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Constantinescu Ben-Iosef, *Un cineast în fața cu lumea contemporană*, p. 64.

<sup>46</sup> Constantinescu.

### Films with ecclesiastical themes

Upon returning to his country, he filmed various documentaries, including a report that captures in real-time the heroism of a Romanian helicopter crew rescuing 22 Turkish sailors;<sup>47</sup> three war films in Vietnam,<sup>48</sup> where he risked his life again, filming in the intervals between American bombings that targeted not only military infrastructure but also civilian objectives, such as industrial areas and transport centres, causing significant civilian casualties and massive destruction. He also made films about ecclesiastical art and the Brâncuși cycle.

Pavel was not part of the so-called bourgeois-landlord elite; he had the appropriate background, and all his films about churches were made during a period of relative “thaw” between 1964 and 1968. However, films addressing religious themes or depicting churches were not encouraged. The representation of religion in cinema was extremely limited, with the state being the sole producer of films.

To highlight how rare films about churches were, it is useful to analyse the available figures. It is important to note that these data are approximate, as there is no complete and public list of all the films made at Sahia. We will rely on our own list, which was compiled based on the inventory from the National Film Archive (A.N.F.), information obtained from the Sahia Film studio, former filmmakers, and various publications.

Throughout the active period of the studio as a documentary producer, from 1950 to 2000, approximately 8,000 films were made at Sahia. Out of these 8,000, a total of 58 films were produced with themes related to religion, of which 48 can be classified in the category of art and culture – barely or not at all conforming to party interference – and 10 in the category of popular science, or various. Today, we might consider these last 10 more as anti-religious propaganda films. If we calculate the percentage, including these 10 films, we can say that approximately 0.7% of Sahia’s production relates to ecclesiastical art, religion, or religious beliefs, and this number includes those made after 1990.

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<sup>47</sup> Constantinescu, *Fapt divers* (1963).

<sup>48</sup> Constantinescu, *Copilărie furată* (1967), *Hanoiul de la răsărit la apus* (1967) și *Între două bombardamente* (1968).

Between 1950 and 1990, 30 films were made in the category of art and culture, as well as 10 films in the categories of popular science and various, totalling 40 films. During the period when Pavel Constantinescu worked at Sahia, from 1959 to January 1971, only 12 films were produced, all categorized as art and culture. Of these 12 films, 5 were directed by Pavel Constantinescu.

Ion Bostan, one of the pioneers of art documentaries in Romania, filmed a movie in 1957 about the painting *The Massacre of the Innocents* by Pieter Bruegel, titled the same as the painting. He later created three documentaries on ecclesiastical art, focusing on religious painting and architecture: one in 1962, another in 1964, and the third in 1965. However, being aware that the period was not favourable for such subjects and wanting to avoid political implications,<sup>49</sup> Bostan retreated to the Danube Delta, where he made dozens of documentary films about nature. After the fall of the communist regime, he returned to ecclesiastical themes and directed eight films about church art in just three years, thus demonstrating his deep interest in this subject.

Another important director is Slavomir Popovici (1930-1983). As the son and grandson of an Orthodox priest, this Serbian director with extraordinary literary talent was perhaps the only one who made religious films in the true sense of the word, creating superb essay documentaries. His films capture the mysterious meaning of churches and convey profound Christian spirituality; they are not merely documentaries about their architectural and pictorial values. He worked alongside his wife, screenwriter Gabriela Ionescu. He transitioned from social films to those about art, ethnography, and folklore, precisely so that the message he wanted to convey to the audience could bypass the censorship filters.<sup>50</sup> Of course, these films were also heavily censored and modified; the director faced censorship issues throughout his life but bravely continued to work according to his own principles. He often resorted to a symbolic language with a rich semantic substratum, not only for artistic reasons but also for practical ones, to help his films somehow pass through censorship. We also mention Petre Sirin, with the film *Byzantine Triptych* (1970).

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<sup>49</sup> Marion Ciobanu, interview by the author, May 18, 2023, author's personal archive.

<sup>50</sup> Iaromira Popovici, 'Cum se făceau documentarele la Studioul "Sahia" – câteva mărturii', in *Dilema Veche*, nr. 610, 22-28 October 2015, (<https://dilemaveche.ro/sectiune/societate/cum-se-faceau-documentarele-la-studioul-sahia-592285html>), accessed on 17.08.2022.

