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At Home in the World
Remarks on the Bengali Sense of Belonging

Mihaela Gligor
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In 1916, Rabindranath Tagore, the first Nobel laureate of Asia, published one of his most inspiring novels, Ghare Baire (The home and the world), a very important writing for the understanding of the history of Bengal, its contemporary problems, and the way in which the West is presented in contrast with the East. But the novel also contains some essential details about the traditional Bengali household and the importance of having a strong cultural identity. It explains how belonging was understood in the Bengali society of those years. The story is told from the vantage point of each of the three main characters: Nikhilesh, Bimala, his wife, and Sandip, their friend. Ghare Baire explains the old against the new, the West against the East, the rational and the emotional, the conservative and the revolutionary, the home and the world, as understood by Rabindranath Tagore. In 1919, Ghare Baire was translated into English by the author’s nephew, Surendranath Tagore, with an input from Rabindranath himself. Nowadays it is available all over.
the world, in numerous translations, and is still seen as one of the most important pieces that Tagore wrote in his long life.

In 2021, Amartya Sen, another Bengali Nobel laureate, whose name was suggested by Rabindranath Tagore himself, published his memoirs, called *Home in the World*, a long-awaited writing about home, belonging, inequality, and identity. The central ‘character’ of this wonderful autobiographical volume is the sense of belonging, of being part of a community. Professor Amartya Sen began his teaching career at Jadavpur University in Calcutta (Kolkata). Then life and scholarships took him, among others, to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of Delhi and the Delhi School of Economics, the London School of Economics and Political Science, and Harvard University. This is, in fact, the reason why he calls many places home, including Dhaka, in modern Bangladesh; Calcutta (Kolkata), where he first studied economics; and Trinity College, Cambridge, where he engaged with the greatest minds of his generation. In *Home in the World*, these homes collectively form an unparalleled vision of twentieth and twenty-first century life in Asia, Europe, and later America.

So, here we have two Nobel laureates coming from the same geographic area, belonging to the same thriving Bengali culture, writing more than 100 years apart, using—more or less—the same concepts to describe the importance of cultural identity. What changed in these 100 years?

Terms like identity and belonging have been central threads within anthropological research since its inception. In general terms, cultural identity refers to a person’s sense of belonging to a particular culture. We often understand the construction of identity in terms of gender, class, age and ethnicity, language, and/or religion. But what happens when a person is forced to leave his/her culture and to live in a different environment, along with people never met before, in a place where another language is spoken, and where God has a different name? What does cultural identity mean to an immigrant? What does he/she take from his/her own culture and what does identity look like for these people? What does home mean? How are the home and the world related nowadays? Where is the home in the world? And where in the world are we at home? It seems like a game of words, but it hides more than we might think.

“Everyone belongs somewhere or with someone,” writes James Greenaway in the Introduction to his recent volume on *The Philosophy of Belongings*, and he continues: “we know, for example, that we belong to places and to times, and we know that we belong to other people and to our communities.” But in recent years, both familial and national belongings and identities have been entwined with (im)migration and transnationalism. These topics have interested me for quite some time, being closely linked to my scientific endeavors. Working
on different subjects, from the philosophy of culture, Indian studies, interwar history and the recovery of important documents belonging to the Jewish intellectuals of Romanian origin, the topic of what the home and the world mean for people in different regions was always on my mind. On the one hand, I was particularly interested in the voice of the subaltern, as described by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her essays, and in how the subaltern speaks and, most importantly, can be heard in our contemporary society. Things like cultural identity, belonging, immigration or exile are interconnected and together can offer a better understanding of our fractured world. On the other hand, the dynamics of migration have changed dramatically in the last 10 years. People all over the world are facing multiple constraints that force them to leave their countries: wars, natural calamities, political regimes or terror attacks are just a few of the issues of our modern world. All these have an important role in immigration and the need to find a safe place to live. They also define the current status of homo mundi—the man of the world. Home is where the individual feels safe. The universal language of our times is not English anymore, but the understanding of the need to live without fear. Any immigrant’s story can develop an entire new philosophy of becoming, and the anthropology of belonging is, probably, the most important element of defining the home in the world.

I won’t discuss these important issues in this essay, as my primary intention is only to offer some personal remarks on the Bengali sense of belonging, as my research is based on a couple of important writings of Bengali authors and also on my personal experiences from 2007, when India entered into my life, to 2024, when I had the honor of participating in the most important Bengali festival of literature, the Tata Steel Kolkata Literary Meet.

As most of my visits to India included Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), I became familiar with the Bengali way of life. In 2009, I spent there six months, having received an iccr postdoctoral scholarship to study Rabindranath Tagore’s philosophy of religions at Jadavpur University. During my stay there, I was very much impressed with the strong sense of community and belonging even among the youngsters, many of them pursuing studies in the West. Being a Bengali is a matter of pride and joy, and most of them seem eager to share with others the essentials of belonging to the third largest ethno-linguistic group in the world.

After 2014, with the newly-created Cluj Center for Indian Studies (which I founded at Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca) and with the beginning of scientific cooperation with Indian universities (among them, Jadavpur University of Kolkata), a number of Bengali students arrived at Babeș-Bolyai University. During their stay here, I noticed how they kept their sense of community.
They expressed their strong cultural identity primarily through language, fashion, food, and faiths, as important elements. In a way, they were uprooted, but they were part of the Bengali spirit more than ever before. These could have been their words, too:

_It is through our openness to the world and cultures other than our own, that we have evolved our Bengaliness that is so distinctive, so unique. It’s what makes us enduring, indolent, insular, outgoing, endearing, adventurous, gypsy-like, nesting, sentimental, adaptive, rebellious, questioning, accepting, and infuriating in turn—or all at once. To be anything else would probably be so very boring._

In 2017, during the presence of Bengali students at Babeș-Bolyai University, we organized many cultural events, as they were eager to promote their culture. On one occasion, for the international day of poetry (21 March), there was a poetry recital in Bengali. It was for the first time that Rabindranath Tagore’s poems in the original Bengali were read in Cluj. The _Gitanjali_ poems sounded like music and the students were proud and happy to share their own language with us. It was then that I truly understood that language is an important tool for every community, even a small one like that comprising our students. It is the language that keeps the traditions alive, and speaks about someone’s identity.

_Our homeland, geographical and linguistic, is spread across two countries, India and Bangladesh—literally the country of Bengalis, and their language, Bānglā. It’s a teeming, heaving, raucous space where empires have been won and lost, civilization celebrated and ground to dust, a place of lucid intellects, . . . where emotion seems to be as much a cachet as education._

Through the language they expressed their emotions and it was in the language they were at home in Cluj.

For a Bengali, the language expresses, without any doubt, the profound sense of belonging. When asked about the language he dreams in, Amartya Sen answered spontaneously: “Bengali, mostly.”

_He is a citizen of the world, but this is how he affirms his identity. The roots are there, always. And they remain. But they also help the individual to spread his wings and ‘to conquer’ the world._

For Amartya Sen, in particular, “the power of argument” was always an important tool in conquering the world of academia, as he writes: “Our reasoned sympathy, across the borders of geography and time, may come from the strength
of our spontaneous affections or from the power of argument.” By argument he secured a place among the world’s most outstanding economists.

Bānglā has another important and distinct feature amongst Indian languages, which is a matter of great pride:

The national anthem of India was written in Bengali, which happens to be my mother tongue and one of the major languages of India. It has to be sung in Hindi, as . . . the national anthem must be sung in the national language. No translation there. When the Indian national anthem is sung, some Bengalis sing loudly with a Bengali pronunciation and accent which is distinctly different from the Hindi pronunciation and accent, but the anthem remains Hindi, although it is Bengali,

recalls Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, another Bengali intellectual that conquered the world, and made it her home.

The Bengalis have many things to be proud of, as I could also see during my stays there. More than that, the Bengali Diaspora has an important role in all parts of our contemporary world. Bengalis are very competitive, and they try to express their rich culture through everything they do. The most important Bengali festivals, like the famous Durga Puja, included in the representative list of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity in 2021, are now celebrated across the globe with the same fervor.

Indeed, the Bengali Diaspora in all its shades is now already so diverse and vast that, in 2015, Kalyani University near Kolkata started a Centre for Bengali Diaspora.

When the students from Kolkata were in Cluj, I became interested in how Bengalis managed to integrate in the countries they were living in and, at the same time, in how they succeeded to keep their specific Bengali identity and why this is important for the understanding of a community.

Who or what is the Bengali, really, beyond a roiled history, schizophrenic emotion and heightened sense of self? What are the Bengali and the Bengali homelands all about, stereotypically and beyond stereotypes? What defines us? What are our defining moments? What makes us who we are?

To respond to these questions, I tried to understand migration in the current context of globalization, linking the determinants of migration to structural changes in world markets and historical times. The so-called “World System
Theory”—developed in the 1970s by the sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein as a replacement to modernization theory, thus, as a multidisciplinary, macro-scale approach to world history and social change which emphasizes the world system as the primary unit of social analysis—has been presently extended and the focus is (or should be) the culture of identity.

Different patterns can be seen and various cultural modes of connecting with the other can be pursued. For example, Mircea Eliade’s well-known *Patterns in Comparative Religion* could be reinterpreted in the light of the recent developments in world history (conflicts, pandemics, and calamities) as an important theoretical ground for explaining religious conversions as elements of integration and belonging. Eliade was another sincere admirer of the Bengali culture. In his writings, there are hundreds of pages of intricate descriptions of facts, people, places, feelings, books, and events, and many of them mention the Bengali household and the importance of the Bengali community.

In the same manner, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s subaltern studies can be approached from a different perspective, as in many cultures we can observe the empowerment of the unprivileged and the strong voice of female models. In fact, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s experience is more than eloquent, as she declared in her co-chaired lecture at Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca in 2022:

> that’s also a story of women’s education. As I said, we are examples. I mean my first job; I was not only the only person of color, but also the only female in a department with 65 white men. So, we are talking about a real change, not just in India, but also in the United States.

What is remarkable for Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s academic trajectory is her ability to expand and further explore her own experiences, not only those related to her work, but also the human interactions she had everywhere in the world, as she traveled and wrote extensively about the various environments, while comparing them, subtly, with her Bengali background.

*At home in the world* is something that Bengalis managed to experience. Identity is both inherited and self-constructed, and the Bengalis living abroad use all the existing tools to preserve their sense of belonging. Rabindranath Tagore belonged to the Bengali society of his time, a community that tried to find its own place in the new world that was about to be born. The present-day Bengalis belong to the globalized world, and they carry with them the love for the land of Bengal and their language, as well as some other specific elements of identity, such as festivals, faiths, films, and food. Bengali culture is, most probably, the richest of India.
Moreover, that Bengali, which belongs to the Indo-Aryan group of languages, is the predominant language of the land is indication that Hinduism, the religion of the Indo-Aryans, had the most influence over Bengal even though Buddhism, Jainism and later Islam established itself, followed in time by Christianity, Judaism and even to a much lesser extent Sikhism.\(^{19}\)

A similar opinion is expressed by another Bengali writer. Sudeep Chakravarti writes in his peerless *The Bengalis: A Portrait of the Community*:

*The Bengali race and culture was more the result of an immense mixing, an aggregation of numerous races and religions which arrived in the subcontinent for survival and conquest.*\(^{20}\)

In a way, little has changed since Rabindranath Tagore wrote *Ghare Baire* in 1916. All his writings were inspired by the place he belonged to, the land of Bengal. He grew up in a very educated family and even from his childhood he was inspired by the *Upanishads*.

*They taught him how human beings can transcend themselves and get a glimpse of the Infinite. His knowledge was gradually enriched by the philosophy of Gītā, the teachings of Buddha, Christian tradition, and the fascinating universes of Bauls of Bengal or Sufi tradition. He also became intimate with the Bengal countryside and loved to spend time with people, learning from them, and finding inspiration in their simple life and genuine wisdom. From all of these, Tagore had drawn his complete and unique vision of the world.*\(^{21}\)

Rabindranath Tagore’s views on society, in general, and the Bengali community, in particular, were extensions of his arguments about the public and private spheres. *The Home and the World* is, in a way, Tagore’s own testament of belonging. “Amar sonar Bangla”\(^{22}\) (My golden Bengal) is the ultimate declaration of the poet’s belonging to the Bengali culture.

As a young boy, Amartya Sen spent many of his early years in the school Tagore’s family had founded in Santiniketan, in the rural area of Bengal, in 1901, an institution that in just 18 years grew into a university, Visva-Bharati\(^{23}\) (World and India), as a logical development of Tagore’s philosophy of education. Studying there, where his maternal grandfather Kshiti Mohan Sen, “a well-known scholar in Sanskrit and Indian philosophy,” was also teaching, exposed Amartya Sen to unconventional schooling methods, but also shaped his humanistic nature. Visva-Bharati “invoked the objective of uniting the world (*Visva*) with all the articulated wisdom (*Bharati*) it could offer.”\(^{24}\) Tagore’s school was
the place where the home and the world were interconnected and the education within nature was focusing on both freedom and identity. In the case of Amartya Sen, being a student there was even more important, due to his personal connection with Rabindranath, as he recalls that

when I was born, Rabindranath persuaded my mother that it was boring to stick to well-used names and he proposed a new name for me. Amartya, by inference, means immortal, in Sanskrit.\textsuperscript{25}

Santiniketan was Sen’s first home in the world, as his belonging to the Bengali identity was more than clearly assumed. It was in Santiniketan that Sen’s dedicated pursuit of Tagore’s thoughts began after the poet’s death, giving him a lifetime of rewarding engagement.

In particular, his overarching emphasis on freedom and reasoning made me think seriously about those issues, which became increasingly important to me as I grew older.\textsuperscript{26}

The home follows us in the world, everywhere we go. Being at home in the world is something all humans have in common. Sharing one’s own culture while trying to fit into another is something that has challenged recent generations. The development of identity cultures in our contemporary world is extremely important, and the importance of language as an identity tool is significant. The home is, first, in the language. No matter where someone is in the world, in the language that person is at home. The Bengali sense of belonging, which I tried to focus on in this essay, is an entire multi-level philosophy of identity.

It is not surprising that the sense of belonging can be found not only in scholarly writings, but also in the fiction of internationally acclaimed Bengali-born authors like Anuradha Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri or Amitav Ghosh. All the Lives We Never Lived\textsuperscript{27} is Anuradha Roy’s beautiful story about family, identity and love. As Roy declared in a recent interview, “my own writing . . . is influenced by the Bengali literature I read.”\textsuperscript{28} But this particular novel is more than that, as it features characters from history who enter into the lives of the novel’s fictional characters, such as the poet Rabindranath Tagore, the singer Begum Akhtar, the dancer and critic Beryl de Zoete, and the German painter and curator Walter Spies, or the Bengali writer Maitreyi Devi, who was Roy’s aunt.

Maitreyi Devi was my aunt, as her husband was my father’s first cousin, which . . . is considered a close relationship here. Her book came out in the 1970s when I was a
child and immediately became more or less contraband in our large, conservative joint family in Calcutta.\textsuperscript{29}

\textit{All the Lives We Never Lived} is the story of how families fall apart and of what remains in the aftermath. The Bengali sense of belonging is very much present in this novel, as it is also present in the famous \textit{The Namesake},\textsuperscript{30} by Jhumpa Lahiri, a miniature of a tiny family voyage between two worlds: Calcutta and Cambridge, Massachusetts. When the first baby arrives in the family,

\textit{as for a name, they have decided to let Ashima’s grandmother, who is past eighty now, who has named each of other six great-grandchildren in the world, do the honors}.\textsuperscript{31}

This is the Bengali custom, so the Bengali identity is, again, stronger than anything else. \textit{The Shadow Lines},\textsuperscript{32} by Amitav Ghosh, recounts events in the history of the partition of India, the liberation movement, and other important moments that marked the history of India. It also provides details on the historical significance, feelings and some important issues of the Bengali Diaspora. The author writes about the sights, sounds, and scents of his beloved home and how his experiences there have influenced the way he views the entire world. In the end, \textit{The Shadow Lines} is Ghosh’s quest for his own Bengali identity. This novel earned Ghosh the 1989 Sahitya Akademi Award for English. There are, of course, many other examples.

\textbf{E}ach person describes herself/himself in terms of cultural identity. The Bengali community, from India or elsewhere, does the same, by creating a home in the world, through language, identity, history, memory, and other cultural tools. The Bengali sense of belonging is a plea for the discovery of one’s true identity and for keeping safe the home in a world that is facing so many different challenges. From the perspective of intellectual history, the remarks on the home and the world, mentioned in this essay, offer just a preview of the complex social, linguistic and cultural history of Bengal, and also speak about the importance of the Bengali voices that have conquered the world and made it their home.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{Notes}
\end{itemize}

1. Rabindranath Tagore (7 May 1861–7 August 1941) was the first Nobel laureate of Asia. In 1913 he received the prestigious prize for \textit{Gitanjali} (Song offerings), his volume of poetry. The Nobel Prize motivation for awarding Tagore mentions:
“his profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse, by which, with consummate skill, he has made his poetic thought, expressed in his own English words, a part of the literature of the West.” See https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1913/tagore/facts/, accessed 9 January 2024. For a complete analysis of Tagore’s life and work, see Amartya Sen, “Tagore and His India,” The New York Review of Books 44, 11 (26 June 1997), also included in Amartya Sen, The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity (London: Penguin Books, 2005) from p. 121 onwards. It is interesting that this essay was chosen for the volume edited by Anders Hallengren, Nobel Laureates in Search of Identity and Integrity: Voices of Different Cultures (New Jersey etc.: World Scientific Publishing, 2004), 177–214, reaffirming, thus, Amartya Sen’s strong sense of belonging to the Bengali culture.


3. Amartya Sen (born 3 November 1933) is an Indian economist and philosopher, which in 1998 was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences, “for his contributions to welfare economics.” “Sen’s studies have included famines, to create a deeper understanding of the economic reasons behind famine and poverty.” https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/economic-sciences/1998/sen/facts/, accessed 9 January 2024.


5. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (born 24 February 1942) is a Bengali-born professor of Humanities at Columbia University, and a founding member of the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society. On 23 June 2022, Professor Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak was awarded the title of Doctor Honoris Causa of Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. Her acceptance discourse can be seen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJhSflc6Qlo.

6. Between 23 and 27 January 2024, I participated in the 12th Tata Steel Kolkata Literary Meet (Kalam), organized in association with Victoria Memorial Hall Kolkata. The full program of the festival is available here: https://kolkatalitmeet.in/2024/.

7. The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) was founded in 1950 by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, independent India’s first education minister. Its objectives are to actively participate in the formulation and implementation of policies and programs pertaining to India’s external cultural relations. For more details, see https://www.iccr.gov.in/. accessed 9 January 2024.


13. “*Durga Puja* is an annual festival celebrated in September or October, most notably in Kolkata. . . . The festival is characterized by large-scale installations and pavilions in urban areas, as well as by traditional Bengali drumming and veneration of the goddess. During the event, the divides of class, religion and ethnicities collapse as crowds of spectators walk around to admire the installations.” https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/durga-puja-in-kolkata-00703, accessed 9 January 2024.


15. Chakravarti, xxvi.


22. “Amar sonar Bangla” (“My golden Bengal”) was adopted as the national anthem of Bangladesh (after the country declared its independence from Pakistan in 26 March 1971). An ode to the Mother Bengal, the song was written by Rabindranath Tagore in 1905 during the first partition of Bengal, when the ruling British Empire had the undivided province of Bengal Presidency split into two parts: East Bengal and Assam (with a majority of Muslims) and West Bengal (with a majority of Hindus).

23. Visva-Bharati University continues today Tagore’s family vision, for a school in which the home and the world are integrated in order to offer a complete education. See https://visvabharati.ac.in/History.html, accessed 9 January 2024.


25. Sen, 8.


Abstract
At Home in the World: Remarks on the Bengali Sense of Belonging

Two Nobel laureates coming from the same geographic area, writing more than 100 years apart, using—more or less—the same concepts to describe the importance of cultural identity. What changed in these 100 years? Generally understood, cultural identity refers to a person’s sense of belonging to a particular culture. We often understand the construction of identity in terms of gender, class, age and ethnicity, language, and/or religion. But what happens when a person is forced to leave his/her culture and to live in a different environment, alongside people never met before, in a place where another language is spoken, and where God has a different name? What does cultural identity mean? How are the home and the world related nowadays? Where is home in the world? This essay views the Bengali sense of belonging in the current context of globalization, linking the determinants of the Bengali culture to the structural changes in the world.