After witnessing such experiences from his colleagues, we wonder how Pavel was able to make five documentaries about churches. Two of them won awards at international festivals in Italy and Poland and were praised in contemporary press outlets, including *Cinema*<sup>51</sup> and *România Literară*.<sup>52</sup> He directed *Comori de artă românească* (*Treasures of Romanian Art*) (1964),<sup>53</sup> *Excursie la mănăstirile Moldovei* (*Excursion to the Monasteries of Moldavia*) (1965),<sup>54</sup> *Mănăstirea Dragomirna/Crimca* (*Dragomirna Monastery/Crimca*) (1966), *Biserici din lemn*, (*Wooden Churches*) (1968),<sup>55</sup> and *Cântece în lemn* (*Songs in Wood*) (1968).<sup>56</sup> His films capture the artistic beauty of the churches, particularly the painting and architecture, but do not focus on their spiritual dimensions. They were made within the limits accepted by censorship, emphasizing the party's concern for the renovation of these monuments, as exemplified in the film *Biserici din lemn*, (*Wooden Churches*) (1968) (Appendix 1). Even though many other churches were being demolished in the meantime, this was the obligatory rhetoric used to show the Western world that the state was taking care of its historical and cultural heritage.

To understand how Pavel managed to create these films and why it was precisely a Jew who did so, it is essential to familiarize ourselves with the atmosphere at the Sahia studio, to know the limits of filmmakers' freedom of expression, and the role that Pavel Constantinescu had within this studio. Many Jews and Hungarians were employed at Sahia, and the director Aristide Moldovan, who led the studio for 34 years, came from a mixed Romanian-

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<sup>51</sup> *Cinema* No. 3, (1969), p.14.

<sup>52</sup> *România Literară*, no. 28 (July 12, 1973).

<sup>53</sup> Pavel Constantinescu, *Comori de artă românească*, Commentary: Eugen Schileru, Film made at the request of the Directorate of Historical Monuments. It presents five leading works of Romanian architecture and painting: the monasteries of Moldovița, Sucevița, Humor, Arbore, and Voroneț.

<sup>54</sup> Pavel Constantinescu, *Excursie la mănăstirile Moldovei* (1965) (Grand Prize, Golden Minerva, San Remo, Italy), *România Literară*, no. 28 (July 12, 1973).

<sup>55</sup> Pavel Constantinescu, *Biserici din lemn*, at the fourth edition of the International Festival of Museum Films in Kielce, won the award from the General Directorate of Museums and Historical Monuments under the Ministry of Culture and Art of the Polish People's Republic, Scînteia, October 22, 1971.

<sup>56</sup> Pavel Constantinescu, *Cântece în lemn* (1968) Concentrated version of the Wooden churches, a faster montage but with the same documentary richness.

Hungarian family. There are numerous testimonies indicating that he did not tolerate any form of discrimination, especially based on ethnic criteria.<sup>57</sup>

Despite being established for overtly propagandistic purposes, the Sahia studio was undoubtedly the freest creative environment of its time when compared to other studios or other fields of art, such as literature or the arts. In an era when every profession had to offer its share of victims, no one from Sahia was arrested, unlike Magda Mihăilescu from Buftea,<sup>58</sup> Mihai Andricu in music, Ana Novac in literature, and Militza Pătrașcu in the arts, and the list could go on.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, it was a refuge for those who had problems at Buftea; many of them were employed under contract and continued their work at Sahia.<sup>60</sup> Those who applied for emigration were allowed to work until the very last moment, receiving a salary, but they did not have their names on the credits.<sup>61</sup>

This relatively relaxed atmosphere, compared to what was happening around, was largely due to two important figures of the studio: the studio director Aristide Moldovan and the film director Virgil Calotescu.<sup>62</sup> Aristide led the studio for 34 years (from 1954 to 1988), while Virgil Calotescu was the party secretary and had numerous connections in the highest political circles, intervening multiple times to protect his colleagues from harsh sentences, even in difficult situations.<sup>63</sup> Thanks to the influence of both him and Moldovan, no one was subjected to severe penalties, nor were they fired or imprisoned for their expressed opinions. Pavel Constantinescu had good relations with both of them, and they likely did not forget that Pavel had once been their superior.

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<sup>57</sup> Árpád Pünkösdi, *Egyperces Fischerek: A szökött filmes életei* (Noran Libro, Budapest, 2011), p. 85, p. 132.; Marion Ciobanu, interview by the author, May 18, 2023, author's personal archive; Patakfalvi Ferenc, interview by the author, May 19, 2023, author's personal archive.

<sup>58</sup> Magda Mihăilescu, *Aceste gioconde fără surâs. Convorbiri cu Malvina Urșianu* (Curtea Veche, București, 2006), pp. 27-29.

<sup>59</sup> Jitea, *Cinema în RSR. Conformism și disidență*, pp. 15, 33.

<sup>60</sup> Mircea Săucan, Ilarion Ciobanu etc.

<sup>61</sup> Marion Ciobanu, interview by the author, May 18, 2023, author's personal archive.

<sup>62</sup> Virgil Calotescu, a member of the party bureau leadership of the studio, vice-president of the Association of Filmmakers, and producer of hundreds of short and feature films until 1989.

<sup>63</sup> Marion Ciobanu, interview by the author, May 18, 2023, author's personal archive.



Of course, there were informants at Sahia, but not many. Most of them were from the auxiliary staff, particularly drivers. We know from a report from the Department of State Security in 1985 that at Sahia and Animafilm combined, there were a total of 15 sources, including only 3 directors and 2 production managers; before '85, there were even fewer.<sup>64</sup> The Sahia file at the Security Service contains 137 informative notes, most of which are almost laudatory about them. Most filmmakers are described as "serious, respectful, kind, calm" and "a bit unsociable, not very communicative."<sup>65</sup> – these qualifications probably served as a justification for the source not reporting more information about those individuals. The most serious accusations in this file are against a production manager who "no longer gets along with his wife; they have arguments and fights."<sup>66</sup> Thus, there were indeed plenty of informative notes, but they reported things that were so insignificant that no one was ever in real danger because of them. About several filmmakers at Sahia, truly incriminating information can be found in Mircea Săucan's file,<sup>67</sup> but these date back to the time he worked at Buftea and relate mainly to his film *Meandre* (1967). The good atmosphere and safety at Sahia were largely due to the fact that a large percentage of the employees were related; the Sahia studio was, both literally and figuratively, a big family.

Another argument presumed by his colleagues explaining why Pavel Constantinescu might have allowed himself more than others is that he may have been an undercover security officer. In his book, he neither confirms nor denies this, but he does bring up the subject. With much humour, he recounts an incident in America where a Romanian there asks him how he managed to travel alone to the United States, given that shortly before, he had encountered another individual who was escorted by three security agents – suggesting to Pavel a lack of trust. To this, Pavel responds with a striking proposal to his conversation partner: they will assume that he is a Security agent, sent on special assignments among Romanian-Americans, and that

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<sup>64</sup> Jitea, *Cinema în RSR. Conformism și disidență*, p. 15, p. 360.

<sup>65</sup> C.N.S.A.S., D 000208, Vol. 8, "Referitor la creație cinematografică, 1. Studioul "Al. Sahia" mat. Verific. A-Z, f.2.

<sup>66</sup> C.N.S.A.S., D 000208, Vol. 8, "Referitor la creație cinematografică, 1. Studioul "Al. Sahia" mat. Verific. A-Z, f. 51.

<sup>67</sup> Nina Behar, Silvia Armașu, and Virgil Calotescu are accused, C.N.S.A.S. I 234060, f. 43-48.

the film project he was working on there is just a subtle camouflage. The conversation partner should forget his suspicions about him, while Pavel will forget this individual's doubts.<sup>68</sup> With the subject thus left open, the reader can believe what they want.

What is certain is that he travelled extensively, filming in America, France, China, and Vietnam; we know that not everyone was allowed to travel and film abroad. However, on the most recent lists published by the National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives with the officers, non-commissioned officers, and collaborators of the Security Service, Pavel Constantinescu does not appear.<sup>69</sup> Of course, these public lists represent only a part of the documents, but neither in his surveillance file nor in the criminal file is there any note in this regard, nor in his quite extensive correspondence intercepted by the security organs. In the document in which he is condemned, he is listed as holding the rank of military lieutenant.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, we will also leave this subject open.