Keywords
home, world, Rabindranath Tagore, Amartya Sen, the Bengali community, language, cultural identity, globalization
What is referred to as the Persianate world, or Persian Cosmopolis, had some of the most developed and refined literary, intellectual and artistic expressions in South Asia.

Introduction

Between the 14th and 16th centuries, the Deccan region of central India experienced an extraordinary period of cultural and artistic flourishing, as influences from Persia and Central Asia were implanted here by Muslim elites in a process of creative adaptation that increasingly left room for syncretism with local Hindu traditions. Less well known than their northern contemporary, the Mughal Empire, each of the Deccan sultanates nevertheless produced, as one scholar put it, “more history than it could consume locally.” Neglected, or limited, more often than not, to a few paragraphs in general histories of the Indian world, they nevertheless constitute one of its most prestigious chapters, which has begun to be systematically studied only in recent decades, with their political, social, diplomatic and, above all, cultural and artistic history.

Politically, like other contemporary Muslim or Hindu states in the region, they emerged in the context of the decline of the Delhi Sultanate in the second half of the 14th century, giving way in the Deccan to two new states,
one founded and ruled by Muslim elites, the Bahmani Sultanate, the other, the kingdom of Vijayanagar, being founded by Hindu elites regenerated from the former Hoysala Empire. Even though their rulers claimed different politico-religious identities, both states/empires were wide open to influences from the Persian world, where in the 15th century the “Timurid Renaissance” served as a source of emulation for much of the Muslim East, including the Indian world. The transfer of these cultural and artistic models from Persia to North India and the Deccan was, as we shall see below, brought about by a continuous flow of “Westerners” (Gharbians), men-at-arms, religious men, Sufi mystics, artists, craftsmen, intellectuals and men of culture, merchants, adventurers, etc., who headed for the princely courts of India in search of opportunities and seeking to exploit their personal talents. Persia was the main reservoir of these skilled personnel, along with Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Persian Gulf, and, in the case of some sultanates opening onto the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, the East African coasts. Many of them were brought up in the Persian culture, which already served as a lingua franca in the eastern Muslim world and was used throughout the pre-modern history of Muslim India as the official and cultural language of successive dynasties.

As a result, what is referred to as the Persianate world, or Persian Cosmopolis, had some of the most developed and refined literary, intellectual and artistic expressions in South Asia, with the specificity that, forced to live within societies with their own indigenous traditions, the political, religious, intellectual and artistic elites of Persian culture inevitably left room for contacts and symbioses with these cultures. The five sultanates built on the ruins of the former Bahmanid Empire, largely destroyed as a result of rivalries between the “foreigners” (Pardeshi) and the “Deccanis” (Dakhni), revive and amplify this Indo-Muslim synthesis and, above all, the tradition of patronage by the princely courts of culture, the arts and architecture, to a level that exceeds even that of the Great Moguls.

In particular Bijapur and Golconda have the greatest achievements: while Persian still remains the traditional language of the court, the diplomacy and the culture of most elites in the sultanates (and in Muslim India as a whole), the sovereigns, in turn, are increasingly willing to show considerable goodwill, and even offer protection, to indigenous languages (Marathi, Kannada, Tamil, Telegu) and, similarly, to the regional variant of the vernacular used by Indian Muslims, this Dakhni Urdu which will make a great literary career from this period onwards. Culture (primarily poetry, music, dance), arts and crafts (especially miniature, calligraphy, metalwork—the renowned Bidriware, which was the most famous specialty of the Bahmani Sultanate and then its successor, Bidar, weaving) and, perhaps most impressive and original, the exquisite and
monumental architectural and town-planning achievements, are all the result of continuous efforts, not only mimetic but above all creative and original, to adapt the Persian styles and heritage, imported from the Middle East and Central Asia, to the Indian world.

At the religious level, Islam remains, fundamentally, the doctrinal and political point of reference for the sultanates, with an extremely important role played by Sufi orders and eminent holy men and mystics, who contributed decisively to the legitimization of political regimes and especially to the spread of Islam among the populations, which led, here as well, to numerous encounters and spiritual, intellectual or artistic confluences with Hindu elements. This Indo-Muslim cosmopolitanism is attested, from medieval times to the present day, by the importance of pilgrimages (ziyarat) to the shrines (dargah) of Sufi masters, which bring together Muslims and Hindus alike, and whose symbolic spiritual patronage of former Muslim capitals is still valued by the local populations long after the Islamic political monopoly disappeared from India. However, perhaps the most peculiar element in three of the sultanates (Ahmedabad, Bijapur, Golconda) is the decision of some sovereigns to claim Twelver Shi’ism as their official doctrine, in a break with the other Muslim states in India, which are attached to Sunnism. Here again, the motivation lies in the reverence these elites have for Persia, where the new Safavid dynasty had just been founded on the grounds provided by Imamite Islam; the result for the Deccan will be the genesis of a Shi’a community of its own, which survives to this day, and the Shi’ite coloring assumed by many of the artistic and architectural compositions patronized by these sultans.

Given the breadth of political, cultural and artistic realities in the three centuries of history of the Deccan sultanates, what we propose is rather an overview, building a general framework for understanding the processes by which these states, through their policies, not only brought the Persianate culture and arts within the Indian world, but above all made possible the multiple contacts and confluences between them.

The Making of Muslim India

Islam established itself in the Indian Subcontinent starting with the 7th century, through a process of proselytism, commercial interactions and political-military expansion. Sindh was the first province to be conquered and annexed by Arab-Muslim troops after 712 under Muhammad bin Qasim; it would become part of the Umayyad Caliphate and, after its dissolution in 750, Sindh and Multan would become increasingly autonomous, with the new
Abbasid dynasty struggling to exert control on the eastern periphery of the empire.⁵

In the 10th century, however, the new empires founded by Turkish soldiers in Persia and Central Asia increasingly looked beyond the frontiers to the Indian world in search of wealth, prestige and sometimes the ambition to extend the Islamic religion to the Indian populations. Starting in particular from the territory of present-day Afghanistan, the inevitable transit area for all foreign invasions of India, the Ghaznavids, first under the leadership of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna (971–1030), would conduct continuous military campaigns in the Indus and Ganges plains, weakening the Hindu states there and massively destroying the economic and cultural-religious infrastructure of the local populations.⁶

A century later, the successors of the Ghaznavis, the Ghurids, a Persian-speaking clan from central Afghanistan, founded their own empire in which, for the first time, the territories from northern India to Bengal would be integrated politically and administratively. The famous Muhammad al-Ghuri (1144–1206), surrounded himself with an officer corps of Turkish origin, with whom he would conduct his campaigns of occupation and management of northern India.⁷ After his death, and against the backdrop of the destruction of the Ghurid state by his Central Asian enemies—the (also Turkic) dynasty of the Khwarazmians—these officers succeeded in retaining the Indian possessions, which would henceforth become a separate Muslim state. The Delhi Sultanate was founded in 1206 by General Qutb al-Din Aibak (1150–1210), a military slave (Mamluk) of Turkic origin and former Ghurid governor of northern India.

The Delhi Sultanate lasted for more than three centuries, a politically and militarily turbulent period, but one that allowed a vast process of implantation of Islam in India.⁸ Politically, five dynasties succeeded one another at the head of the sultanate. The first was the one established by Qutb al-Din Aibak, hence the name “Mamluk dynasty” (1206–1290): with the exception of some notable descendants of the founder (Iltutmish, Ghiyas ud-din Balban and even a sovereign, Razia Sultana), the government during this period was plagued by power struggles between the various clans of the family, each supported by groups of Turkish officers and nobles, in a climate of violence and instability. The last sultan of the dynasty, Muiz-ud-din Qaiqabad, was overthrown in 1290 by one of his generals, Jalal-ud-din Firuz Khalji, who would henceforth lay the foundations for his own dynasty bearing his name. Also of Turkish origin, but assimilated into the Afghan world, with which they came to identify, the leaders of the Khalji clan left a dark image in the historical memory of the Hindu population, especially Ala ud-din Khalji (reigned 1296–1316), through their violent military campaigns against the Rajput and Hindu kingdoms of Gujarat, Malwa, Jaisalmer, Chittor, Siwana, Jalore and through their oppressive economic policy.
In the traditional manner of the culture of violence that dominated the management of power in the Muslim states of the Indian world, with rivalries between the various branches of the ruling family, generals, and indigenous Hindu elites converted to Islam, a few years of political turmoil followed the demise of Ala ud-din, with assassinations of his successors, until the rise of a general of Turkish-Mongolian origin, Ghyath al-Din Tughlaq, who, in 1320, established his own dynasty, which took his name—Tughlaq, and ruled an important part of the Indian subcontinent for almost a hundred years (until 1413). During the reign of his son, Muhammad ibn Tughlaq (1325–1351), the Delhi Sultanate reached its maximum territorial expansion, controlling, directly or indirectly, almost the entire Indian Peninsula, with the exception of the south and the tribal territories in the west. This contributed to the increasing strategic importance that the Deccan Plateau began to have, both for its resources and for its midland position, its control allowing Turkish-Muslim leaders access to South India. This, it seems, was the reason why, in 1327, Muhammad took the radical decision to move the imperial administration, along with the entire Muslim population of Delhi, to the Deccan city of Deogiri, renamed Daulatabad. Although the court remained here for only a short time (until 1334) and was later moved back to Delhi (mainly because of the difficult access to water in Daulatabad), this settlement of massive numbers of Urdu-speaking Muslims, especially a large number of members of the Sufi brotherhoods that gravitated to the power, played a decisive role in the genesis of a local Muslim elite that remained anchored in the region and would be the core of the future Bahmanid state. The political, religious and cultural establishment of Islam in central India (and, ephemerally, in the south) provoked the reaction of the Hindu elite: in 1336, two brothers, members of the Sangama family, founded a new dynasty that would take control of the whole of South India (except Kerala): the kingdom, and later the Vijayanagara Empire, would become, for more than two centuries, the geopolitical and religious rival of the new Muslim sultanates that surrounded the Deccan region. It must be said, however, that even the latter, although claiming a very strong Hindu identity, was permeated by Persianate cultural and artistic influences and fashion. In the mid–15th century, King Deva Raya II maintained diplomatic and commercial relations with the Timurid court, led by Shah Rukh, and, like his Muslim neighbors to the north, was inspired by the architecture, court rituals and sophisticated dress that gave prestige to the two capitals of the Timurid empire, Samarkand and Herat.

The last years of Tughlaq’s reign (whose rule was fundamentally authoritarian and violent) are marked by numerous revolts, which led to political and economic fragility and the loss of some provinces or vassal states. The most important setback would undoubtedly be the emergence of southern, eastern
and central India from the authority of the sultanate, leaving room for new state formations, some led by Hindu dynasties (Vijayanagar), others by Muslim dynasties (mostly founded by former rulers).

The first such state, short-lived (1335–1378), was the Madurai Sultanate, founded by former governor Jalaluddin Ahsan Khan, a sayyid (descendant from the line of the Prophet Muhammad) from the Delhi region, and whose elites were Muslims of Persian culture, with an assumed violent policy against the indigenous Hindu population: it would eventually be annexed by its expanding neighbor, Vijayanagar.

In Bengal, the three provinces of the Delhi Sultanate would also secede as early as 1338, with the governors here proclaiming themselves sultans; a few years later, in 1352, Ilyas Shah, the sovereign of Satgaon province, defeated the other two leaders and unified the entire Bengal region, founding the Ilyas Shahi dynasty, which would last until 1487. Despite several military campaigns, the Delhi sultans never succeeded in recovering the province, which became de facto independent after 1359, building its own empire, with several Hindu states becoming vassals, and an intense foreign policy towards both the Middle East and East Asia (China) and Southeast Asia. The leaders of the capital of the Bengal Sultanate (Pandua-Firuzabad, then Lakhnauti) would pursue the traditional policy of privileging the Persian language as the language of diplomacy and culture (tradition has it that Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah would even send an invitation to the great poet Hafez, who was in Persia, to come to his court) and, similarly, to patronize Sufi circles from Persia and Central Asia, used as vectors for legitimizing power and disseminating Islam among the indigenous population. On the other hand, as some of the Deccan sultanates would do a little later with the Urdu language, the Muslim authorities would increasingly allow Bengali to enter official court forms, eventually adopting it as the language of the day, paving the way for the foundation of a Bengali culture and literature that would reach its peak with the Bengali Renaissance of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century.

In 1347, following an uprising led by emirs from the southern provinces of the Delhi Sultanate, the entire Deccan region broke away from the former tutelary power and gave birth to a new Muslim state, which would enjoy a prestigious political, cultural and artistic history—the Bahmani Sultanate. A few decades later, in the context of the shock of Timur Lenk’s military campaign against the Delhi Sultanate, two more of its southern provinces would secede, creating two new state structures: Malwa Sultanate (1392–1562) and Gujarat Sultanate (1394–1573), both later conquered by Mughal troops. As in all the other Muslim states of pre-Mughal India, we see here an extraordinary develop-
ment of culture, art and architecture, in the traditional influence of Persia and Central Asia, but combined with local styles and aesthetic sensibilities, producing many masterpieces of what is known as Indo-Muslim art. Mandu (the capital of Malwa) and Ahmedabad and Champaner (the two capitals of the Gujarat Sultanate) still preserve the architectural memory of these refined and imposing constructions, especially the mosques (in Gujarat, the construction of tall, elongated minarets with richly ornamented balconies was favored). Many of the decorative formulas innovated or experimented with here would be taken up by the future sultanates of the Deccan and, above all, by the Mughal court. The official language in Malwa and Gurajat was, as elsewhere in Muslim India, Persian, in which we have a large number of historical chronicles and literary productions from the period. The manuscripts are richly illustrated with miniatures, inspired by the canons of the Timurid school; throughout the following centuries, miniature would become one of the most flourishing arts in the Indian world, not only at the courts of Muslim princes, but also in Hindu kingdoms such as the Rajput states of Rajasthan the Indian states of the southern Himalaya (Pahari painting).

As a result, therefore, by the time of the future Mughal military expansions after the 16th century, northern and central India would be controlled by these states ruled by Turkic-Afghan-Persian elites (and sometimes indigenous converts, who rapidly rose up the administrative and military hierarchies), with a Muslim model of government, and importing heavily into the Indian subcontinent elites and populations from the rest of the Islamic world, primarily Persia and Central Asia. Until its fall in 1526, the Delhi Sultanate never recovered its former provinces of Bengal, Deccan and Gujarat, plagued by continuing dynastic disputes, rivalries between the Turkish-Afghan military clans (to which were added, increasingly, the power ambitions of indigenous converts), economic mismanagement and popular uprisings.

Taking advantage of these weaknesses, in 1398 Timur Lenk invaded northern India, destroying the capital Delhi and all the regions along his route, then returning to Samarkand with a huge booty, wealth and slaves. The Timurid campaign would deal a final blow to the Tughlaq dynasty, the now much reduced territories of the Delhi Sultanate coming under the control of a new dynasty, the Sayyids (1414–1451) who, although they claimed the title by claiming descent from the line of the Prophet Muhammad, were apparently originally an indigenous clan from the Punjab region. With no real authority except around the capital Delhi, in a geopolitical context in which the new Muslim states of north and central India already had their own trajectory, the Sayyid dynasty lasted only a few decades, being dethroned in 1451 by the last dynasty to de-
cide the political destiny of the sultanate, the Lodi—a clan of Afghan (Pashtun) origin. Its success in recovering the old provinces was limited, however, and the sultanate’s authority extended only to the upper Ganges basin.

In 1526, the last ruler of the dynasty, Ibrahim Lodi, was defeated and killed at the Battle of Panipat, on the outskirts of the capital, ending the three centuries of the Delhi Sultanate. This ushered in the new dynasty founded by the victor of Panipat, Babur (1483–1530), a prince of Turkish-Mongolian origin, in the line of Genghis Khan and Tamerlane, driven out of the Fergana valley by the Uzbeks, and a refugee in Afghanistan. Leaving Kabul for Delhi, Babur brought with him to India the Persian cultural heritage in which he had been educated, and the nostalgia for the world of Central Asia, which would live on for a long time, even if his descendants would only know it indirectly, largely through the stories of the many people who would continually migrate to the Indian world throughout the centuries. In its heyday (1526–1707, the year of Aurangzeb’s death), the Mughal dynasty would lavishly patronize an Indo-Persian cultural and artistic synthesis, part of a wider golden age of the Persianate. First of all, it is exemplified in Persia as such by the rise of the Safavid dynasty (1501–1736), which already takes up the achievements of the 15th century Timurid Renaissance and brings them to their apogee, especially artistically. At the same time, however, Persian culture was part of the cultural baggage of the Ottoman elites in the classical period of the empire, as it was within the Uzbek emirates of Central Asia, whose political leaders and administrative apparatus, even if of Turkic origin, were familiar with the Persian language and literary productions, especially since a good part of the bureaucracy, and of the commercial circles, were Tajik, i.e., Persian-speaking. In the Indian world, the Moghuls, the Muslim sultanates emerging after the 14th century, but also some Hindu dynasties, such as Vijayanagar, would value the Persian language, culture, and artistic references to such an extent that today the largest amount of documentary resources from the medieval Persian-speaking world is preserved in the South Asian region:

More Persian dictionaries were produced in India in the fifteenth century than in Iran, or for that matter in the entire world outside India. Although multilingual, these dictionaries used Persian as their medium, that is, the language to which others were made to relate. The large number of Persian dictionaries produced at India’s provincial courts suggests a need for some pan-Indian cultural center of reference that might fill the void created by the loss of Delhi as a political one.
Sultans, Sufis and “Foreigners”: The Bahmani Sultanate (1347–1527)

For over a century and a half, the central and western part of the Deccan Plateau was controlled by the Bahmani Sultanate, one of the three major Muslim states that existed in India at the time, along with the Delhi Sultanate and the Bengal Sultanate. As we have seen, it was the result of the dissidence of the emirs who remained in the short-lived capital Daulatabad after the return of the princely court to Delhi. Under the leadership of an Afghan-born general, Ismail Mukh, this insurrection eventually led to the break-up of the sultanate’s southern province of Delhi, and to the founding of a new state, ruled, in traditional fashion, by military elites with origins in the Turkish and Afghan migrants who had settled in the Indian world. The founder of the Bahmani Sultanate as such was Zafar Khan, a military adventurer from the Khorasan area, who, in the manner of many other personages in those centuries, went on to make a career in the territories so full of opportunities in India, rising to the position of governor of the Deccan under Muhammad ibn Tughlaq. A member of the rebellion of the emirs of Daulatabad, he would be left as ruler of the new state now dislocated from the Delhi Sultanate after the retirement of Ismail Mukh.¹⁶

In the traditional manner of many Muslim state structures in India, as in other parts of the Islamic world, Zafar Khan’s enthronement as sovereign, under the title of Ala-ud-Din Hasan Bahman Shah, was supported and religiously legitimized by the elites (sheikhs) of the Sufi Chistiyya order, the most important in medieval India. The order was founded by the mystic Abu Ishaq Shami in Chisht, a small town near Herat, around 930, and would first enjoy great prestige in the region of Afghanistan during the period when the capitals of the two Muslim empires of the early second millennium, the Ghaznavid and later the Ghurid, were located there. Their campaigns in India would in fact provide the opportunity for the brotherhood to establish itself here, the first, chronologically, to be followed later by the other Sufi orders from the Middle East and Central Asia that established themselves in the Indian world (Qadiriyya, Madariyya, Suhrwardiyya, Kubrawiyya, Naqshbandiyya, Qalandariyya).¹⁷ The most important and revered figure was, and remains to this day, the seventh shaykh of the order, Mu’in ud-Din Chishti (1143–1236). Born in Sistan in Persia, he went to India in the early years of the new Delhi Sultanate and settled in Ajmer, where his spiritual and intellectual qualities made him known throughout the region, leaving a strong impression on his contemporaries, Muslims and Hindus alike—many of the latter converting to Islam as a result of the contact
with the shaykh. From the time of his death until today, his tomb in Ajmer (Dargah Sharif) has remained the most important Muslim pilgrimage site in South Asia, with hundreds of thousands of Muslim and Hindu worshippers, especially during the annual commemoration of his death (Urs Sharif). Many other great mystics and spiritual masters settled or born in India will be attached to the Chishtiyya tarīqa (religious order), such as the spiritual patrons of Delhi’s capital, Nizamuddin Awliya (1238–1325) and Amir Khusrow (1253–1325), whose dargah, located next to each other, are also at the center of widespread popular piety.

Interested to religiously legitimize their rise to power, the Bahmani sultans supported the installation of eminent members of the brotherhood in the Deccan area, in addition to those already in Daulatabad since the Tughlaq period. Sultan Firuz Shah invited the great master Sayyed Muhammad Gesudaraz (1321–1422) to the capital of Gulbarga: even though relations between the two would cool over time, the mystic became the spiritual patron of the city and his tomb has been a place of veneration and pilgrimage ever since. Fluent and prolific in Arabic and Persian, the languages of religion and culture in the Muslim world, Gesudaraz is also considered to be the first author of spiritual texts in Dakhni, the version of Urdu developed in the Deccan on the foundations laid by the Muslim invaders from Delhi. The tensions between Firuz Shah and Gesudaraz are illustrative of the relations that have always existed in Islam between political/military leaders and the spiritual authorities: the former need the latter to religiously secure their power but, on the other hand, they are very sensitive to criticism from religious people who sometimes take a critical stance towards the actions of the sultans in the name of moral or doctrinal rigor.

With its capital first at Gulbarga (1347–1425), then at Bidar (1425–1527), the Bahmani Sultanate became a herald of militant Islam during this period, with its violent policies against Hindus within the sultanate and the neighboring Hindu states (Khandesh, Malwa, and, above all, its great rival to the south, Vijayanagar). Taking advantage of the weakening of the Delhi Sultanate, the Bahmani leaders gained a military, political and cultural prestige that had a great echo in the regions of Central Asia and Persia, which had themselves entered the flourishing era of the Timurid Renaissance. As a result, in a traditional manner, significant segments of the Muslim societies outside India, who were in search of military, commercial, religious or cultural-artistic careers, would turn to the new state. Referred to at the time as Gharbian (Westerners), Pardeshi (foreigners), or Afaqis (settlers) they played a key role at the court of Gulbanga and later Bidar. While in the Delhi Sultanate the politico-military aristocracy was made up primarily of Turks (Turani) and Afghans, in the Deccan sultanates these traditional clans were supplemented by those of the Persians (Irani), who
were largely Shi’ites and whose intellectual and practical qualities would grant them important positions in the bureaucratic (primarily the scribal guild) and administrative apparatus, as well as in international trade. Regardless of their origin, they were trained in the Persian language and culture, which had been shaping the elites and societies of the Middle East and Central Asia for centuries. In the Muslim states of the Deccan, the Bahmani Sultanate and later the five other successor states, the meteoric rise of these “immigrants,” who came in continuous waves during these three centuries, would provoke the envy and resistance of the “indigenous” Dakhmis (Deccanis) political and military elites, i.e., the descendants of previous generations of Muslims from the Delhi Sultanate period, some of whom were even Hindu converts to Islam, and who had managed to integrate and identify themselves with the official apparatus of the Muslim states of northern or central India.

In fact, this was to be one of the defining characteristics of all the Deccan sultanates: the massive number of people who acceded to positions in the state, or in fiscal and land management, at the territorial level, and who came from the indigenous populations, mostly converts to Islam, but with some, especially Brahmins, still attached to Hinduism. Unlike in the north, where the Delhi Sultanate had much more time to develop and build up a political, military and administrative system dominated by Turkish-Afghan-Persian elements, the Muslim elites who rule the Deccan states are a fast-rising minority who have to govern a majority Hindu population, with only small pockets of converts to Islam. The fact that a large proportion of the leaders and members of the state apparatus are recent entrants to the Indian world from Persia, Central Asia, the Arab world and, increasingly, East Africa (referred to as Habshi), contributes to their identity and cultural flexibility once in public office. The sultanates of the Deccan thus maintained a much wider and more assumed openness towards the indigenous cultural and artistic background, building a space of confluences between all these traditions, those brought from outside, and those found in the populations of the territories they manage. Thus, over the three centuries of the sultanates’ history, a specific Indo-Muslim symbiosis emerged, which can be seen primarily in art and architecture, but which only serves to sublimate artistically the spirit and atmosphere of this refined, luxurious, sensualist and intellectual cosmopolitanism.

Shielded from the military campaign waged by Timur Lenk in the north against the Delhi Sultanate, the Bahmanid state drew massive inspiration from the model of political and cultural management initiated by the Timurids; artists, craftsmen, men of culture, all trained in the matrix and sensibilities of Persian styles, would be drawn from the Timurid empire to help build the new sultanate in the Deccan. The fifth sultan of the dynasty, Taj-ud-din Firoz Shah
(reigned 1397–1422), also known as Firuz Shah Bahmani, was one of the greatest patrons of this Persianization of the sultanate (a process which also involved the integration of Hindus into the administrative and military apparatus of the state). The two western ports, Dabhol and Goa, were the point of departure and arrival for the ships sent by the sultan to bring to the kingdom not only goods (primarily horses, which were of vital use in the sultanate’s military campaigns—and in competition with the great enemy Vijayanagar, also a massive importer of horses) but also skilled human personnel, which were of great use to the development of the state. A huge number of such figures (poets, mystics, Sufis, warriors, administrators, craftsmen) would build up important careers in the Deccan area—we shall soon refer herein to the exemplary figure of Mahmud Gawan (1411–1481). Firuz Shah built a palace complex (Firuzabad) south of Gulbarga, which served as a residence for his court and his numerous harem, imitating the monumental style developed for the Timurid buildings of Samarkand (from which he apparently took the decorative motif of the pairs of lions, the symbol of royalty, placed on the façade of the western gate of the city). A generous patron who gathered scholars, mystics and religious men to his court, Firuz Shah was himself the prototype of the encyclopedic and polyglot Muslim sovereign, with interests in philosophy, astronomy (he built an observatory in Daulatabad), Sufism—he would distance himself from the great Sufi mystic Gesudaraz, who had disappointed him with his theoretical knowledge in exact fields such as mathematics and astronomy.

As already mentioned, one of the most exemplary biographies of these ghur-bian, Westerners, is that of Mahmud Gawan, “an Iranian aristocrat whose career epitomized Bahmani efforts to transplant Timurid Central Asian culture into the heart of the Deccan plateau.” Born in Gilan, in northern Persia on the edge of the Caspian Sea, he belonged to an aristocratic family that had a long experience in the bureaucratic and administrative apparatus of successive states in the region. We have already mentioned this exemplary characteristic of the Persian elites who inherited and perfected the old traditions of state management from the periods of imperial Persia, and which they also preserved within the Muslim caliphates, especially the Abbasid Caliphate. For hundreds of years, from the medieval period to the modern era, these secretaries (munshis) and officials (who were essentially not just bureaucrats, but also men of culture to the highest degree, and promoters of culture—Persian, that is) provided the management and governance of the states and empires of the eastern Muslim world, starting with Abbasid Iraq (the Barmakid viziers’ dynasty at the time of the first Abbasid caliphs, the Persian dynasty of the Bouyid emirs between 1045 and 1055), then autonomous (Seljuks, Samanids, Ghaznavids) and independent (Ghurids, Khwarezmshahs, Ilkhans, Timurids, etc.) political structures. The Persian-speaking
East is full of such personalities with extraordinary biographies, changing destinies, meteoric and prestigious ascents, and often equally spectacular declines. Each has their own odyssey, migrating from one side of this vast world of eastern Islam to the other in search of opportunities that would make the most of their talents and ambitions. This category also includes Mahmud Gawan, who fled his native Persia amid political tensions in the Timurid world and, after journeys through various parts of Asia, arrived in India in 1453, first in order to trade. But after a visit to Bidar and a meeting with the Bahmanid Sultan of the time, Ahmad Shah II, his talents and, to a large extent, the prestige of his aristocratic Persian lineage, would weigh heavily in the sovereign’s decision to keep him at court and make use of his qualities.

Thus began the prestigious career of this “emigrant,” installed in positions of military and political authority; after the death of Sultan Humayun Shah (1461), he became guardian of the Crown Prince Nizam Shah and, in fact, the strongman of the sultanate. His official position would also be confirmed after Nizam’s early death (1463), and the installation as new sultan of his brother Muhammad III, also a minor: Mahmud Gawan would now hold the title of vizier. From this position, taking advantage of the sultan’s inability to exercise their official prerogatives, Mahmud controlled the destiny of the Bahmanid state until his death. The territory was expanded, following continuous military campaigns against neighboring Hindu states, primarily the great southern rival Vijayanagar. For this, huge numbers of horses were imported from the peripheral regions of the Indian world, primarily from Persia, Central Asia, the Persian Gulf—from where they were shipped to the west coast of India. Equally essential was his cultural policy, first and foremost the construction in the capital Bidar of a huge institution of higher education bearing his name: Mahmud Gawan Madrasa. Scholars and religious men from the Indian world, or called in from the rest of the Muslim world, conducted teaching and research here, in the disciplines and spirit of the age, obviously, but which played a key role in implanting the sciences, culture and artistic values of the Middle East and Central Asia within the Deccan elite. The Madrasa itself was built, like many other religious or public buildings in the Bahmanid Sultanate, in an assumed imitation of what, at the time, were the aesthetic canons of art and architecture in the Muslim East, i.e., those developed in Timurid Persia.

But Mahmud fell victim to the envy of the court and to the aversion of the Deccanis to these intolerably brilliant and fast-rising ghurbians—following fabricated accusations by his enemies that he was in league with the Hindu sovereign of Orissa, he was immediately dismissed by Sultan Muhammad Shah III, who ordered his execution in 1481. Mahmud’s disappearance would have dramatic consequences for the fate of the Bahmani Sultanate: just a year later,
Muhammad Shah would also die. Like the Sultanate of Delhi a century earlier, the great Bahmani state would also succumb to power struggles between the various factions, particularly between the Deccanis and the Westerners, who took advantage of this in order to carve out territorial fiefdoms, which would later become the new successor sultanates: Ahmadnagar, Berar, Bijapur, Golconda, and Bidar.

**Successor Sultanates: The Golden Age of the Indo-Islamic Confluences**

The Ahmadnagar Sultanate was the first to break away, in 1490, when Malik Ahmad, Bahmani governor of Junnar province (in the northwestern part of the Bahmani Sultanate), made it the territory of his own state, and founded the Nizam Shahi dynasty. Malik was the son of the former Vizier (Prime Minister) Nizam al-Mulk Malik Hasan Bahri, leader of the Deccani party (originally a Hindu Brahmin who converted to Islam), who, in the manner of his predecessor Mahmud Gawan, had succeeded in seizing the real exercise of power from the sultan. Nizam’s assassination was the starting point for the disintegration of the Bahmani Sultanate. The break-up effected by his son, Malik Ahmad, was largely a reaction to this political violence against his father, hence the symbolic name that the new dynasty would henceforth assume.27 Malik founded a new capital in 1494, which took his name, Ahmadnagar, and which, like all the courts of these medieval Muslim states, quickly became an environment of effervescent cultural and artistic patronage.28

The political and cultural heyday of the sultanate came especially during the long reign of the second sovereign, Burhan Nizam Shah I (1508–1553). Through its ports on the Arabian Sea, particularly Bombay, the kingdom maintained commercial and human contacts with the Persian world, from which a massive number of new *Pardeshis* (foreigners) would come, attracted by the prestige and opportunities offered by the new sultanate. This reverence of the majority of the Muslim elite in India for everything that came from Persia most likely explains Burhan’s decision to convert to Twelver Shi’ism, as it had recently been adopted as an official doctrine by the Safavid dynasty after 1501.29 Shi’ism was already a long-standing presence in the Indian world in its various forms (Isma’ili, Imami/Twelver Shi’ism) and missionaries and believers of the various Shi’ite sects had been actively proselytizing for centuries, both among the Muslim populations in India as such, most of whom were Sunni, and among the natives, Hindus and Jains, especially in the merchant circles/castes in urban centers.
An important role in the rise of Shi’ism among Indian Muslim elites, especially in the Deccan, was played by the establishment here in the first half of the 14th century of the Sufi order Nimatullahiyya. It was founded, like many other Muslim mystical orders, in the Persian world, by Shah Nimatullah Wali (1330–1430), one of the great masters of Sufism in its classical period, who had an enormous influence at the time. Although Nimatullah was a Sunni, he lived in a cultural and religious context in which the confluences between Sufi and Shi’ite spirituality were very active, which would lead the order, after his death, to move more and more towards an identification with Twelver Shi’ism. This is what allowed its subsequent survival in Iran until the present day, after the Safavids and then the Qajars came to power, when Shi’ite theologians forced the disappearance of the Sunni Sufi confraternities in Persia. Succeeding his father as the new Shaykh of the order, Shah Khalil Allah first passed through the Timurid court in Herat, and then left, with his family and some of his followers, for the Deccan, in the Bahmani Sultanate, around 1432, at the invitation of Sultan Ahmad Shah, who wanted to find a new spiritual emir for the Gharbians, distancing himself from the tutelage of the Chishtiiyya order, which was linked to the Dekhanis group. For several generations, the leaders of the movement would remain in the Deccan, exercising great influence over part of the Bahmani aristocracy, then the successor sultanates, and contributing, as we have said, to the success of Twelver Shi’ism among them.

Burhan’s successor, his son Hussain Nizam Shah I (1553–1565), would return to Sunnism, and lead the coalition of Deccan sultanates against the great common enemy to the south, the Vijayanagar Empire. The reunited Muslim armies emerged victorious at the Battle of Talikota in 1565, when the Hindu strongman and regent himself, Rama Raya, was captured and beheaded—a key moment that would lead to the gradual decline of the empire in the decades to come. From the second half of the 16th century, Ahmadnagar came increasingly into conflict with the growing Mughal Empire to the north, which had ambitions to annex the rich territories of central and southern India. In 1600, the Mughals conquered Ahmadnagar: the last Nizam Shahi managed to hold on to some of the territory until 1636, when Aurangzeb (c. 1618–1707), viceroy of the Deccan at the time, ended the dynasty and annexed the sultanate to the Mughal Empire.

Berar, the northernmost of the five Deccan sultanates, broke away from the dying Bahmanid state almost simultaneously with Ahmadnagar, in 1490, and proclaimed its independence under the former Governor Fathullah Imad-ul-Mulk (himself from a family of Brahmins, converts to Islam, and members of the Deccani faction), establishing the local Imad Shahi dynasty. It was the most short-lived, lasting until 1572, being constantly coveted by its powerful south-
ern neighbor Ahmadnagar, who finally succeeded in conquering it after a final military campaign that ended the Imad dynasty.

The same pattern was followed by the governor of the southern Bahmanid province of Bijapur, also in 1490: Yusuf Adil Khan (1450–1510) founded his own dynasty here, Adil Shahi, which would last until 1686 and enjoy a brilliant military, artistic and cultural destiny. Like many of the Bahmanid elite, Adil was a *Gharbian*, according to some sources, originally a slave from the Caucasus region, bought to Iran by Mahmud Gawan, and later brought to India. However, according to other historians of the time (Mir Rafi-uddin Ibrahim-i Shirazi, official chronicler of the Adil Shahi family in the late 16th century, during the reign of Ibrahim Adil Shah II), he was in fact born in Persia, in Saveh. What is significant, however, apart from the traditional Persian cultural roots, is that Yusuf, like Burhan Nizam Shah of Ahmednagar, and his neighbors in Golconda, the Qutb Shahi dynasty, would fervently adhere to Twelver Shi’ism and proclaim it, as would the Safavid Shahs of Persia at the same time, as the official state doctrine.32

This fascination with Shi’ism on the part of many leaders in the Deccan (it was much less common in the northern part of Muslim India, in the Delhi Sultanate and later in its successor, the Mughal Empire) was to a large extent the result of a phenomenon that had been a feature of Persia and eastern Anatolia since the time of the Mongol Ilkhans. The collapse of the Abbasid caliphate and the decline in the influence of official Sunnism led, in the centuries that followed, to a great effervescence of identity-seeking and doctrinal reorientation, with new religious movements, orders and popular movements inspired by and reinterpretting, often in heterodox formulas, the ideas of the Shi’ite currents. They would gain a strong foothold among Turkoman elites in the 13th–16th centuries, leading to the founding of the Safavid dynasty and state in Persia in 1501, or the founding of Sufi order in Anatolia, such as the Bektashi (which still retain traces of their Shi’ite origins even after their integration into the Sunni Ottoman system). The mimetic (and, for those who come from there, nostalgic) admiration that the elites of the Muslim sultanates of the Deccan have for the Persian world explains this continuous attempt to integrate into the official ideology and the whole culture developed in their princely courts, the themes, values and people linked to Persia.

By establishing Twelver Shi’ism as the official doctrine of the sultanate, Yusuf Adil Shah (and some of his followers who remain attached to this variant of Islam) shows his attachment to Iran but, on the other hand, this is also a form of ideological and geopolitical break with his Muslim rivals in the north, the Delhi sultans and later the Mughals.33 His son Ismail Adil Shah (reigned 1510–1534) takes up this pro-Persian and pro-Shi’ite allegiance and even intensifies it: in
1519, the qutba (sermon at the Friday collective prayer) is delivered in the name of the Safavid Shah and the dress of the sultanate army is modelled on that of the Persian Qizilbash. Lastly, all this amplified the traditional rivalry between the Gharbians and the Dakhnis: Ismail, who had many Iranians in his entourage and family, kept those of native origin away from the court and the administrative apparatus, be they Muslims who had settled in the Deccan generations ago or Hindu converts who had secured public and military positions in the previous period.

On the other hand, however, Ismail, like his father, and like all the sultans of the dynasty, who had an extraordinary cosmopolitan intellectual background, although obviously supporting Persian as the official language and culture, was equally open to the Dakhni Urdu language and the new literary productions it was beginning to produce (many sultans knew and often spoke, with those in their entourage who came from these communities, especially the women of the harem, the vernacular languages of the Deccan region: Marathi, Kannada, Telegu). This Deccani Urdu, or Dakhni, which was to become the lingua franca of the region during the Sultanate period, was built precisely through a large input of the local languages of the Deccan (Marathi, Kannada, Tamil, Telegu), grafted onto the core Urdu brought by the Muslims on their arrival from the Delhi Sultanate, plus major influences from the Persian language. While the sovereigns of the Bahmani Sultanate showed little openness towards Dakhni, being attached to the Persian language, a very rich literature was soon to develop, especially in Bijapur and Golconda sultanates, often under the patronage of the court, especially in the form of poetry—the most prized model in the medieval period (with eminent names such as San’atī, Muhammad Nusrati, Hashmi Bijapuri in Bijapur, and Ghwasi, Ibn-e-Nishati, Asadullah Wajhi in Golconda). Another important vector for the construction of a common linguistic and cultural space of the Dakhni language were the numerous Sufis who roamed the Deccan region in order to spread Islam among the local populations.

These constructions of identity by the political and cultural elites of Bijapur (and the other sultanates) thus involved a continuous takeover, assimilation and adaptation of the various traditions from which they drew inspiration (Persian, Central Asian), or within which they developed. Indo-Persian symbioses and confluences reached their maximum refinement in the period of the five Deccan sultanates, even if all these eminent achievements, primarily in art and architecture, are obscured by the much more visible and promoted Mughal heritage. For example, the third sultan of Bijapur, Ibrahim Adil Shah I (reigned 1534–1558), after breaking the pattern of his predecessors and returning to Sunnism (and to supporting Deccani elements at court), even seems to claim, symbolically, the earlier political legacy of the famous cluster of Hindu Chalukya dynas-
ties (6th–12th centuries) which, in its heyday (the Badami Chalukya Empire, 7th century) controlled the whole of central India and almost the entire south.37

Ibrahim’s son and successor, Ali Adil Shah I (reigned 1558–1579) took this sultanate’s own imperial ambition further in concrete terms, participating with the sovereigns of the other sultanates (Ahmednagar, Golconda, Bidar) in the united military campaign against the southern neighbor, Vijayanagar. Defeated at the Battle of Talikota (1565), the Hindu state would lose most of its territory, including the capital, Vijayanagara (now Hampi), to Bijapur and Golconda. With the spoils of war and the enormous resources acquired here, the Muslim rulers of the sultanate would initiate vast building projects (mosques, palaces, citadels, funerary monuments—the most famous of which, the Great Mosque (Jami Masjid) and the Ibrahim Rauza complex (mausoleum and mosque—dubbed, by some historians, as “the Taj Mahal of the South”38), making Bijapur one of the most flourishing and sprawling cities of the era (nearly a million inhabitants), competing with India’s other great Muslim capital, Delhi.