### **Emigration to Israel. Memoirs and film projects**

Pavel Constantinescu, like most filmmakers with initially communist beliefs, also went through the drama of disillusionment. He, who in his youth dreamed of justice, happiness, equality, and human dignity, who risked his life daily for six years for these ideals, came to understand that the communist regime would never provide these to society, the situation was worsening day by day. He was terribly disappointed. He decided to emigrate, and through these films about churches, as well as his unparalleled films about Brâncuși, he prepared for his retreat. He chose to make films that did not involve a political stance.

In 1970, based on a filming contract, he travelled to the Federal Republic of Germany. He requested successive visa extensions until December 1973, at which point he ceased to maintain contact with the Romanian authorities and did not return to the country.<sup>71</sup> Consequently, a criminal case was

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<sup>68</sup> Constantinescu Ben-Iosef, *Un cineast în față cu lumea contemporană*, p. 112.

<sup>69</sup> C.N.S.A.S., ([http://www.cnsas.ro/fosta\\_securitate.html](http://www.cnsas.ro/fosta_securitate.html)), accessed on 10.15.2024.

<sup>70</sup> C.N.S.A.S., P114879; C.N.S.A.S., I234985.

<sup>71</sup> C.N.S.A.S., I 234985.

opened against him, in which an aggravating factor was his request for political asylum in Switzerland. He was sentenced to six years in prison, of which he was supposed to serve five.

In Israel, where he emigrated, Pavel Constantinescu was forced to start everything from scratch. He couldn't break into television because he was not well-known<sup>72</sup> and did not master the language well; at first, he didn't even have a passport. This was why he sought political asylum in Switzerland, in order to obtain the necessary documents for employment in Israel. His first job was picking oranges, but gradually he managed to create short films funded by television and other government institutions.<sup>73</sup> Eventually, he was hired by the Ministry of Education, where he produced hundreds of educational documentary films covering all levels of education.

Although testimonies from his ex-wife, friends, and colleagues confirm that Pavel Constantinescu was not a practitioner of any religion, we cannot ignore a constant inner aspiration toward moral and aesthetic values such as beauty and truth, values he found in the church. I do not intend to present him as a believer, but his journal reveals how profoundly he was impressed by Russian culture. He was captivated by Russian ballet, theatre, music, and classical literature, the latter two in particular having strong roots in the Christian tradition.

We know that the film *Comori de artă românească* was made at the request of the Directorate of Historical Monuments, and regarding the film *Mănăstirea Dragomirna/Crimca* (1966), the director recounted in a 1967 interview how he was drawn to the miniature paintings at Dragomirna. He stated that from his first visit to the monastery, he was deeply impressed by the artistic treasure there, and although he was initially only interested in the artistic value of Atanasie Crimca's work, as he deepened his knowledge, he became fascinated by the history of the place and the personality of Crimca, the founder of the national miniature painting school.<sup>74</sup>

From the same journal, it is evident that, in addition to the films he completed, the director was working on at least three projects with religious themes. In 1967, in Beijing, he expressed his desire to film Buddhist temples,

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<sup>72</sup> Constantinescu Ben-Iosef, *Un cineast în față cu lumea contemporană*, p. 281.

<sup>73</sup> Constantinescu, p. 282.

<sup>74</sup> Oltea Tănase, "Interviul nostru cu regizorul Pavel Constantinescu despre noul său film documentar", *Informația*, 1. Dec. 1967, in Constantinescu Ben-Iosef, *Un cineast în față cu lumea contemporană*, p. 272.

comparing them to the painted churches in northern Moldova. In 1984 in Venice, he noted that the theme of the Last Judgment had long preoccupied him, and he would like to film a small church from the seventh century where he discovered a new form of this famous composition, the Last Judgment.

Another project is a film entitled *Tehina*,<sup>75</sup> which is a prayer of deep repentance for Yom Kippur. It was written by Yehuda Halevi, a Jewish poet and philosopher recognized as one of the most remarkable figures in medieval Jewish literature. Unfortunately, there is no clear information about the realization of this film, leaving open the question of whether it remained only at the project stage or not. However, undoubtedly, it would have been his most profound film spiritually among all his documentaries. This is not only due to the text itself but also to the direction.