Ali Adil Shah I, a sovereign with a passion for science and culture, returns to Twelver Shi’ism, but like his northern contemporary, the Great Mogul Akbar I (reigned 1556–1605), he shows a wide openness to all religious and spiritual traditions, even accepting Portuguese clerics at his court in Bijapur, who now come via Goa to bring the Christian faith to the Indian world. One of the eminent achievements of this climate of intellectual effervescence, under the benevolent and interested patronage of Ali Adil, was an illustrated encyclopedia, with over 800 miniatures, of astrology and magic, entitled Nujum al-Ulum (Stars of the sciences), a summa, written in Persian, which brings together a vast number of ideas and beliefs developed in the Muslim and Hindu traditions. Some scholars not only believe that the work was done under the direct patronage of Ali Adil, but even identify the sultan as the author of the text.39

The enormous number of miniatures and images testifies to the high artistic level of the court masters of Bijapur. This “Deccan painting,” which, as we have seen, retains much of its Persian inspiration and heritage, will be one of the most specific forms of artistic expression in the five sultanates. It differs from contemporary schools in the Mughal Empire in particular in the emphasis on vivid and intense colors, the refinement of compositions, with an emphasis on “decadent luxury,” and in particular its inclination towards “a more inward journey, with mystic and fantastic overtones.”40 The Mughal miniatures have a more realistic manner of depicting characters, with a predilection for court scenes, hunting scenes, depicting princely families and members of the aristocracy, whereas the Deccan miniatures are more lyrical, with themes of music, poetry, dance and love.41 This school of painting in Bijapur reached its peak during the long reign of Ali Adil’s successor, his grandson Ibrahim Adil Shah II
(reigned 1580–1627)—himself a man of culture and a great lover of philosophy and Hindu music, with the most famous painter from the period of the Deccan sultanates, Farrukh Hussain (1547–1615), born in Persia, traveling to the Mughal courts in Kabul, Delhi, Agra, to finally arrive at Bijapur.  

The next sultan, Muhammad Adil Shah (reigned 1627–1656), sponsored the construction in the capital of the most symbolic architectural landmark of the sultanate period, the famous Gol Gumbaz (Round Dome), a monumental structure whose dome was, at the time, the largest in the Muslim world (44 meters in diameter) built of brick. It houses the remains of the sovereign, Muhammad Adil, and is very close to the tomb (dargah) of the great Sufi master Hashim Pir, a member of the Shattariyah order. The order originated in Persia in the 15th century as a local branch of the great Qadiriyah order, but later it was implanted in India by Sheikh Abdullah Shattar, its members having great influence over the Muslim courts of the Indian world, from the Mughal to the Deccan sultanates. Muhammad Adil claimed to be a disciple of Hashim Pir, which explains his immense veneration for him and the reason for the construction of his burial mausoleum, Gol Gumbaz, near the tomb of his spiritual master.  

The phenomenon of Sufism in Bijapur has been fairly well documented; we have, in particular, the already classic monograph by Richard Maxwell Eaton, an eminent American scholar, who devoted his research to the history of Islam in medieval India. As we have already mentioned, they played a key role in the spread of Islam in the Indian world, either through proselytism and preaching or, sometimes, even through militancy, triggering violent confrontations with Hindu circles and populations. At the same time, through their immense prestige with the masses—Muslims, but also to some extent Hindus, impressed by their spiritual and often thaumaturgical qualities—many of the great Sufi masters gravitated towards sovereigns and princely courts, legitimizing those in power and thus benefiting from their good graces and generosity. The cemetery that houses the tombs of these Sufi shaykhs, outside the medieval city walls, has for hundreds of years remained a place of pilgrimage for tens of thousands of believers, both Muslim and Hindu, who come here to seek the blessing (baraka) of the saint.

The last two sultans of Bijapur, Ali Adil Shah II (reigned 1656–1672) and Sikandar Adil Shah (reigned 1672–1686) had to cope internally with the emergence of a movement for independence from the sultanate by the Maratha population, led by Shivaji I (reigned 1674–1680), and externally with the increasingly insistent expansionist pressures of the Mughal Empire, which was led by Aurangzeb. Shivaji I laid the foundations of a state structure which, in the decades to come, taking advantage of the dissolution of the Deccan sultanates and the decline of the Mughal Empire after Aurangzeb’s death (1707), would de-
velop into an empire controlling the whole of central and north-western India, rivaling, in the 18th century, Shah Durrani’s Afghan Empire in the north and the British East India Company in the east. The Bijapur Sultanate ended its existence in September 1686, when the capital was invaded and conquered by Aurangzeb.

Beyond their common aversion to Vijayanagar, and the confrontations with neighboring Muslim and Hindu states, relations between the sultanates were not cordial either, and they were in constant rivalry. In 1619, the small Bidar Sultanate, which had retained its capital and the few territories around it that remained after the fragmentation of the Bahmanid Empire, was invaded and annexed by its larger neighbor to the south, the Bijapur Sultanate. Bidar has been ruled since its foundation in 1492 by the Barid Shahi dynasty, founded by Qasim Barid I, of Georgian or Turkish origin, who arrived as a slave in the Deccan and from there, like so many in his situation, climbed the rungs of public office through his talents and ambition. As in all the other sultanates of the Deccan (and indeed in most of the Muslim states of medieval India), Persian was the language of court and culture, the language of official documents and correspondence. Though not as brilliant as their great neighbors Bijapur and Golconda, the Barid Shahi also patronized a Persian-speaking literature and art, being great lovers of poetry and of aesthetic and artistic models imported from the Iranian world.

Finally, perhaps the most Persianate of the Deccan sultanates, and the most prestigious, next to Bijapur, was the Golconda Sultanate, ruled by the Qutb Shahi dynasty. As with other sultanates, the founder of the dynasty and the state, Quli Khawas Khan Hamdani (1485–1543), was also of foreign origin, having been born in the Hamadan region of northwest Persia to the Qara Qoyunlu Turkmen clan (who had, in previous decades, founded a state at the confluence of eastern Anatolia, the southern Caucasus, northern Iraq and northwest Persia). Having gone to India while involved in one of the most flourishing economic exchanges between the Indian world and the Middle East, the horse trade, he arrived first in Delhi and then descended to the Bahmani Sultanate, which offered many more career opportunities for talented and experienced men like himself. When the Bahmani Empire disintegrated, he took advantage of his position as military ruler of the sultanate to take control of the eastern province of Golconda, taking the name Qutb Shah (from the honorific title he had held in the Bahmani Sultanate of Qutb al-Mulk—Pillar of the Kingdom).

The new sovereign brought with him not only his Persian cultural and linguistic heritage, but also his Twelver Shi’ite religious identity, which he established as the official doctrine of the state. These two references were to shape the sultanate’s domestic and foreign policy for most of its first century. Internally, this meant, in this first half of the dynasty’s history, an absolute domination of the Persian language—which is the official language of the state, and in which
literature and other forms of culture, religious and secular, are produced.\textsuperscript{49} Close relations with the new Safavid state are a key contributor to this pro-Iranian favoritism, and the court attracts and recruits heavily from the Persian world, severely restricting the access of natives to positions in the state and even banning Hindu religious festivals. Attachment to Shi’ism, likewise, was the other factor that tightened relations with Persia: the Friday sermon (\textit{khutba}) is delivered in the name of the Safavid Shahs, thus acknowledging their symbolic authority and, at the same time, building a space of pan-Shi’ite solidarity, alongside Bijapur, at times when the neighboring sultanate was ruled by Shi’ite sovereigns, useful in rivalries with the neighboring Sunni Muslim states, primarily the Mughal.\textsuperscript{50} The proselytizing within the local populations is carried out in the name of Twelver Shi’ite Islam which, over time, has led to the emergence of an Imami community in this part of the Deccan, which preserves its identity elements and specific rituals, primarily collective commemorations on the occasion of major religious events (\textit{Ashura}, \textit{Arba’in}).\textsuperscript{51} Shi’ism survived after the dissolution of the dynasty and the integration of Golconda into the Mughal Empire in 1687, and the new dynasty that would control the region shortly afterwards, the Nizams of Hyderabad (1724–1948), although Sunni, still allowed Shi’ite rituals to continue.

With the reigns of Ibrahim Quli Qutb Shah Wali (1550–1580) and his son Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah (1580–1612), however, power became more tolerant of Hindus and the second century of the dynasty saw an intense integration of the indigenous Telegu identity and culture into the court life and official culture patronized by the sultans. Persian loses its absolute monopoly as an official language, and Telegu begins to be used more and more in public documents, becoming privileged towards the end of the dynasty. The process is initiated by Ibrahim Quli who, to foil his brother Jamsheed’s plan to assassinate him (as he had already done with their father, the first sultan, Quli Qutb), takes refuge at the court of Vijayanagar, where he lives for seven years (1543–1550). Here he will learn the Telegu language and familiarize himself with Hindu culture and traditions; when he returns as sovereign to Golconda, he brings with him and promotes this new identity, to which he feels very attached. On the other hand, Ibrahim would not hesitate to participate in the united military campaign of the Muslim sultanates of the Deccan against the man who had received and sheltered him in exile, the regent Rama Raya, the effective ruler of Vijayanagar—after the defeat at Talikota, Golconda would annex part of the territory lost to the Hindu kingdom, thereby further strengthening Ibrahim’s project of placing himself in the extension of the old traditions of South India. He gathered at his court poets, scholars, artists, musicians from the Telegu and other regions of the Deccan (alongside whom, of course, the Persians were also present). His Hindu wife, Bhagirathi, whom he brought with him from his ex-
ile in Vijayanagar, was versed in the arts, very elaborate and long-established in South India, of music and dance. Their son, the future Sultan Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, thus grew up in this cosmopolitan atmosphere, where the Shi’a-Persian and Hindu-Telugu traditions mingled, and this was to have an impact on the spirit and plans of his reign. Like his father, he was intensely involved in the patronage of culture and the arts, poetry, calligraphy, painting, music and dance. He composed poems himself, in Dakhni Urdu, in Persian but also in Telegu, a language he had learned from his mother since his birth.

Finally, architecture was, as in the rest of the sultanate, the place par excellence where Persian and Indian elements met and merged. In 1591, on the anniversary of the beginning of the second millennium of the Islamic era, Muhammad decided to build a new, more lavish and extensive capital to free himself from the urban confines of the old fort, Golconda: called Hyderabad (“City of Haydar”), it evokes the Shi’a roots of the dynasty: the first Imam of Shi’ism, Ali, is also traditionally referred to by the nickname Haydar—lion. In the center of the city, whose plans were drawn up by architects brought from Persia (but also inspired by the layout of Hindu urban structures in the Deccan, such as the former capital of the Kakatiya dynasty, Warangal), was built what has since remained its symbol par excellence: the Charminar (“Four Minarets”), a masterpiece of Indo-Muslim architecture. A few years later, in 1617, the new Sultan, Muhammad Qutb Shah, sponsored the start of the construction of the congregational mosque for the collective Friday prayer, the Makkak Masjid, itself one of the finest expressions of the meeting of Persian and Indian architectural and decorative styles; other representative monuments are the Toli Masjid, or the complex of mausoleums where the Shahs of the dynasty are buried.

This “Hinduisation” was not only linguistic, cultural and artistic, but also politico-military. Members of the Brahmin caste would gradually be integrated into the political and administrative apparatus, while Telegu leaders and fighters (nayakas) were used to defend the many forts throughout the state, and even conscripted into the royal guard. Hindu civil servants, mostly Brahmins, were the majority in the administrative system at the local level, primarily in the collection of land taxes—the main source of state revenue for all states in medieval India. In the case of Golconda, resources also came from the exploitation of diamond mines, which were a state monopoly, and which made the sultanate, and later its successor, the state of Hyderabad, the world’s largest producer, bringing enormous benefits to the ruling families.

The reign of the last two Qutb Shahi sultans, Abdullah Qutb Shah (1626–1672) and Abul Hasan Qutb Shah (1672–1686), came under increasing pressure from Mughal expansionist projects towards the Deccan region, which was at the center of Aurangzeb’s ambitions. For all the political and military di-
sasters of this twilight period—or, perhaps, because of them—it was equally marked by cultural and artistic achievements, in the same vein, of a creative takeover of Persian/Eastern and local/Hindu influences. Both were great lovers and patrons of poetry and music: Abdullah brought to court the most famous Telegu poet and composer of the age, Kshetrayya (1600–1680), while Abul Hasan, his son-in-law and the last sultan, became known as “Tana Shah” (King of Taste) for his penchant for beauty, luxury, gallant bliss and spiritual pursuits, in the good tradition of the Persian Sufi ethos, where the beauty of creation is seen as an epiphany of divine plenitude. The final destruction of what remained of Vijayanagar by Abdullah in 1633 and the occupation of the last capital of the Hindu kingdom, Vellore, brought new riches and further strengthened the court’s anchorage in the cultural and artistic heritage of South India. Abul Hasan would even take the decision, with ill-fated consequences, to appoint Hindu Brahmins, such as the brothers Akkanna and Madanna, to important ministerial posts, whose rise and influence provoked the dislike of the Muslim party, who appealed to Aurangzeb, already sovereign of the Mughal Empire. In 1687, just a year after annexing the neighboring sultanate of Bijapur, Mughal forces entered Hyderabad, arrested Abul Hasan (who would spend the last years of his life imprisoned in Daulatabad fort) and ended the Qutb Shahi dynasty, making Golconda one of the provinces of the Mughal state.55

Conclusions

For almost a hundred years, the Deccan sultanates resisted the expansionist projects of the Mughal Empire, after having been in constant rivalry among themselves or with other states in their neighborhood (Gujarat Sultanate, Vijayanagar Empire). Their occupation by the Mughals had, as a first consequence, the end of these refined and luxurious dynasties, which devoted, perhaps more than any others of the time, passion and resources to patronizing culture and the arts. Even though they fundamentally claimed their Persian cultural (and, for some, ethnic) identity, the elites who ruled and administered these states allowed themselves to be imbued with the spirit and traditions of the territories they came to govern, fostering the emergence of this Indo-Muslim cosmopolitanism, which is found, in specific forms, in all Muslim states in the pre-modern Indian world. Unfortunately, as I have already said, the achievements of the Deccan sultanates are constantly overshadowed by the much more mediatized and studied period of the Mughal Empire, although, to a very large extent, the biographies of the eminent personages of these states, their artistic and architectural achievements, their efforts to bring local cultures
into court life, all make the medieval Deccan one of the most extraordinary and brilliant phases in Indian history.

The Mughals, however, did not get to enjoy and exploit the territories and wealth of the former sultanates: only a few years after their disappearance, just after the death of Alamgir (Aurangzeb) in 1707, the Mughal Empire itself would rapidly disintegrate, giving way, in the Deccan, on the one hand, in the west and in the center, to a new confederation of Maratha clans, which was gradually reviving the idea of a Hindu political and identity revival, and, in the east, to a state built on the territory of the former Golconda Sultanate: the state of the Nizams of Hyderabad. To a very large extent the latter would take over a large part of the cultural and artistic heritage of the Indo-Persian cosmopolitanism built up by the sultanate (along with the new influences it received, primarily European), until its annexation to the Indian Union in 1948.

Notes

3. The term “Persianate” was used by Marshall G. S. Hodgson in the second volume (The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Period) of his famous synthesis The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization (Chicago–London: University of Chicago Press, 1977), in reference to the linguistic and cultural space built on Persian identities and traditions.
4. A term constructed by analogy with “Sanskrit Cosmopolis” (used by Sheldon Pollock), found, for example, in Richard M. Eaton: “The Persian Cosmopolis (900–1900) and the Sanskrit Cosmopolis (400–1900),” in The Persianate World: Rethinking a Shared Sphere, edited by Abbas Amanat, Assef Ashraf (Leiden–Boston: Brill,
2019), 63–83, and which, in Emma J. Flatt’s formulation, “was neither a political structure, nor a geographically bounded zone, and certainly not a homogeneous religious community, but a tradition dispersed over a vast area, which was defined by the use of Persian in political life,” Courts of the Deccan Sultanates, 18.

5. A good general history of Islam in India in the pre-modern period, even if already very old, remains Ishwari Prasad’s A Short History of Muslim Rule in India: From the Conquest of Islam to the Death of Aurangzeb, 2nd edition (Allahabad: Indian Press, 1931).


15. Eaton, India in the Persianate Age, 140–141.


17. About the medieval history of the brotherhood in India, see especially the chapter “The Chishtis” in the reference work Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, A History of Sufism in India, vol. 1, Early Sufism and its History in India to 1600 AD (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1978), 114–189.


27. As in the case of the other sultanates of Deccan, the monographs dedicated to the Ahmadnagar Sultanate are very few; useful information can be found in B. G. Kunte, “The Nizamshahi of Ahmadnagar,” in History of Maharashtra: Medieval Period (Bombay: Directorate of Government Printing, Stationery and Publications, Maharashtra State, 1972), 71–149.


38. “The complex features bulbous domes with lotus petal bases, slim decorative minarets, broad cornices topped with finials, intricate brackets, and an abundance of calligraphic inscriptions, all carved from stone . . . One can trace the elements of this exuberant architectural style to a variety of sources, including local religious architecture serving both Hindu and Muslim communities.” Deborah Hutton, *Art of the Court of Bijapur* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2006), 2.


41. “The imaginative style of Deccani court art has been admired for its poetic character and sense of fantasy. In painting these qualities are conveyed in part by a lyrical movement of line; a dark, mysterious palette or one with distinctive combinations of glowing color; enigmatic shifts of scale; and an emphasis on mood rather than reality, as the more widely known Mughal school is often thought to educate. Several factors influenced Deccani artists, including Hindu iconography, Persian painting, and European sources. . . . The view of Deccan art as otherworldly, as is frequently described, certainly captures its most seductive qualities.” Navina Najat Haidar, “The Art of the Deccan Courts,” in *Sultans of Deccan India 1500–1700*, 15.


48. For a general history of the dynasty, we have H. K. Sherwani’s monumental work, *History of the Qutb Shāhī Dynasty* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1974).


50. In a letter to the Safavid sovereign, Shah Abbas, the sultan Muhammad Quli wrote: “O protector of the faith, O, asylum of monarchs, the auspicious affairs of these regions about which His Majesty must have heard from the ambassadors of the court and travelers to those climes, have been for some time in a state of confusion and disorder due to wickedness of seditious people. My submission is that His Majesty’s
noble attention be directed toward our affair more and more, for His Majesty’s attention is sufficient to repel the said calamities in the best possible way.” Cited in Rachel Parikh, “Faith and Fate: The Khalili Fālnāma and Shi’i Identity in Golconda,” in Iran and the Deccan, 231.


52. Narendra Luther, Prince, Poet, Lover, Builder: Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, the Founder of Hyderabad (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 2010).


Abstract
Indo-Persian Identities in Medieval Muslim Deccan

Between the 14th and 17th centuries, the Deccan Plateau region saw the emergence of Muslim sultanates (Bahmani, Ahmednagar, Bidar, Golconda, Bijapur, Berar, Bijapur) whose political, religious, intellectual, and artistic elites are deeply imbued with the Persian language and culture. They thus continue a long tradition of the dynasties that appeared in the east of the Muslim world, since the 9th century (Samanids, Ghaznavids, Ghurids, Khwarazmshahs, Ilkhanids, Timurids), as well as the Muslim political power ruling northern India, between the 13th and the 16th centuries (Delhi Sultanate). In all of this, regardless of the origin of the political-military elites who were in power (Turks, Afghans, Caucasians, Iranians, Indians converted to Islam), Persian becomes both the political-administrative language and the language of culture. Our study aims to provide an insight into the ways in which this Persian reference was disseminated, developed, assumed in the Bahmani Sultanate, and then in the other five sultanates that emerged after its dissolution (1527). For over three centuries, the dynasties in power patronized a very rich cultural life, where traditional Persian elements, brought here by scholars, religious people, Sufis, poets, artists coming from the Middle East and Central Asia, were shaped and adapted to the realities of the Indian environment. These symbioses were especially visible in art (primarily in miniatures) and in the development of new artistic expressions within what is called Indo-Islamic architecture.

Keywords
Muslim sultanates, Persian language and culture, Indo-Islamic architecture
The colonial quest for a social class which could support their revenue regime stopped at caste identity.

In September 2021, the ruling party in India proposed three different Acts related to agriculture and agriculture-related activities. These three Acts were proposed and promoted as unprecedented and revolutionary for farming and the farmers’ community. These proposed acts followed the historical trajectory and continued some of the colonial laws which have been in place and amended many times. Additionally, many of these Acts have been vital to agriculture and agriculturists, especially in the regions where agricultural production had been at stake for many reasons. Punjab, the northern state of India, is one of them.

Contrary to the government’s claim, the agrarian communities across India found these proposed Acts to be against agriculture and agriculturists’ interests. In response, the farmers organized and participated in what was registered as the largest mobilization and longest strike in the history of protests. The successful farmers’ movement forced the government to withdraw these three farm bills before they could even be implemented.

Historically, agriculture and agricultural communities have had a high...
stake in social and legal developments, from the colonial to the post-colonial period. The debates that emerged around these three repealed agricultural laws were not only about the changing agrarian landscape and its need in contemporary times, but at the same time, they marked a defining moment for the agrarian communities. Substantive portions of these three bills were claimed to be extending the forms and nature of farming activities and their market prospects. However, none of these three farm bills had ensured the farmers’ share beyond farming activities. Precisely this made the farming communities perceive a threat to their livelihood and very identity. At stake is the identity of a farmer, which is in transition between agriculture and a newly emerged field, agro-business.

When the Indian Parliament repealed the three proposed Farm Acts at the end of 2021, the primary question that emerged was: Who is a farmer? What defines the identity of a farmer? What constitutes a farmer? Do the legal and social binaries follow the same chart? (the legal status—Farmer, and the social status—Kisan/Kisani). Or do they meet somewhere in between? Alternatively, perhaps they even overlap. What historical construction of this identity appeared to be a ‘class’ kind of identity? Is it as it appears?

Who is a farmer? This debate first surfaced in the colonial period in Punjab when the government decided to give the rights to agriculture to selected communities, 16 to be precise. The legal sanction gave agricultural rights to those selected communities and froze the identity of an agriculturist. Among these castes, the Jats held about 70 per cent of the cultivable land, thus securing the exclusivity of their identity.

This question of categorization emerged in colonial Punjab during the late 19th century from the inception of classification debates at that time. The classification was a long and complicated process that took many turns even within the colonial period. Some of these debates also resurfaced during the farmers’ movement in recent times.

**Law and Claim-Making**

At the time of the recently concluded farmers’ movement, various debates and discourses have taken place, and from different entry points. Furthermore, it was a coincidence that it emerged from a movement labelled as the ‘wealthy farmers’ movement from Punjab, which the farmers from other states marginally joined. The primary support for the movement came from the Punjab region and Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. However, it is also true that the movement had broader support from all over India and was not confined only to the Punjab farmers.
The stated intention behind the passing of these three Acts was to remove existing constraints on buyers to contract, purchase and stock agricultural commodities. The central government passed these Acts. However, the prerogative to pass these three laws was not only of the central government but also of the state government. The central government’s prerogative was the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act of 2020. The other two are the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act of 2020, governing contract farming, and the Farmers’ Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act of 2020 (popularly known as APMC² Bypass Act). The latter focused on the public-regulated markets that were previously under the state-level APMC Acts, therefore under the purview of the states and not the central government. The Acts that have severe ramifications for states are usually passed only after serious discussion and consultation with the states and not by the central government.

All three acts need scrutiny as they share the same premises to let private players and non-agricultural entities enter the agricultural supply chain. Further, they strengthen their position instead of the people involved in agriculture. All three Acts relax the terms and conditions that affect the agrarian communities and favor the non-agricultural sector. The First Act relaxes the restrictions regarding the purchase and sale of farm produce. The second one relaxes the terms concerning, for instance, the stocking of agricultural produce.³ The third Act allows contract farming on mutual agreements.⁴

Under the semi-federalist structure, state-specific laws deal with agricultural trade within states. Some of these laws come under the APMC Acts. The APMC mandated some regulated market areas (mandis) to purchase ‘notified’ agrarian commodities within the marketing fees, payment and commission mechanism. One needs to acquire a license to operate in these mandis. From its inception in the 1940s and later in the 1960s, some of these Acts were the tools to ensure that farmers had direct access to organized market spaces (mandis) for their benefit, which further resolved the problem of intermediaries.

Historically, India’s agrarian or agricultural market reforms have been a vexing issue. Sectors like ‘agriculture,’ ‘market and fairs,’ and ‘trade and commerce within the state’ come under state purview. Various Acts, provisions lists and the Seventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution permit that. It makes the agricultural market a state competence. The center used Article 301, which invoked ‘free trade’ within the country to provide freedom of trade and commerce, to infringe upon the state’s legal sphere.

Hence, the passing of these Acts created a fundamental rupture in center-state agri-relations. The APMC Bypass Act restricted any state’s regulation to designated physical premises, which are called ‘market yards’ or mandis. After the
Act, the center controlled all other areas than these ‘market yards,’ called ‘trade areas’ in states. Technically the ‘trade areas’ could be any place not defined by the Act. The reason to do so came from the idea formulated by the Economic Survey 2014–2015. The survey aimed to free agricultural trade from the APMCs, which were viewed as a den of intermediaries and exploitative to farmers. The enactment of the APMC Bypass Act particularly hurt the states which predominantly had deregulated systems of buying and selling agricultural products. All deregulated areas within the state will automatically come under the central government’s control, allowing private actors to operate freely in the current deregulated market environment. It absolves any private player from adhering to state law and effectively nullifies the state’s law and control in agricultural marketing.

No systematic evidence suggested a transfer of regulatory authority from the states to the center. Moreover, this was quite visible in some steps the center took. For example, just a few weeks after the ECA was amended, the center imposed restrictions on stocking several agricultural produce, like onions in October 2020 and the range of pulses in July 2021, undermining the purported spirit of the ECA passed by the center.5

It was not a coincidence that colonial and post-colonial states claimed to bring these Acts in support of the welfare of the agriculturists/farmers in both periods. Meanwhile, the identity of an agriculturist/farmer changed a lot. The earlier legal developments during the colonial period, such as the Mandi Act, were much debated during the farmers’ protest in 2021. However, this time the participation in the farmers’ movement was not only of the Jat Zamindars, whose identity as an agriculturist was established by colonial processes, but others were also present.

The Unionist Party and the Zamindar defended the Mandi Act during the colonial period because it established their participation and role in the Mandis. However, it created anxiety among the Sahukars and the laborers who did not have a good relationship with them. Nevertheless, this time, the agriculturists and the Arhatis felt threatened by the passing of the new Act, commonly called the Bypass Mandi Act.6 When talking about the Mandi Act, the role and the greatness of Unionist leader Chhotu Ram (1881–1945) was also evoked. It was interesting to see the present evocation through a historical lens, with the Mandi Act primarily intended to make the agriculturist caste an active member of the everyday life of Mandis.

The Act was passed in order to keep the agriculturist claim in mind, by creating a monster out of the Sahukar or the intermediaries’ image. The Mandi Act of 1939 continued the series of Acts passed during the colonial period. Along with other Acts, especially the PLAA of 1900, it narrowed the definition of farmers/agriculturists or Zamindars. It narrowed a class or occupation to a caste
identity. This ‘casteness’ of the class was formalized within the legal framework, which later became a popular term culturally. Recently, one might visit any part of rural Punjab or Haryana and find out that these two terms, Zamindar and Jat, are synonymous. There is no difference in the social domain. This formation has a colonial past curated formally to achieve the colonial agenda.

Interestingly, one might see that even with the passing of the 2021 Acts, there would not be much change towards the landless labor formed mainly by Dalits and Backward Castes. However, the farmers’ movement tried to widen the definition of farmers and include landless labor into the domain, which was impossible in colonial times. However, this attempt’s success will only be seen in the near or later future.

The identity of an agriculturist/farmer/Kisan has taken center stage in the debates around agriculture, whether it is about the agrarian economy or agricultural laws in colonial and post-colonial discourse. However, it happens often that the identity of an ‘agriculturalist’ or ‘farmer’ is taken for granted and goes without much scrutiny. What happens to the constitution of a ‘farmer’ identity and the changes it goes through? The change, shuffle and historical development of the identity of an agriculturalist, which is popularly known as a farmer or Kisan in this region, require a close reading. This phenomenon is essential as it interlocks with class and caste identity.

The colonial processes and discourse might have been situated elsewhere, but historically the identity of agriculturists developed as a caste identity instead of a class identity. During the colonial period in Punjab, various push factors introduced, consolidated and strengthened the agriculturists’ identity as a caste identity. Although various discourses and processes were part of identity building, the colonial legal sphere played a significant role.

The colonial quest for a social class which could support their revenue regime stopped at caste identity. Colonial anthropologists also mobilized the discourse where Punjab was seen to be the land of the yeoman class, which corroborated their revenue priorities. The yeoman’s claim was primarily a caste claim in the working. Jats and other dominant castes fit in very well in this claim.

At the same time, the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900 created an exclusive space where the dominance of certain ‘martial’ castes could be established. It was a unique colonial process that excluded many castes, mostly backwards and former ‘untouchables’ outside this purview, even when these castes were an integral part of the agrarian economy. The legal construction of the agriculturist castes created their dominance, which was further strengthened socially and economically by other laws.

Punjab was mainly a rural state where Panchayats were set up by colonial law and had social authority and sanctions cutting across castes and classes. The
agriculturists’ caste took over such public spaces at their convenience. In other words, one can say that the dominance of these agriculturist castes, which was established by the colonial legal developments, was carried forward in social spaces quite profoundly.

In keeping with their prior experience in Britain, what the colonial administrators looked for in the agriculturist classes was not exactly found in ‘class.’ Certain ‘castes’ were mobilized legally and socially to fit into those categories. The agriculturist identity that emerged and consolidated here was predominantly a caste identity made unbreakable by outside forces. The ‘classness of caste’ was constructed through colonial processes and made exclusive and impenetrable by other castes. The backward castes and the ‘untouchables’ bore its burden. Despite being the working ‘class’ in the agrarian economy, they could not jump over the fence and become the class the colonial state ‘wanted.’

Law was the central axis of some of this crucial churning during India’s colonial period. While looking at the farmers’ identity and its processes as it played out in the colonial period was crucial, looking at the changes in the form of identity assertion in post-colonial India gave an organic picture of the processes that preceded the colonial period.

The colonial state and its legal processes played a significant role in the emergence of caste dominance in the garb of agriculturist identity. In particular, the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900 was a path-breaking legal development which paved the way for certain caste/s to become more dominant than other caste/s, especially Dalits, outcastes and village Kamins. Only 16 ‘agriculturist’ caste/s were given the rights to buy, sell and even mortgage the land.

Once the colonial discourse started with finding the agricultural classes, something was taken from their experience back home. However, this search ended up placing those desired merits on the institution of caste. B. R. Ambedkar (1891–1956) rightly pointed out the same in his extended critique of the 1900 Act in his pamphlet to the colonial state in 1933. The provincial autonomy in Punjab led to another era of retaining and enhancing the politics of caste dominance.

B. R. Ambedkar’s long-drawn pamphlet provided the most important critique of the colonial law (the 1900 Act), which changed the colonial bias in making the landed zamindar caste dominant and pushed Dalits/backward castes and village Kamins to the margins. While these processes date from the colonial period, they echo the contemporary farmers’ movement and their demand to repeal the proposed Act. Thus, we see in many movements the representation of the ‘classness of the caste,’ as an attempt was made to superimpose a class identity on a caste identity historically built in this region.
Notes

2. APMC stands for Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee.

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**Abstract**

Identity, Law and Agrarian Economy in India: Past and Present

The article discusses the contentious issue of agricultural reform in India, particularly focusing on the three Acts proposed by the ruling party in September 2021. These Acts aimed to revolutionize farming practices but faced significant opposition from agrarian communities nationwide, cul-
minating in extensive protests and the eventual withdrawal of the bills. The debate surrounding these Acts delves into questions of agrarian identity and the historical construction of the farmer’s role, going back to colonial-era policies and their lasting impact. The article highlights the complex interplay between legal frameworks, social identities, and economic structures, emphasizing the transition of the farmer’s identity from a class-based to a caste-based construct. Through historical analysis and contemporary parallels, it explores how colonial legacies continue to shape agrarian politics and the ongoing struggle to define and protect the interests of farmers in India.

**Keywords**

law, identity, farmer, agriculture, caste
India’s North Border Conflicts
Between Reality and Fiction

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As both the Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan are still disputing the sovereignty over the Jammu and Kashmir region, it is unsurprising that there have been border skirmishes as recently as 2020 and 2021. This conflict over a region situated in the northern part of the Indian subcontinent can be traced back to the years following the formation of the two countries disputing it. Since 1947, India and Pakistan have been involved in three major conflicts and numerous border skirmishes due to this particular region. Moreover, in 1971, the Republic of India helped the rebels in East Pakistan to obtain their independence from Pakistani rule and form the Bangladeshi state. Unfortunately, the Republic of India has more than one problematic relationship with its neighbors: in addition to the conflict with Pakistan, the border with China is also riddled with tensions. In effect, in 1962, the tensions with China erupted into the Sino-Indian War.

In the present research, we focus on identifying the reasons behind these territorial disputes, and on how these conflicts are characterized by periods
of calm, followed by heightened tensions and fighting. Moreover, we show that the conflicts are still escalating, as no government can assume responsibility for a loss of territory. Although these conflicts have led to millions of refugees, thousands of deaths, and numerous casualties, which have also been portrayed in traumatic Indian novels, the citizens of these Asian countries do not see a possible solution for these unsolved problems in the near future.

The Evolution of the Indian–Pakistani Conflict

Before India and Pakistan obtained their independence in 1947, the British Empire controlled a large part of this South Asian region, either through direct or indirect rule. The British Raj was under direct rule by the British Crown since 1858, while the princely states functioned as tributary regions in which the indigenous rulers had the power over domestic affairs, while the foreign affairs were dealt with by the British. In 1947, the British Empire had to grant independence to the Indian territories, as the British forces had become weaker. In order to prevent a bloodbath, the British Raj was partitioned into two states using a religious criterion. Afterwards, the princely states had to choose whether to integrate into India or Pakistan. Unfortunately, the situation of the Jammu and Kashmir princely state was complicated, as it was a mostly Muslim state with some regions that had large Hindu majorities. Therefore, the Maharaja of that time, Hari Singh, wanted to transform the Jammu and Kashmir princely state into an independent country. This proved to be an impossible wish, as the new state of Pakistan severed the supply of food and goods to Kashmir and a large Muslim community in Poonch rebelled.

The first Indo–Pakistani War, or the First Kashmir War, did not break out because of the tense relationship with Pakistan or the local civil unrest, but because of “the invasion of Kashmir by Pathan tribesmen from Pakistan on October 22, 1947.” Following this invasion, the Maharaja was forced to appeal to the Indian state and request help from the Indian Government. After “accepting the accession, which made Kashmir a constituent region of India, the Government of India airlifted on 27 October armed forces that quickly pushed back the Pakistani invaders.” By November, the Indian Army had managed to secure the Srinagar airfield and force the Pakistani troops to retreat, capturing the city of Baramulla. In December 1947, the advance of the Indian forces faced a setback due to lack of supplies and proper equipment. Furthermore,

the “Azad Kashmir” (literally, “free Kashmir”) forces compelled the Indians to retreat. In the spring of 1948, the Indians launched a counter-offensive that led to
more direct Pakistani involvement in the war. In a battle near the city of Poonch, the Pakistani army used mountain guns to support the Azad Kashmir forces. Later in the year, regular Pakistani army units entered the fray as the Indian army made important territorial gains.\(^3\)

In this context, the Indian state asked for the help of the United Nations, an organization that managed to negotiate a ceasefire and wanted to organize “a plebiscite in Kashmir in order to determine the future status of the state.”\(^4\) This led to the end of the First Kashmir War on 5 January 1949.

In April 1965, after some border conflicts, the Pakistani army

*launched Operation Desert Hawk in the Rann of Kutch. After three months of intermittent engagement, India and Pakistan signed an agreement to settle the Kutch dispute through arbitration by the International Court of Justice on 30 June 1965.*\(^5\)

The signing of the agreement did not mean the conflict between India and Pakistan was over, as Pakistani officials, with the approval of President Ayub Khan, prepared “Operation Gibraltar.” The operation began in May 1965, with hundreds of Pakistani men, both soldiers and civilians, prepared to infiltrate the Indian territory, receiving special training in a camp located in West Punjab. The Pakistani infiltration started on 5 August 1965, but it “failed to ignite the desired indigenous rebellion against India.”\(^6\) Pakistan’s army had deployed, during “Operation Grand Slam,” the M48 tanks received from the United States of America, but

*India’s strategic planners were much wiser . . . , opening the floodgates of their nearest dams and trapping Pakistan’s tank corps in deep mud, then launching a three-pronged attack across the Indo–Pakistani international border in Punjab, aimed at the defenseless capital of Lahore.*\(^7\)

Although India’s army could have conquered the whole Kashmir region, by

*September 22, 1965, both sides agreed to a UN mandated ceasefire. . . . On January 10, 1966, Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahdaur Shastri and Pakistani President Ayub Khan signed an agreement at Tashkent (Uzbekistan), agreeing to withdraw to pre-August lines.*\(^8\)

As a result of the increased civil unrest in West Pakistan caused by the perception that most decision-making was in the hands of individuals from East Pakistan, in
1971, the leaders of Pakistan ordered the launch of “Operation Searchlight” in order to arrest political leaders, disarm potentially disloyal Bengali personnel in the police and the army, and crush the militant rebellion by force. This operation led to the killing of many disloyal Bengalis, but also to the death of hundreds of thousands of innocent people. Therefore, on 27 March, Major Ziaur Rahman, ashamed by the actions of the leaders of East Pakistan, declared the independence of Bangladesh and proclaimed himself as the temporary leader of the Republic of Bangladesh over the radio. Furthermore, as millions of people were seeking asylum in India, the Indian government decided that it was better for their country to intervene in the civil war. Consequently, at the request of the Bangladeshi leaders,

*India launched a land, air and sea assault on East Pakistan and in just 13 days was able to force Pakistan’s army to surrender at Dhaka, and took 90,000 soldiers as prisoners of war. East Pakistan became the independent country of Bangladesh on December 16, 1971. Hostilities between India and Pakistan continued till July 1972, when both countries signed the Shimla Agreement.*

During the war, the secondhand Pakistani submarine Ghazi was sent to attack the Indian aircraft carrier INS Vikrant, the pride of the Indian Navy, but did not manage to locate it. Therefore, the commander of the obsolete submarine, Zafar M. Khan, started to lay mines near the port of Visakhapatnam, but due to the mines or the depth charges thrown by the destroyer INS Rajput, the Pakistani submarine was sunk.