The entire film is dedicated to the spiritual aspect of prayer. It is a profound meditation on the human condition, reflecting on the personal relationship with the Divine, mortality, and the inner struggle with sins and weaknesses, expressing a strong desire to lead a virtuous life according to divine will. The author explores existential questions, seeking reconciliation with oneself and the Creator; the central themes are the search for divine mercy and a close relationship with God, emphasizing the need for spiritual guidance. The spirit of this prayer, the tone, structure, form, and language all remind us of the Psalms of David. The film is an emotional appeal, an invitation to reflect on the meaning of life and the passage of time.

The film project successfully captures the contemplative atmosphere of the text, constructed in a lyrical manner without becoming sentimental or overly emotional. It appears almost complete, having established the structure, locations, and filming techniques, with only a few minor details missing, including a note: "To consult Noica."<sup>76</sup> It is particularly interesting that the themes addressed in the film, as well as the overall atmosphere, closely resemble a letter that Pavel sent to Aurora Roșca<sup>77</sup> in 1972, where he sincerely expresses his concerns about the meaning of life, consciousness, freedom, goodness, beauty, and happiness, similar to the reflections of Yehuda Halevi. The letter does not provide concrete details about his life at that time but accurately describes his inner state and existential concerns.

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<sup>75</sup> Constantinescu Ben-Iosef, *Un cineast în față cu lumea contemporană*, pp. 235-238.

<sup>76</sup> Constantinescu, p. 238.

<sup>77</sup> C.N.S.A.S., P 114879, f. 8-11.

Another text from his journal (Annex 4)<sup>78</sup> reflects a profound reverence for Jerusalem, recalling its sacred history and spirituality. Pavel evokes images of the holy city, suggesting that his personal experience in this place reinforces his belief that the person of Jesus was real, not a myth. The text suggests a certain belief, even if the author does not explicitly express himself as a religious practitioner. The contemplative tone and his appreciation for religious values indicate a sincere quest for a higher meaning in life. The author seems emotionally anchored in religious traditions, even if he does not formally practice them. We believe that this text goes far beyond a purely aesthetic admiration of church values.

## Conclusions

As a result of our research, we believe that Pavel Constantinescu directed these films with ecclesiastical themes because he could, and because he wanted to.

He had the necessary courage, talent, social position, and culture – albeit accumulated later – than if he had not spent six years on the front lines. He greatly appreciated art and knew many high-quality art critics who influenced him (such as Barbu Brezianu, Militza Pătrașcu, a former student of Constantin Brâncuși, etc.). He knew how to choose his consultants and listened to their opinions. He had influential friends and connections everywhere, and from a political standpoint, he was terribly disappointed.

By analyzing the situation of the three filmmakers who made films about churches between 1959 and 1971, we can affirm that, in general, even though films about ecclesiastical art were not well-regarded by the authorities, they could still be made. There were periods of strictness and others that were more permissive, influenced by the severity of the censors and the editors' ability to trick the censorship. However, it seems that those who had the courage and interest in such themes managed to produce their works. Sahia, being a permissive environment compared to other institutions and a studio where most filmmakers were dedicated to culture, allowed for many things that were not possible in other institutions.

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<sup>78</sup> Constantinescu Ben-Iosef, *Un cineast în față cu lumea contemporană*, p. 136-137.

The quality of his films is primarily due to his talent but especially to his exceptional intelligence and his ability to adapt to any environment he found himself in. The years spent in the U.S.S.R. were decisive in his professional formation, as he learned from the greatest filmmakers in the world and had colleagues who themselves became renowned filmmakers. Even the years spent on the front lines were significant because he gained rich life experience here, which was essential for a documentarian and war reporter. Additionally, it was during this time that he learned the Russian language, without which he certainly could not have accumulated so much knowledge at V.G.I.K.

Although he was not a religious practitioner, Pavel consistently showed a genuine interest and aspiration toward values deeply rooted in religious traditions, particularly in Judaism and Christianity. Pavel Constantinescu was and remained “an incorrigible idealist”,<sup>79</sup> as his friend Amir Rotem characterized him, “a rebel who always did only what he wanted”,<sup>80</sup> as described by his wife, and “a tough, unruly, and extraordinarily intelligent Moldavian Jew”,<sup>81</sup> as Iosif Petran said.