Although the Pakistani Government had managed to cope with the loss of East Pakistan, the issue of the southwestern border with India was never clarified. The situation regarding the Line of Control (LoC) in the region of Jammu and Kashmir “began to deteriorate in the first week of May 1999, when clashes were reported between Pakistani and Indian troops in the Kargil sector of Indian-held Kashmir. India alleged that Pakistan-backed Mujahideen had occupied the Kargil heights in connivance with regular Pakistani armed forces. The Kargil heights—a post left unmanned by India”—was one of the advantageous points held by Pakistan in the 1947–1948 war, afterwards captured by the Indian army in the 1965 war. Although at the beginning of May,

*Indian troops stationed locally launched several unplanned and uncoordinated assaults to evict the intruders and to blunt the anticipated criticism of their lack of vigilance, . . . they were repulsed and suffered heavy losses.*

As both Pakistan and India managed to become nuclear powers in 1998, the Indian military leaders were afraid to escalate the conflict by using the entire force
of the Indian army in the Kashmir area and decided to only focus on the Kargil region and under no circumstance go beyond the Line of Control. Therefore, the Indian commanders sent

20,000 troops into the contested area . . . employing ground and air power on its side of the LoC to evict the intruders. After initially offering firm resistance, the Pakistani forces were left to face relentless, successful Indian attacks.\footnote{14}

Furthermore, United States President Bill Clinton, in fear of a nuclear war, had forced the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, to pull all Pakistani soldiers from the conflict area. Therefore, by July, the Indian forces retook the initial position on the Line of Control in the Kashmir area and the war came to an end.

The situation of the Jammu and Kashmir area is still unstable, as both India and Pakistan refuse to organize the plebiscite suggested by the United Nation and, therefore, rely on a temporary ceasefire. The refusal to organize the plebiscite is most likely due to the fact that neither country wants to give up the Jammu and Kashmir region to its rival. To this climate of uncertainty, we can add that terrorist groups from Pakistan use the Kashmir conflict as a reason to attack the Indian army, such as the 2005 Srinagar bombing of an Indian military vehicle or the attack of the Jaish-e-Mohammed insurgents on the Indian army headquarters near Uri in 2016. Furthermore, the decision of the Indian Government to revoke the autonomy of the Jammu and Kashmir region in 2019 did not help the situation, as it caused the locals to revolt against the Indian Government.

We can argue that the solution proposed by the United Nations, of organizing a plebiscite in the Kashmir and Jammu region, is not possible due to the interest of both states to fully annex this region. However, the solution provided by UN representative Sir Owen Dixon in his report of 1950–1951 is more feasible. He proposed

the division of the state of Jammu and Kashmir into four main regions: Jammu, Ladakh, the Vale of Kashmir including Muzaffarabad, and Gilgit-Baltistan. According to his Plan, the district of Poonch was to remain to Pakistan. He proposed that of the four regions, Jammu and Ladakh should go uncontested to India and the Northern Areas to Pakistan. He concluded that in the Valley a plebiscite might be held to decide about its future.\footnote{15}

Another possible solution to the Kashmir conflict is “along the lines of Northern Ireland’s Good Friday Agreement. In both cases there is an internal and external dimension to the disputes.”\footnote{16} Some steps were made in that direction,
as a symbolic bus service was created in 2006 between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad, for the family members that live on opposite sides of the Line of Control. In 2008, “duty-free barter trade for twenty-one items produced on either side of the LoC was allowed.” Regrettably, in 2019, the Indian Government “suspended the trade between the two sides” and implemented stricter border measures alongside the Line of Control.

The Sino–Indian Conflict

In the middle of the twentieth century, the relationship between India and China was thriving.

India was one of the earliest nations to recognize the PRC [People’s Republic of China], rather than the Taiwan-based Republic of China, as a sovereign state. In the midst of the Korean War, Indian diplomats at the United Nations proposed UN membership for the PRC as a necessary part of the ceasefire.19

As India constantly supported continental China, on 29 April 1954, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and his counterpart Zhou Enlai signed the Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet Region of China and India, which stipulated that they would respect each other’s territorial integrity, would not interfere in each other’s internal affairs, would develop a mutually beneficial trading relationship, and would live in peaceful harmony.20 Although the prime ministers of the two countries signed an agreement, a clear border was not established, since the Indians recognized the McMahon Line established by the British through the 1914 Simla Convention, but contested by the Chinese, as the declaration had only been signed by the Tibetans and the British. The McMahon Line was recognized by the Tibetan Government before Tibet was annexed by the People’s Republic of China in 1950 and became an autonomous region of China.21 In 1959, the Tibetan uprising forced the Dalai Lama to flee to India and request asylum, which was a deal breaker for the Chinese, as the Indians were helping an enemy of the People’s Republic of China. Moreover, by 1958 the “Chinese had commenced building a highway from Tibet to Xinjiang through Aksai Chin, in what was then Indian territory.”22

During the summer of 1962 there had been some skirmishes between the Indian and Chinese troops stationed along the border, which led to the death of numerous Chinese soldiers. “On September 8, 1962, 60 Chinese troops surrounded and intimidated the [Indian] Dhola post.” By 11 September 1962, the Indian army was
given permission to fire on any armed Chinese who entered Indian Territory. . . . On Oct 3rd, just a week before the war, the Chinese premier, Zhou Enlai, visited New Delhi, and promised Jawaharal Nehru . . . that there would be no war. 24

In October 1962, the Indian leaders urged the Indian battalions dispatched to Namka Chu to drive the Chinese soldiers out of Thagla, but this was an impossible mission, as commander Lt. Gen. Brij Mohan Kaul was only given “two weak infantry battalions, ill-equipped, lacking war-like stores and ammunition, and devoid of artillery support.” 25 On 20 October 1962, Chinese artillery bombarded the Indian position and “little by little, the superior volume of the Chinese ak-47s overwhelmed the Indians.” 26 Furthermore, the Chinese also launched an attack in November on Rezang La and Chushul. Afterwards, on 21 November, Prime Minister Zhou Enlai declared a ceasefire as they had managed to secure the Line of Actual Control, which was declared by the Chinese prime minister in 1959 as the correct border, as it included control of the Aksai Chin region. 27

As the exact position of the border between China and India was once again not established in a common document agreed upon by both countries, in December 2022 a new “clash [erupted] between Chinese and Indian troops along the two countries’ 2,100-mile-long contested border.” 28 Furthermore, it is possible to say that the neighboring country, Nepal, is also adding fuel to the fire, because in 2020 Nepal announced “that they prepared a new map for the country . . . , [and] in addition to [the] disputed Kalapani territory, [they also included] . . . a small Indian settlement (Susta) . . . into Nepal.” 29

The Indian Border Conflicts in Literature

The Indian border conflicts are an important theme in Indian literature, as “the grim reaper claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, while a further ten million people were uprooted from their ancestral homes” 30 after the integration of the princely states into India or Pakistan. The main focus of the Indian writers is on the partition of India and Pakistan, as this is the reason behind the Indian–Pakistani wars and border skirmishes. One of the most well-known novels that deal with this theme is Khushwant Singh’s 1956 novel, Train to Pakistan. The novel presents the fictional village of Mano Majra, in the new independent Indian state, where people do not know much about the partition of India and Pakistan and about
communal riots . . . [How] both [Hindus and Muslims] shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. Both tortured. Both raped. From Calcutta, the riots spread north and east and west: to Noakhali in East Bengal, where Muslims massacred Hindus; to Bihar, where Hindus massacred Muslims.\(^{31}\)

When they find out about the evil things the independence had brought, they think that “we were better under the British. At least there was security.”\(^{32}\) Although both Muslims and Hindus had been living in peace in this small village, the local authorities decided that the local Muslims were to be put on a train and sent to Pakistan. Firstly, the decision was made because a train from Pakistan had arrived in the small village’s railway station, and it was filled with dead Sikhs, which enraged the local Sikhs. Secondly, we believe the decision was also political, as this was an important border village where goods trains passed, and the government could not risk putting this strategic position in danger, on the chance that local Muslims could become Pakistani spies. Unfortunately, mobs of people planning to avenge the deaths of the individuals on the train that had arrived from Pakistan killed the Muslims gathered in order to be sent to Pakistan. Juggut Singh, who was in love with a Muslim girl, decided to sacrifice himself and stop the people from killing the Muslims, even if this meant he would end up dead.

Another shocking story of the Indian partition is the one written by the Indian American author Veera Hiranandani in her journal-style book from 2018, *The Night Diary*.\(^{33}\) The text describes the life of Nisha, born to a Muslim mother and a Hindu father, after the partition of India and Pakistan. As only Nisha’s mother was a Muslim and they lived in the city of Mirpur Khaz in Sindh Province, which became part of Pakistan, her family became discriminated, and her brother started to be bullied. Therefore, her father decided to take his family and run to India, but it was a dangerous journey, as people were constantly attacking them. In the end, the family managed to escape Paki-
stan and start a new life in India, but the horrors that they had witnessed on the road traumatized Nisha and her family.

Salman Rushdie’s 1981 novel, *Midnight’s Children*, also deals with the partition of India and Pakistan, as many references appear in the writing. Unlike the previous novels, it visits the past and recent developments of the initial conflict.

There were conflicts between Muslims and Hindus before the Partition, like the one on August 19 . . .; and Street violence between Muslims and Hindus in Bombay on September 4, 1946 . . . There are political and social tensions between Hindus and Muslims after the Partition: two wars over Kashmir, and one over the creation of an independent Bangladesh. All these events were depicted in the novel and made great impact on the plot.\(^{35}\)

The story is presented by Saleem Sinai, who was born in the exact moment when India achieved its independence on 15 August 1947. Saleem tells his family story to Padma Mangroli, Saleem’s lover. The most dramatic episode in the novel occurs during the Second Kashmir War, during which

\begin{quote}
Everyone related to Saleem was killed except Jamila Singer and the family of his uncle Mustapha. The war resulted in pangs and suffering, loss of life and violence. Sallem survived in the war,\(^{36}\)
\end{quote}

but became an orphan. What differentiates Rushdie from the first two writers is that he combines historical truths with magic realism.

\begin{quote}
The use of magic realism enables him to create his own version of history from the marginalized perspective, . . . and to comment on the social and political problems of postcolonial India.\(^{37}\)
\end{quote}

This inclusion of magical realism is done not only through the voice of the main character, but through all the characters of the book, when discussing Indian
politics or the social context: they seem to talk about a fantastic world, not the real historical one.

Jon Cleary’s 1966 novel, *The Pulse of Danger*, explores the story of a group of botanical researchers returning from their expedition to Thimbu in 1962 during the Sino–Indian War, which had caused the death of thousands of people. The researchers become afraid for their lives as they hear on the radio that the “Chinese have crossed the border east of . . . [their location], over into the North-East Frontier, and into the west, too, in Ladakh.” Not long after the news, they encounter an Indian officer that had captured a Chinese general on Bhutan’s territory. Lieutenant-Colonel Dalpat Singh of the Indian Army was the commander of a battalion in the North-East Frontier Agency station near the Chinese border, but his camp was attacked by the Chinese military and he, together with a group of eighteen men, fled “west over the mountains into Bhutan.” While fleeing to Bhutan, they ran into a “Chinese border post, well inside the border. . . . [They] manage to avoid them, but unfortunately . . . then ran into a second post.” Even if Singh lost all his subordinates, he managed to defeat the Chinese forces and capture the Chinese General Li Bu-fang. Although the Indian officer tried to bring his prisoner to India, in order to prove himself worthy of his military rank and expose the Chinese invasion plans, by the end of the novel both military men fall into a chasm in the Himalayan mountains.

**Destruction**

Although many readers could argue that Humphrey Hawksley’s 2000 novel, *Dragon Fire*, is a fantasy novel, it could be seen as depicting a possible alternative reality, as the tensions between India and its neighbors are not de-escalating. The novel brings to the attention of the close readers sensitive topics such as Tibet’s occupation by China, the Indian–Pakistani
conflict, the Sino–Indian conflict, the Taiwan conflict, and the dangerous nuclear capabilities of China, India, and Pakistan.

China, at this moment, “is still obliged to advocate better trade and investment cooperation and to see India as a multilateral economic partner,” but this economic cooperation can end if India crosses the red line of the territorial integrity of China or interferes in the internal affairs of the communist state. In the novel, Humphrey Hawksley suggests that the Chinese state could become a fierce enemy of India, if the Indians would dare to launch a military mission in Tibet, which is Chinese territory. Emphasizing this point, the novel begins with the provocation of China through the secret mission carried out by the Special Frontier Force, which is meant to rescue the Buddhist monk Lhundrub Togden, an important leader against the Chinese rule over Tibet. Although it is unlikely that such an operation would be launched in real life, we should not forget that the Indian Government granted asylum to the Dalai Lama in 1959 and that the exiled Tibetan Government operates in Dharamshala.

At present, China does not support Pakistan’s position on the Kashmir issue. Pakistan wants to resolve the matter through internationalization. China, in contrast, along with the US and the EU, among others, believes that the dispute should be resolved through bilateral talks,

but if India were to become an enemy of China, it is possible for the communist government to shift its policy and support Pakistan’s claims. In Dragon Fire, because India supports the escape of the Tibetan leader, the Chinese Chief of the General Staff, Tang Siju, and Defense Minister Lueng Liyin secure a deal with Pakistan. In the novel, the Pakistani Government offers to fight against the terrorists that might attack Tibet or Xinjiang from Pakistan or neighboring coun-
tries, while they get access to Chinese surveillance technology and obtain “East Wind DF-21 missile[s] and launchers and the KS-1 theatre-defense missile.”42

Things get out of hand when the Pakistani military fires a Stinger missile on a helicopter that has aboard the Indian Home Minister and other Indian officials returning from an important meeting at the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce. Moreover, when the Indian Prime Minister, Hari Dixit, wants to reach the Pakistani Prime Minister, they realize that the Islamic state was taken over by Hamid Khan, the Army Chief of Staff, who demands the organization of a referendum in Kashmir, which the Indian Government rejects, and thus a war begins between India and Pakistan in the Kashmir area.

As Hari Dixit finds out about the secret agreement between Pakistan and China, and as the Kingdom of Bhutan is invaded by China, India is forced to act and help its neighbor. Fortunately, the Russian president persuades the Indian prime minister to order a ceasefire. Despite this Indian ceasefire, the Chinese attack an Indian submarine and afterwards, when Taiwan seeks to affirm its independent status, it also starts a war with Taiwan. As Hari Dixit feels that China is defying everyone, he urges the military to attack the

*Chinese garrison in Namya Ra, Myanmar . . . Target Chinese supply and airbase in Lashio. Target Chinese ELINT and SIGINT station on Little Cocos Islands. Target Chinese naval ships at Hanggyi islands base.*43

These attacks enraged the Chinese and made President Tao give the order to launch nuclear warheads towards Bombay. The Chinese hoped that after firing a nuclear missile at Bombay, India would surrender, but Hari Dixit decided to launch four nuclear missiles towards “Chengdu, Beijing, Zhongnanhai and Shanghai,”44 which triggered the launch of another Chinese missile towards Delhi, where the presidential headquarters was located.

Although *Dragon Fire* is a fictional novel, it is based on real problems in South, South-East and East Asia, and it imagines how a possible future may look. Sadly, the presented future is a post-apocalyptic one, in which a small conflict turns into a world war, where nuclear missiles fly between the belligerent nations, and nobody can stop them without risking their country joining a deadly war.

In conclusion, we need to underline that the Republic of India, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and the People’s Republic of China have frozen conflicts at the borders that can be awoken by a stray bullet fired by mistake by a soldier or just by an inappropriate word from a government official.
Although neither side will make compromises, these unsolved conflicts have caused thousands of deaths and millions of refugees during the numerous wars and border skirmishes. These victims are portrayed in literary works by brilliant authors such as Salman Rushdie, Veera Hiranandani, Kushwant Singh, Humphrey Hawksley and Jon Cleary, and the leaders of these countries should learn from past mistakes and read about World War I, the crimes committed by the Nazis during the Holocaust and the innocents killed by the Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear bombs, and find a solution to the unresolved conflicts in a peaceful way, through negotiations in which each side makes compromises. Otherwise, the post-apocalyptic world of Dragon Fire awaits us.

Notes

10. Iqbal and Hussain, 141.
18. Jacob, 17.
22. Guha, 27.
32. Singh, 52.
43. Hawksley, 337.
44. Hawksley, 351.

**Abstract**

**India’s North Border Conflicts: Between Reality and Fiction**

Ever since the Republic of India became an independent nation in 1947, the Indian state has strived to keep its territorial integrity, in spite of the numerous territorial claims made by neighboring states. Firstly, the Kashmir region is home to both Muslim and Hindu populations; therefore, when the Indian and Pakistani states were created, the region was split between the two new states. However, both states hold the belief that the entirety of the Kashmir region should be part of their territory. This situation sparked numerous local conflicts and four local wars (1947, 1965, 1971, and 1999). Secondly, another disputed area is located on the border with the People’s Republic of China, as the Chinese state does not recognize the McMahon Line, which was agreed upon by British India and Tibet. This led to the conflict in 1962 and to a tension-filled relationship between China and India. This paper approaches both the historical evolution of the conflicts and the way in which these two conflict areas are portrayed in literature. While Veera Hiranandani, in *The Night Diary* (2018), and Khushwant Singh, in *Train to Pakistan* (1956), focus on the conflicts between Muslims and Hindus after the partition of India and Pakistan, Salman Rushdie, in *Midnight’s Children* (1981), analyzes the traumas of the conflict in Kashmir. Furthermore, Jon Cleary, in *Pulse of Danger* (1966), presents the context of the Sino-Indian war. The most disturbing novel about the Indian conflicts is Humphrey Hawksley’s novel, *Dragon Fire* (2000), because the author presents an apocalyptic war between the Republic of India, on one side, and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan allied with the People’s Republic of China, on the other side.

**Keywords**

South Asia, the partition of India, the partition of Pakistan, Kashmir conflict, Aksai Chin region, trauma literature
The establishment of diplomatic relations between Romania and India, 75 years ago, marked the beginning of a long and fruitful association between the two countries. While the relations between Romania and India predate this diplomatic milestone, the formal establishment of diplomatic ties on 14 December 1948 holds great significance. The diplomatic mission of Romania in India was established in 1955, while India’s diplomatic mission in Bucharest was established in 1959. By raising diplomatic relations to the embassy level on 15 November 1957, Romania and India further solidified their commitment to strengthen bilateral cooperation across various fields. Over the years, these two countries have developed multifaceted ties, encompassing diplomacy, politics, trade, cultural exchanges, etc.
India’s Independence, Partition and Foreign Policy

The history of independent India commenced on 15 August 1947, when the nation attained its freedom. When British rule ended in 1947, the subcontinent was divided into two countries: India, with a Hindu majority, and Pakistan, with a Muslim majority. 1 Pakistan consisted of West Pakistan, now Pakistan, and East Pakistan, which became Bangladesh in 1971. 2 In July 1947, the Indian Independence Act was enacted following the partition plan, which marked the end of British suzerainty over the princely states. The princely states were given the option to determine their desired status: to align with either of the newly formed dominions or preserve their independence.

On 15 August of the same year, India achieved independence, with Viceroy Mountbatten assuming the role of governor-general and Jawaharlal Nehru becoming the prime minister. 3 The initial years of India’s independence were characterized by tumultuous events, including a significant population exchange with Pakistan, the Indo–Pakistani War of 1947, and the consolidation of over 500 princely states into a unified nation. The nation faced religious violence, terrorism and regional separatist insurgencies. India had unresolved territorial disputes with China and Pakistan that led to wars in 1947, 1965, 1971, and 1999. India was neutral in the Cold War and a leader in the Non-Alignment Movement. The aims of non-alignment, as articulated by Nehru and his successors, were to preserve India’s freedom of action internationally by refusing to align India with any bloc or alliance, particularly those led by the United States or the Soviet Union, international cooperation being a means of solving international disputes and nonviolence. It had a brief period of alignment as an ally of the former Soviet Union, while Pakistan maintained close ties with the United States and the People’s Republic of China.

After gaining independence and the partition of the territory, India wanted to reassert itself on the political scene and to “heal” itself economically. In its early international engagements, the Nehru government sought to assert its presence and enhance the prestige of India as much as possible, seeking to establish diplomatic relations with as many states as possible. 4 We have as an example the signing of diplomatic relations with Austria in 1949, with Belgium in 1947, or with the People’s Republic of China in 1950. 5 Also, India exchanged diplomatic missions at the rank of embassies with the USSR and the Czechoslovak Republic, and at the rank of legation with the People’s Republic of Hungary.
Romania on the International Stage of the 20th Century

On the other side, a crucial and defining moment for Romania’s internal policy was the signing of the 23 August 1944 act. Consequently, Romania evolved contrary to its interests, gradually establishing a political and economic regime subservient to the Soviet Union.