Pavel Constantinescu’s achievements in the field of cinematography are not just works of art. In today’s world, as it faces an increasingly acute moral crisis and a sense of meaninglessness, the significance of churches and ecclesiastical art stands out more than ever, what gives Pavel Constantinescu’s films a unique value, in addition to their professional merit.

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<sup>79</sup> Constantinescu, p. 285.

<sup>80</sup> Marion Ciobanu, interview by the author, May 18, 2023, author’s personal archive.

<sup>81</sup> Constantinescu Ben-Iosef, *Un cineast în față cu lumea contemporană*, p. 9.

## APPENDIX

All the texts in the appendix were translated by Prof. Ph.D. Maria-Silvia Crăciun

### **Pavel Constantinescu, passage from the film's text *Wooden Churches***

1.

"Placed within the landscape, on hills and on the edges of the woods, on the wide valleys of rivers and streams, or within the confines of villages, wooden churches, modest, in similar ways to peasant houses, or imposing, like true Gothic cathedrals are spread across the entire country.

In time, many of these fragile monuments have disappeared. For those which have survived today, long-lasting autumn rains and the snows of rough winters have been fierce enemies.

With knowhow and infinite care for the preservation of ancient of olden forms rotten beams are replaced, the scaffolding of the spears is completed and the tall wooden roofing is refashioned.

Restored, these splendid monuments stading on the edge of their existence will be able to face again decades of autumns and rains, of winters and snow. Enjoying all the care in the world, salvaging from destruction the most representative wooden churches has gained significant momentum during the last few years."

### **Pavel Constantinescu, *A cinematographer facing the contemporary world***

2.

p. 17

Budhist processions were, doubtlessly, spectacular. I would wish to film something. To juxtapose, face to face. Budhist temples and the painted churches of norhtern Moldavia. Two types of architecture, two forms of expression sealed off by geographical distance and the two completely different religions. Would the Chisnese allow us to film?

3.

p. 127

Reading the message, I address the One Above: „Many and unfathomable are your ways, My Lord! Allow me to ask you, although I know you are not in the habit of answering: What new twists of fate are you devising on my account?"

4.

pp.136-137

At one of the crossroads, we turn, climbing Golgotha... at the end of the climb, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the primordial monument of Christianity, unveils itself to our gaze. I recall to memory images of the life of Christ, as they appear in the famous frescos of Voroneț, Humor, Arbore, Moldovița, Sucevița. It seems like yesterday, when by the light of the spotlights we were filming with the team, the immortal creations of the anonymous virtuosi from the time of Ștefan cel Mare. The film came back from San Remo with the "Golden Minerva", the first prize of the great festival.

Looking at the place and the people who gravitate towards the monument, I have a feeling that Jesus was not a myth, but a true man, made of flesh, bones and blood, and perhaps no other like him had left such a profound impression on mankind. Preserving for centuries the values of the great religions of the world, this city wears with justice in the consciousness of mankind the name of Holy City, with a great, unique and unequalled history.

Yes, in these places, as nowhere in the world, one has the feeling that one slips along the invisible wheel of fortune, that one rises and falls (ascends and descends) dizzily, across generations, over the times that always fulfill eternity. The picture of a succession of long-gone civilizations and of the ones on the verge of becoming is truly fabulous, fascinating.

Making our way among the walls of the old fortress, we leave the town... how many events and how many undeciphered secrets continue to live in the serene silence of the old walls as I pass them unknowingly, full of impressions, of deeply felt reverence and an unknown fear. The sun is setting ... the heat of the day is extinguished in the towers and old buttresses. I will come back, Jerusalem, I repeat in my mind, I will come back to you always, beloved and holy city.

5.

p. 144

A little church from the seventh century, in full process of restoration under the aegis of UNESCO, where I discover a new form of the famous composition „The Last Judgement”, one of the possible subjects for a film that has preoccupied me for ages, that I wish not to remain – just- a project, like many others.



### **Acronyms**

**C.N.S.A.S.** – National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives

**C.P.S.U.** – Communist Party of the Soviet Union

**PCUS** – Communist Party of the Soviet Union

**R.G.A.L.I.** – Russian State Archive of Literature and Art

**R.S.F.S.R.** – Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic

**V.G.I.K.** – All-Union State Institute of Cinematography

**V.K.P.** – All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)

**V.L.K.S.M.** – All-Union Leninist Young Communist League

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