The Treaty of friendship, co-operation and mutual assistance between the USSR and the Romanian People’s Republic of 4 February 1948, with a validity of 20 years, provided for the obligation to consult the Soviet Government in all foreign policy issues. Through this act, Romania renounced its own foreign policy, and its diplomatic relations were completely frozen. In this context, the ties with the Western states almost ceased, and the diplomatic representations in the capital of Romania, especially the American, British, and French ones, were subjected to constant pressure from the repressive apparatus. Between 1948 and 1954, Romania’s diplomatic isolation was almost complete. Any Soviet decision was carried out without reservation.

After 1958, Romania assumed the risk of a different policy. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej’s regime began to explore the possibility of improving relations with the West. Romania concluded compensation agreements with Western governments for the goods nationalized in 1948, thus removing a major obstacle to future economic ties. Between 1960 and 1964, Romania’s leadership crystallized and defined its positions in collaboration with the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon). In order to prevent economic repercussions and economic and political isolation, measures were taken to widen the country’s economic collaboration and the alliances with developed and developing socialist countries.

In 1964, Romania signed agreements to upgrade diplomatic representations to embassy level with Sweden, Italy, Japan, the USA, and Norway. After Nicolae Ceaușescu came to power, relations with the West flourished. In 1967, relations were established with Federal Germany, and Romania was the only country within the communist bloc that maintained diplomatic relations with Israel even after the Six-Day War. 19 September 1967 marks another success of Romanian diplomacy: Corneliu Mănescu, the foreign minister at the time, is elected president of Twenty-Second Session of the United Nations General Assembly, being the first diplomat from a socialist country to occupy a position of such importance. On 14–18 May of the following year, Charles de Gaulle visited Romania, being the first French president to visit Romania.
As can be seen, the period between 1947 and 1989 is remarkably complex, with the communist leaders in Bucharest either playing the role of Moscow’s subordinates or posing as champions of national sovereignty, a relationship that brought them increased prestige and numerous economic advantages. Unfortunately, however, the foreign policy did not reflect the internal state of the country.

Diplomatic Relations between Romania and India

a. Pre–1948 Diplomatic Engagement

The relations between these two countries have a long history. Renowned Transylvanian philologist and Orientalist Alexander (Sándor) Csoma de Kőrös (1784–1842), author of the first Tibetan-English dictionary and grammar book, embarked on a journey to India in 1820 and resided in Zanskar and Calcutta for several years. His final resting place is in Darjeeling.9 Romania’s national poet, Mihai Eminescu (1850–1889), was fascinated by Indian languages and literature and translated a book on Sanskrit grammar into Romanian from German.10 Distinguished Romanian philosophers and poets, such as Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu (1838–1907), George Coșbuc (1866–1918), or Lucian Blaga (1895–1961), were profoundly impacted by their engagement with Indian philosophy and thought, which resonated in their literary works. In 1920, Prince Carol II embarked on a comprehensive tour of India, lasting five months. Additionally, Rabindranath Tagore visited Romania in 1926, where he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Bucharest.11 Mircea Eliade studied philosophy and Sanskrit at Calcutta University (1928–1931).

In 1931, three Romanian aviators, George-Valentin Bibescu (1880–1941), Major Traian Burtuloiu (1894–1974), and Lieutenant Radu Beller (1898–1931) attempted to circumnavigate the world by plane. On this occasion, they arrived in India (Beller died there). The aviators told in several interviews in the Bucharest press what the Indian world means, arousing the interest of Romanians, especially those eager for adventure.12 Moreover, Constantin Brâncuși admired traditional Indian art and wanted to visit this faraway country. Brâncuși brought with him from Europe three birds that were to decorate the mausoleum of the Maharajah’s wife, apparently designed by the Romanian sculptor as a unique monument.13 Mahatma Gandhi, who played an essential role in the struggle for independence, is mentioned in Romanian magazines from the first half of the 20th century.
The diplomatic archives of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs contain information about exporting Indian Bikaneri wool to Romania. The Indian publication *Register of Indian Manufactures, Exporters and Importers* talks about Romanian companies and goods in order to establish commercial relations between Romania and India and there are articles from the international and Romanian press regarding the economic and political situation of India.

b. Establishing Diplomatic Relations (1948–1957)

In 1948, the main actors in establishing diplomatic relations between Romania and India were the Indian ambassador in Ankara, Diwan Chaman Lall (1892–1973), the Romanian ambassador in Ankara, Grigore Moisil (1906–1973), and Romania’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the same year, the Government of India addressed the Government of the Romanian People’s Republic (RPR), through its representative in Ankara, to establish diplomatic relations and exchange missions. Thus, negotiations took place in Ankara between the ambassador of the RPR in Turkey and the ambassador of India in Turkey. The ambassador of India communicated that India wanted to establish diplomatic relations with Romania. Later, the Embassy of the Romanian People’s Republic in Ankara communicated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, through a telegram, the desire of the Indian ambassador. Negotiations were held between the two ambassadors, in which the Indian ambassador proposed the establishment of embassies and consulates in Bucharest and Delhi.

On 18 November 1948, I. Crișan (in charge of ad-interim affairs, counselor of the Legation) asked the Romanian Embassy in Ankara to send the Indian ambassador a letter with the following text in French:

> Regarding the conversation with Ambassador Moisil as well as your letter of 6 October 1948, on behalf of my Government, I have the honor to ask you to convey to your Government that the Government of the RPR agrees with the establishment of diplomatic relations between the RPR and India. I take this opportunity to renew the assurance of my high esteem to Your Excellency.17

In the same month, the Indian Embassy in Ankara forwarded the reply of the RPR Embassy in Ankara containing:

1. The Government of India proposes to be published simultaneously on December 7, 1948, the following text: *To strengthen the friendly relations between them,*
the Government of India and the RPR decided to establish diplomatic relations at the level of Legation.

2. The formal date of establishment of diplomatic relations is usually the date of publication of the announcement. The Government of India also agrees to any date the Romanian Government chooses (possibly after 7 December).

3. The lack of staff will delay the installation of the Indian Legation in Bucharest for some time. However, the Government of India is also pleased to receive the Romanian envoy. The Romanian Legation will temporarily install the entrance of a convenient residence.

4. Urgent reply requested by 7 December 1948, to be communicated to the Government of India at least 3 or 4 days before the announcement date.\textsuperscript{18}

Finally, on 14 December 1948, diplomatic relations were established at legation level. The Romanian journal \textit{Scânteia} (“central organ of the Romanian Workers Party”) published the following news:

\textit{Establishment of diplomatic relations between the Government of the RPR and the Indian Govt. The Government of the RPR and the Indian Government, in the desire to strengthen the ties between the two countries, decided, by mutual agreement, to establish diplomatic relations, through diplomatic offices, with the rank of Legation.}

Consequently, diplomatic relations were established between Romania and India at legation level, but not at that of missions.

The negotiations continued in the following years, stabilizing diplomatic relations between these two countries. In a document located in the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, we find the justification of the Romanian diplomats to establish diplomatic relations at the embassy level with India:

\textit{Anglo-American imperialists are making efforts to keep India as close as possible to the imperialist camp and to turn it into a base of aggression against the USSR and the people’s democratic countries, using the economic and human resources as well as India’s strategic position in Asia, near the USSR and the Chinese Republic. Due to the internal political situation, the difficult economic situation, the cruel local and colonial exploitation, the famine and the struggle of the masses, as well as the neighborhood with the USSR and the Chinese Republic, India has a different position among the countries of the imperialist camp than the other imperialist countries. By establishing effective diplomatic relations with India, the RPR can prove that it is an active factor in the camp of peace, providing aid and encourage-}
ment in the work and struggle of the masses for bread, peace and independence. To achieve this goal, the proposal of the Ambassador of India in Tehran should be used for economic exchanges between the RPR and India. The Minister of the RPR in Tehran may also use this opportunity to discuss this issue, reminding the Indian ambassador that formal diplomatic ties already exist between Romania and India since 14 December 1948.

The existence of a RPR diplomatic mission in India provides a valuable and necessary connection. We would make ourselves felt in this space and manage to create economic ties more efficiently in India and the neighboring countries in Asia. Delhi is an important political and diplomatic center today. British and American imperialists are making serious efforts to counter the liberation movement of the masses. Sending an RPR diplomatic mission to India would strengthen the peace camp headed by the USSR and, together with the missions of the other people’s democratic countries, would constitute aid in the struggle of the masses for national liberation, helping to expose the fake democracy of the Nehru government by enlightening the masses.19

In 1951, the RPR Government wanted to send a diplomatic mission to India, but to no avail, as, according to the Indian Government, a Romanian legation would have nowhere to settle. Two years later, the Indian chargé d’affaires in Prague, during a reception, entered into a discussion with Ştefan Cleja, ambassador of Romania in Berlin, expressing his desire to buy from Romania for India machines (tractors) and wheat in exchange for textiles, jute, and skins, adding that “these relations could develop if we had diplomatic offices,” expressing at the same time the hope that this would happen. He mentioned that due to financial difficulties, for now, they had few diplomatic offices, and some offices of several countries had problems.20

On 25 March 1954, the president of the RPR Trade Delegation, engineer M. Ciobanu, was called to the Soviet Embassy, where Shiborin, minister-counselor and first collaborator of Ambassador Mikhail A. Menshikov, informed him of the encrypted telegram from Bucharest, instructing him to make official approaches to the Indian Government, in order to establish diplomatic relations between the two countries and to communicate that the Government of the RPR agrees to establish an embassy in India. In connection with this assignment, he requested the support of the Soviet Embassy. Thus, together with Shiborin, they decided that the upcoming statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would indicate that during the commercial negotiations with the Indian Government, the RPR commercial delegation came to understand that the Indian Government would be willing to favorably consider a proposal from the RPR Government for the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two
countries and that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India would convey this to Mr. Ratan Kumar Nehru, who holds the position of secretary-general of the Ministry of External Affairs.

In the afternoon of 26 March, they received from Mr. Vilkov, first secretary of the Soviet Embassy, a draft of the aide-mémoire for the audience they were going to have with Mr. Nehru. They requested that the audience be on 27 March, but Mr. Nehru was away from Delhi,21 scheduling the audience only for 2 April 1954.

After listening to what M. Ciobanu had to say, R. K. Nehru asked who had given them the understanding that a request from the Romanian Government regarding diplomatic relations would be accepted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of India. He was showed the statements of some Indian dignitaries during the negotiations held in India for the conclusion of the commercial agreement. At the end of the discussion, R. K. Nehru indicated that he agreed with the proposal of the Romanian Government, as he also knew the point of view of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, namely, that India wanted to have diplomatic relations with as many countries as possible. R. K. Nehru pointed out the problems facing India in the case of establishing a diplomatic mission, namely, the need for more personnel and the financial issue. The request of the Romanian Government was to be analyzed only after the approval of the prime minister.

Meeting later with R. K. Nehru at a reception,22 Mr. Ciobanu was assured that he would soon receive an answer from J. Nehru. Indeed, the next day, Mr. Ahuja, private secretary of Mr. Pillai, secretary general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told him that the prime minister was in principle in agreement with the Romanian Government’s proposal and that the Indian Embassy in Moscow had been instructed to discuss some details with the Romanian Embassy in Moscow. After R. K. Nehru informed him of the agreement of the Indian Government regarding the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, Ciobanu visited the heads of friendly diplomatic missions: General Yuan Chung-Hsien, the ambassador of the People’s Republic of China, Mr. Ladislav Durdil, the ambassador of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, whom he informed about the steps taken by the rpr Government and about the agreement received from the Indian Government.

On 22 April 1954, he sent a report to Simion Bughici, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in which he talked about the steps taken in Delhi to conclude diplomatic relations between India and the rpr.23

After completing all these steps, diplomatic relations at embassy level were to be officially established. However, this happened only in 1957. The information appeared in Scînteia:
In order to further strengthen the amicable relations existing between the Romanian People’s Republic and the Republic of India, the governments of the two countries have decided to raise their diplomatic representatives to the rank of embassies.

By a decree of the Presidium of the Great National Assembly, Nicolae Cioroianu was appointed ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of the Romanian People’s Republic in the Republic of India.24

c. The Evolution of Diplomatic Relations After 1957: Political, Economic and Cultural Exchanges

After 1957, the diplomatic relations between the two countries registered a significant increase through the exchange of visits at the political and cultural levels, the signing of some economic agreements and the conclusion of some essential understandings.

Chivu Stoica, the prime minister of Romania between 1955 and 1961, along with the Vice-President of the Council of Ministers, Emil Bodnăraș, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Avram Bunaciu, visited India in March 1958.25 In the same year, the Indian politician Madan Mohan Malaviya visited Romania. In July 1959, the RPR received an Indian parliamentary delegation. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, and Corneliu Mănescu visited India between 12 and 20 October 1962, being invited by the Indian Government.26 Two years later, Gheorghe Apostol, the first vice-president of the Council of Ministers, attended Jawaharlal Nehru’s funeral.27

The President of India, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, visited Romania between 7 and 10 October 1965, when he showed India’s position on the Kashmir issue and asked for Romania’s help.28 An important visit for diplomatic relations was the one made by Indira Gandhi on 16–19 October 1967. The Indian Prime Minister invited Nicolae Ceaușescu and the President of the Council of Ministers to visit India.29 Ceaușescu honored the invitation in 1969.30

Relations developed with the signing of several economic agreements. As early as 1957, Romania and India were trading, iron ore from Romania going to India, for the building of the railway system.31 In 1962, The Romanian-Indian Trade and Payments Agreement was concluded, which stipulated that Romania exported to India machinery, industrial machinery, means of transport, metallurgical and chemical products, and imported iron ore, tea, coffee, rice, jute, textiles, and leather products. India began receiving Romanian tractors the following year.32 We can also mention the Scientific and Technological Cooperation Agreement between the Government of Romania and the Government of
the Republic of India of 18 October 1993, the Commercial Economic Co-operation Agreement of 23 October 2006 and the Joint Declaration on the Establishment of an Extended Partnership between Romania and India, signed by the ministers of foreign affairs of the two states in New Delhi on 8 March 2013.

From a cultural perspective, we can cite several agreements and visits. India and Romania signed a Cultural Agreement in 1957, which provided for co-operation in culture, science, education, literature, and arts. In 1958, several special events took place, such as the medical conferences held by the Academician Ștefan Nicolau in New Delhi, the exhibition of Romanian folk art by the All India Fine Arts & Crafts Society in Allahabad, and the intense activity of the Association of Indo-Romanian Friendship. In the same year, there was an exchange of cultural visits between Romania and India (a seminar on Indian music, the conference of the painter B. C. Sanyal). The following year, the Țăndărică Puppet Theater toured Australia, New Zealand, India, Indonesia, Burma, and Iraq.

Different areas of specialization were organized in Romania for Indian citizens; for example, Professor M. P. Jasyswal came to Romania as a lecturer of Hindi language and literature at the University of Bucharest. Also, in this area, we mention the scientific researcher and teacher of the Hindi language, Laurențiu Theban, who studied the Indo-Aryan languages, and engineer Ion Precup, who was affiliated to the Indian Petroleum Institute Dehra Dun.

In 1966, the Romanian Embassy corresponded with various institutions in the country, such as the Ministry of Education and the Romanian Academy, regarding sending the magazines România azi (Romania today) and Revista Română (The Romanian review) to universities in India. In the same year, there were visits of famous personalities from the cultural field, such as the secretary for cultural relations Inam Rahman to the Socialist Republic of Romania, as well as the visit of the choreographer Petre Bodeuș to India. Internships were also offered to Indian nationals in Romania.

The Cultural Exchange Program was developed and implemented in the following years. More recently, cultural exchanges have also been promoted through initiatives outside the official framework of bilateral cooperation. A Culture, Education, Youth and Sports Cooperation Program between India and Romania for 2011–2015 was signed in Bucharest in March 2011.

Between 1974 and 2015, a Romanian language lectureship functioned at Delhi University. The lectureship was restored in 2022. Hindi language courses are offered at the University of Bucharest, biannually. Moreover, in 2014, the Cluj Center for Indian Studies was inaugurated at Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca.
Conclusion

Over the years, Romania and India have collaborated in various cultural, educational, and economic fields. Diplomatic relations between Romania and India continue and develop even today. The existence of a Romanian embassy in New Delhi, as well as an Indian embassy in Bucharest, proves the desire, but also the necessity, to create a close link between the two countries. Romania and India are two very different countries (culturally, economically, and socially), but they combined common interests to create a commitment that lasts to this day.

Notes

21. The movements for the union with India of the Indian population from the French colony of Pondicherry began during that period.
22. This is given in honor of the Legation of the Hungarian People’s Republic in India on the Liberation Day of the Hungarian People’s Republic, 4 April 1954.
40. Laurențiu Theban (1940–1921) was co-founder, together with Acad. Alexandru Rosetti and Prof. Dr. Cicerone Poghirc, of the Department of Hindi Language and Literature, established at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures following the approval of the Ministry of Education in the academic year 1969–1970.
Abstract
75 Years of Diplomatic Relations between Romania and India

After gaining independence (1947) and following the partition of its vast territory, India wanted to reassert itself on the political scene and develop economically. One step towards achieving these goals was establishing diplomatic relations with as many countries as possible. The period that followed saw numerous diplomatic agreements concluded by India with countries from Asia and Europe. Diplomatic relations with Romania began in the first half of the 20th century and they continue today on a political, economic and cultural level. Romania and India established diplomatic relations in 1948, at legation level, and in 1957 relations were raised to embassy level. Romania’s diplomatic office in India opened in 1955, and India’s in Romania in 1959. From the discussions and negotiations, to the cultural and political relations established, the history of the beginning of diplomatic relations between Romania and India deserves to be analyzed and discussed. The existence of the Romanian Embassy in New Delhi and of the Indian Embassy in Bucharest proves the desire, but also the necessity, to create a close link between the two countries. In the last 75 years, Romania and India managed to follow common interests and created a strong partnership.

Keywords
Romania, India, diplomatic relations, cultural cooperation, history, partnership
Among the members of the Moldavian prince’s council during the Late Middle Ages, the title of starost stands out in the nomenclature of documented high offices, mentioned for the first time at the beginning of the 15th century during the rule of Alexander the Good (1400–1432). For the second half of the 15th century, this term has been acknowledged in current historiography as belonging to the governors of the northern counties, on the borders with the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and of Putna County, mentioned for the first time in the context of the conflicts that broke out between Moldavia and Wallachia during the reign of Stephen the Great (1457–1504). Taking into account the fact that the title of pârcălab and starost were applied to the same persons, responsible for the governance of the aforementioned lands, this historical fact became a commonly accepted one for the entire period of documented mentions of this title during the medieval and early modern era in the history of the Principality of Moldavia.

The main objectives of the article are to identify what characteristics defined the starosts in the first half of the 15th century and to specify the responsibilities and the territories entrusted to the starosts in the abovementioned period.

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However, applying this observation retroactively to all the mentions of the Moldavian starosts made in the first half of the 15th century may not seem as justified at first sight, as is the case with the time period of Stephen the Great and his successors, since there are mentions of starosts with a high-ranking status in the prince’s council. For this reason, the purpose of the present study is to determine the role of these particular starosts in the political-administrative system of Moldavia before the reign of Stephen the Great. The main objectives of the article are to identify what characteristics defined the starosts in the first half of the 15th century and to specify the responsibilities and the territories entrusted to the starosts in the abovementioned period.

The Origins of Starosts in the Moldavian Administrative System

Before analyzing all early mentions of the starosts in the council of the Moldavian voivodes, it is necessary to take a look at the origins of this title. Coming from the old Slavic language, starosta experienced a special evolution in the political landscape of the Kingdom of Poland and the Principality of Halych-Volhynia. Originally designating the leaders of village communes and low-ranking administrative units in both medieval Slavic states, the notion of starosta experienced a significant change in its meaning in the 14th century. In the case of Halych-Volhynia, the rule of Starost Dedko in Halych became a pivotal moment for the evolution of this political institution in the context of the conflict between Poland, Hungary, the Golden Horde, and Lithuania for the Halych-Volhynian inheritance between the years 1340 and 1349. Although this episode was a short one, it had repercussions in the subsequent history of Halych and Volhynia, because the reimagined version of the institution of the starost was inherited and further developed by the royal administrations of Casimir III the Great and Louis I of Hungary. As for the Kingdom of Poland, the starosts became the main instrument for consolidating royal power during the reigns of Władysław I Łokietek and Casimir III the Great, appointed as royal representatives with wide administrative and judicial powers in the Polish voivodships, including the newly incorporated Red Ruthenia and Podolia in the second half of the 14th century, which were bordering the Principality of Moldavia.

The similar mission of representing the monarch’s power in the field in the cases of the Polish and Moldavian starosts led to the opinions regarding the Polish origin of this office, which designated the prince’s representatives on the northern border of Moldavia. Regardless of whether the term “starost” is a borrowing from the Polish or Halych administrative circles, this Slavic notion
was essentially a synonym for the terms “pârcălab” and “capitaneus” (of Hungarian and Latin origin, respectively) utilized in the Moldavian acts. Internal documents of the Polish chancellery confirm the direct relationship between “starosts” and “capitaneus,” while official Latin documents tied to the Moldavian–Polish relations in the 15th century directly indicate the translation of the title “pârcălab” or “starost” into “capitaneus.” The latter term was also used in the administrative system of the peripheral lands in the Kingdom of Hungary, such as in the case of Maramureș (Máramaros) and the captaincy of Belgrade during the 15th century. The precedent of the “capitaneus” in their role as territorial officials in the Kingdom of Hungary and especially in Maramureș could be the main source through which this title was utilized in the early days of the Moldavian chancellery.

In conclusion, the Moldavian starosts served as territorial dignitaries with the goal of representing the central authority in the regions even before the reign of Stephen the Great, and had a similar role to the Moldavian pârcălabs. The origin of the term could be the result of the influence coming from the administrative practices of the time in Maramureș, Halych-Volhynia, or the Kingdom of Poland.

The Four Starosts of Moldavia before the Rule of Stephen the Great

AFTER REVIEWING the conclusions accepted in historiography regarding the meaning of “pârcălab,” “starost” and “capitaneus” in the Slavonic and Latin documents of the Moldavian and Polish chancellery, we can proceed to the direct analysis of the mentions of starosts in the prince’s council before the reign of Stephen the Great, comparing their position in relation to the total number of the councilors. The first mention of a dignitary with the title of starost belongs to Starost Dragoș in the act of 28 June 1401, better known in the internal documents as Dragoș Viteazul (the Brave). Although his first mention dates from 30 March 1392, D. Constantinescu believed that Dragoș had been in office since the rule of Peter I Mușat (1375–1391), while M. Costâșescu draw parallels between the multiple toponyms of Drăgușeni in Moldavia, which were connected with the name of this dignitary, and the frequent use of the name Dragoș in Maramureș in the 14th–15th centuries.

This boyar had a long political career, having served for almost 40 years as a member of the prince’s council during the reigns of Roman I (1392–1394), Stephen I (1394–1399) and Alexander the Good. The document of 28 June
1401 is the only evidence of Dragoș the Brave as a starost, placed first among the other members of the prince’s council. Given the fact that Dragoș appears in the same leading position as early as 1400, it is most likely that he supported Alexander the Good since the beginning of his rule in Moldavia, which allowed him to increase his rank in the new prince’s council as a reward, and obtained the title of starost for a short period. At some point after 28 June 1401, Dragoș the Brave lost the title of starost, but he remained in the leading positions within Alexander the Good’s council, having been later appointed pârcălab of Neamț, between 8 March 1407 and 16 September 1408. Judging from the history of Dragoș the Brave’s mentions in the princely charters (fig. 1), he kept his high-ranking positions in the council in relation to the total number of present members; however, Dragoș occupied the first place among the councilors of Alexander the Good only during the time when he served as a starost.

Fig. 1. Dragoș the Brave in the Moldavian charters issued between 30 March 1392 and 15 June 1431

Giurgiu of Frătăuți is the next and the longest known holder of the title of starost in the first half of the 15th century. He was mentioned for the first time in the act issued on 18 November 1392 during the reign of Roman I. This Moldavian boyar was one of the five sons of Dragomir Albul and Albul’s grandson. M. Costăchescu believed that the latter two witnessed the founding of the Principality of Moldavia, while I. C. Miclescu-Prăjescu considered the possibility that this family from Maramureș had settled east of the Carpathians before
or after Bogdan I’s arrival here, but he noticed that Albul and his son Dragomir were among the closest supporters of the first Moldavian voivode. L.-V. Lefter brought to attention the connections between these Moldavian boyars and the Romanian noble Stan Albu from Maramureș, who was the master of a knezate in the Cosău Valley. The Romanian historian explains the loss of half of Stan Albu’s possessions after Louis I of Hungary’s intervention by the departure of his brother or cousin to Moldavia, alongside Bogdan I.

Giurgiu of Frătăuți’s first appearance on 20 July 1404 as a member of the prince’s council coincides with him obtaining the title of starost, previously held by Dragoș the Brave. From that moment on, he enjoyed a very long political career, serving for 35 years in the prince’s council during the reigns of Alexander the Good and his sons, Iliaș I and Stephen II. The evolution of his mentions in the acts of the Moldavian chancellery deserves special attention, given the multitude of testimonies about this dignitary from the first half of the 15th century.

“Giurgiu staroste” was systematically listed in the first place among the members of the prince’s council between 1404 and 1408 (fig. 2), reconfirming the high significance of this office, as it had been with Dragoș the Brave. After the last mention of him holding this title, Giurgiu of Frătăuți continued to be present among the councilors of Alexander the Good, but during the years 1409–1415 a gradual fall in his position is observed, culminating with him oc-

![Graph showing Giurgiu of Frătăuți’s mentions in the Moldavian charters issued between 20 July 1404 and 8 October 1408.](image)
occupying the 10th place towards the end of this period (fig. 3). If we relate his position to the total number of members of the prince’s council, the year 1413 can easily be called the lowest point of his career, when he appeared in the last place among other councilors. During this time, Giurgiu was given various political tasks, being mentioned on 22 September 1411 as a *vornic* and on 3 April 1412 as a *hotarnic* (a person appointed by the prince to set the boundaries of disputed landed estates; this task was usually offered to people that held other offices in the prince’s council, since it often required long travels from the Moldavian capital to different regions). These records prove that Giurgiu of Frătăuți did not hold the office of starost during the years 1409–1415, having been periodically entrusted with other missions on behalf of the voivode.

After a period of absence in the documents of the Moldavian chancellery, Giurgiu of Frătăuți reappeared in the second place in the prince’s council on 15 January 1418, while in the princely charter issued on 23 April 1420 he was once again referred to as “Giurgiu staroste.” From that moment on and until the document issued by Iliâș I and Stephen II on 27 August 1436, Giurgiu of Frătăuți remained an active high-ranking official in the council, but it was never specified what kind of title he held during all this time. Until the death of Alexander the Good, the dignitary’s positions fluctuated in comparison to his colleagues from the 2nd to the 7th place (fig. 4). Taking into account the peculiar traditions practiced by Alexander the Good’s chancellery (which rarely named the offices held by most of the boyars present in the council), as well
as the absence of any other starosts during this time, we can assume that for the rest of Alexander the Good’s reign and during the first reigns of Iliaș I (1432–1433) and Stephen II (1433–1435), Giurgiu of Frătăuți continued to be a starost without any interruptions. An indirect clue in favor of this hypothesis is the much later mention of Giurgiu of Frătăuți’s son, Mihul Starostici. His nickname came from the eponymous title of starost and it suggests that his father served in this office for a very long time—so much so that this fact was commemorated in the act issued by Peter Aron on 5 June 1456, 16 years after the death of Giurgiu of Frătăuți. As for when exactly Giurgiu returned to his position as a starost, in 1418 or 1420, we shall return to possible explanations later in this study.

After the death of Alexander the Good, Giurgiu of Frătăuți became one of the leading officials during the first reigns of Iliaș I and Stephen II. The latter ruler tried to win the sympathies of the old dignitary’s family by offering to Danco, the son of Giurgiu, the village of Minăuți together with four Tartar fees as a gift on 9 November 1433, but despite his high position and the attention he received, Giurgiu of Frătăuți was mentioned for the last time in Stephen’s council on 10 February 1434. Due to the fact that the old boyar was later mentioned again, on 8 October 1435, during the reign of Iliaș I, we can assume that at some point Giurgiu of Frătăuți switched sides and joined the camp of Alexander the Good’s eldest son, supporting his efforts to regain the throne between 1434 and 1435.
With the return of Iliaș I as the prince of Moldavia in 1435, Giurgiu of Frătăuți not only resumed his previous duties, but he also became the leader of the new princely council—a fact that remained unchanged even after the compromise between Iliaș I and Stephen II in 1436 (fig. 5). Although he was mentioned in many charters only by his name, the appearance of “Giurgiu staroste” three times on 27 August 1436, 12 March 1437, and 18 May 1438, as well as the fact that he kept the leading position in the joint council of the two voivodes, indicate that he maintained his office unchanged between 1435 and 1439. Giurgiu of Frătăuți’s last mention in Iliaș’s council dates from 28 October 1439, after which the old dignitary most likely died.

In addition to Dragoș the Brave and Giurgiu of Frătăuți, among the dignitaries who served as starosts before the reign of Stephen the Great we can also include Giula capitaneus and Mihail “capytaneus moldaviensis.” Although Giula and Mihail were mentioned under this title only once, the former being among the Moldavian boyars who swore the oath of fealty to the Polish King Władysław II Jagiełło (1386–1434) at Lwów on 27 September 1387, and the latter among the members of the prince’s council who approved the safe-conduct offered to the duke of Podolia, Spytko of Melsztyn, on 3 September 1397, both can be put in the same category as Dragoș the Brave and Giurgiu of Frătăuți, as holders of the office of starost, for three reasons: 1) Giula and
Mihail appeared in the Latin texts of the oath of fealty in Lwów and the safe-conduct issued for Spytko of Melsztyn with the title of “capitaneus,” which is a synonym for both “starost” or “pârcălab” in Moldavian internal sources and for “starosta” in the administrative system of the Kingdom of Poland, denoting the territorial aspect of this governorship; 2) Giula and Mihail held the first place among the boyars of Peter Mușat and Stephen I, just like Dragoș the Brave and Giurgiu of Frâțăuți would later appear in the same position in the first half of the 15th century; 3) Giula and Mihail are the only officials with the title of “capitaneus” in Peter Mușat’s and Stephen I’s councils, similarly to the cases of Dragoș the Brave and Giurgiu of Frâțăuți. These observed similarities can be considered sufficient to support the equivalence of this title held by Giula and Mihail with that obtained later by Dragoș and Giurgiu.

As it has been established in the case of Giurgiu of Frâțăuți’s ancestors, Giula was also closely tied to the Moldavian elites from the times of the founding of the principality. His only other documented mention appears in the earliest charter of the Moldavian chancellery, on 1 May 1384, where he was named “dominus Jule.” He was the owner of a feudal residence in Giulești (located in Boroaia commune, Suceava County, Romania), whose ruins were dated to the second half of the 14th century.44 L. Bătrîna and A. Bătrîna see in this high-ranking official one of the many Romanians from Maramureș who joined Bogdan I during his departure to Moldavia. The main arguments brought by the two historians are the name of Giula himself, which alludes to his kinship with the Giulești family, who were Romanian nobles in Maramureș, and his personal seal, present on the act of the oath of fealty taken in Lwów on 26 September 1387, which contains similar elements with the seals discovered in the necropolis of the Maramureș nobles.45

Thus, after having surveyed all mentions of Giula capitaneus, Mihail capitaneus, Dragoș the Brave and Giurgiu of Frâțăuți, we can proceed to some preliminary conclusions about the character of the office of starost in the Principality of Moldavia at the end of the 14th century—the first half of the 15th century. Having been documented between 1387 and 1439, this territorial governorship was most probably offered to distinguished boyars in the prince’s council, which underlined the starost’s special status within the political-administrative system of Moldavia. During the reigns of the first Moldavian voivodes, documentary records indicate the presence of only one dignitary with this title, often joining the ranks of the most prominent officials during the reigns of Peter Mușat, Stephen I, Alexander the Good, Iliaș I, and Stephen II. Some of the holders of this office, like Giurgiu of Frâțăuți and Giula capitaneus, were directly related to those Romanians from Maramureș who joined Bogdan I and contributed to the founding of the east-Carpathian principality. However, all men-
tions of Giula capitaneus, Mihail capitaneus, Dragoș the Brave and Giurgiu of Frătăuți do not provide a direct answer to the main question: between 1387 and 1439, what territories were under the direct responsibility of the starosts in Moldavia?

The Two Hypotheses: Starosts in *terra Sepeniczensi* or in Cetatea Albă?

The solution may be provided by the late mentions of Giurgiu of Frătăuți with the title of starost. His presence in the leading positions of the prince’s council during the second reign of Iliaș I (1435–1436), his appearance in the acts issued exclusively by the same prince during his joint reign with Stephen II (1436–1443) and his absence among the witnesses to the charters issued by the second son of Alexander the Good confirm that he continued to exercise the prerogatives of starost even after the division of the subject territories between the two sons of Alexander the Good. Because of this fact, Giurgiu and, in retrospect, his predecessors could hold the office of starost in the territories of the Upper Country, which were still under the direct responsibility of Iliaș I, and whose territorial dignitaries also appeared in the documents issued by the voivode of Suceava. This considerably narrows the probable size of the lands under the jurisdiction of the four starosts and excludes other lands in the Lower Country, whose rulers are not mentioned in the documents, such as the pârcălabs responsible for the fortress of Chilia (Kilia) or the area of the Moldavian–Wallachian border between the curve of the Carpathians and the course of the Danube.

Reviewing all the documentary mentions of Dragoș the Brave and Giurgiu of Frătăuți during their service as starosts, it is possible to exclude other governorships held by their colleagues present at the same time in the prince’s council. Thus, in various Moldavian internal documents we note the presence of the pârcălabs of Hotin (Khotyn), Țețina (Tsetsyno), Neamț and Dorohoi, the vornics of Suceava and Siret, together with the two aforementioned starosts. Due to the fact that there are no known examples of duplication of the holders of territorial offices during the reign of Alexander the Good, we can assume that the starosts during this time were not responsible for the lands and towns mentioned above. The same can be accepted for the cases of Old Orhei and Soroca, whose rulers in the prince’s council appear for the first time in documents only during the reign of Stephen the Great.

A tempting answer would be to identify the area of the Moldavian starosts’ responsibility with recently acquired territories, at least since the rule of Peter.
Mușat, when Giula capitaneus was already in office. Such a scenario seems to have happened in Putna County, whose territories were contested during the 15th century by the Moldavian and Wallachian voivodes, until the conflict was solved in favor of Stephen the Great by 1484. However, equating the title of starost with the newly annexed territories to the Principality of Moldavia is ruled out by a closer examination. The first mentions of the Putna starosts were made six decades after the end of the Moldavian–Wallachian border conflicts: on 30 April 1546 the Moldavian prince Peter Rareș offered the Șendrești village on the Putna River to Giurgea Bolea, the starost of Putna, while his son, Toader Bolea, served in the same office between 12 November 1552 and 24 April 1553. Although these late appearances of the starosts of Putna do not immediately rule out the possibility of their existence since the rule of Stephen the Great, the mention of Mihul, the pârcălab of Crăciuna on 13 May 1484, proves the initial presence of another territorial governorship in the Vrancea region after the stabilization of the Moldavian–Wallachian border along the Milcov River and suggests a later reorganization of Putna County, led by a starost. Thus, starosts cannot be linked to a recently integrated region in Moldavia without further documented evidence.

This contradiction did not stop the searches for a starost institution on the other side of the Moldavian border with the Kingdom of Poland, special attention being given to the case of the Șipeniț (Schipenitz, Shypyntsi) region. In recent historiography an attempt to explain the significance and prerogatives of starosts in the late 14th and early 15th century was made by Constantin Burac. The Romanian historian believed that after the Moldavian princes extended their control over the terra Sepeniczensi, they began to appoint a starost in the region from among their own relatives. Moreover, C. Burac also adds to the list of the Șipeniț starosts the name of a certain “Costea the Wallachian,” who swore allegiance to the king of Poland in 1402. In the original text of the document, this Costea appears without any mention of a title, while in the Moldavian internal documents of the time there are no indications in favor of identifying Costea as a starost. The Romanian historian does not offer a definitive answer regarding the main residence of the Șipeniț starosts, remarking that it declined over time and was eventually replaced by the dignitaries sent to Hotin and Țețina, which “not only borrowed the name of the office, but also its duties.” According to C. Burac, the starosts of terra Sepeniczensi disappear in the administrative-territorial system of the northern Moldavian borders after 13 December 1433.

The hypothesis regarding the association of the first Moldavian starosts with the Șipeniț region due to its later integration into the voivodeship founded by Bogdan I has some flaws. Firstly, there is the problem of the main residence
for such an administrative unit on the northern borders of Moldavia. Out of the three main known centers of the Șipeniț region, the starosts of this land could not govern from Hotin or Țețina, where we have early mentions of local governors present among the members of the prince’s council. Taking into consideration the fact that the practice of having two pârcălabs and starosts in the main fortresses of Moldavia became common during the rule of Stephen the Great, the residence of a starost in the Șipeniț region could only be the town of Khmeliv, whose officials are not identified in the texts of princely charters. Little is known about the past of this town, given the lack of historical sources regarding this subject. It was mentioned for the first time together with Țețina in the message of the Moldavian nobles addressed to the Polish King Władysław II Jagiello in 1395 on the occasion of the planned meeting with Stephen I. This town appears in other later documentary sources, such as the Moldavian–Polish border treaty of 13 December 1433 between Władysław II and Stephen II, as well as in the act of cession of the Șipeniț region to Poland by Iliaș I, of 23 September 1436. The last mention of Khmeliv is the document issued by Maria Holszańska, the wife of Iliaș I, and Manoil Grecul, the pârcălab of Hotin, who offered to Poland this town together with the rest of the Șipeniț region. After 1444 there are no more indications of the existence of Khmeliv: on 1 April 1457, Peter Aron proposed to the Podolian and Red Russian starosts the appointment of Polish governors only in Hotin and Cernăuți in the context of the future conflict for the Moldavian throne with Stephen the Great, confirming indirectly the disappearance of this center of the Șipeniț region throughout the previous 13 years.

The identification of the territories subordinated to the starosts in 1387–1439 with the fortress of Khmeliv is supported by several arguments. First of all, the chronological interval of the activity of this town coincides with the documentary mentions of the four starosts. The disappearance of any other holders of the title of starost after the death of Giurgiu of Frătăuți in the following few years could be explained by the outbreak of the fight between the pretenders to the Moldavian throne, when Khmeliv could have been abandoned or destroyed during the military clashes. In addition, the very notion of a “starost” can be easily associated with a town on the border with the Kingdom of Poland, from where the title of this territorial governorship may have originated and was later extended in the years of Stephen the Great’s reign to the princely officials of Hotin, Cernăuți, and Soroca.

However, the connection between Giula capitaneus, Mihail capitaneus, Dragoș the Brave, and Giurgiu of Frătăuți with Khmeliv has some flaws. First of all, it is not possible to exactly assess the real political and administrative value of this town in the eyes of the Moldavian rulers, because its ruins have not been
discovered yet. The location of Khmeliv in the Șipeniț region, through which passed the main commercial artery between the Principality of Moldavia and the commercial centers of Lwów and Kraków, could justify its high status, so much so that any dignitary appointed in this town obtained or already held the highest rank in the prince’s council, but even in this case there are two counter-arguments against locating the main residence of the four starosts in Khmeliv. Firstly, all mentions of Khmeliv in the Moldavian–Polish bilateral agreements place this town behind the other two centers of the Șipeniț region, Hotin and Țețina, suggesting a lower political, military or economic value in comparison with its counterparts. Secondly, this hypothesis would indicate that the Șipeniț region was already part of the Moldavian lands at the time of Peter Mușat’s oath of allegiance to the king of Poland in Lwów in 1387. However, doubts have recently been expressed in Romanian historiography regarding such a scenario: in his study about the evolution of the Moldavian–Polish border, A. Pinzar argues that the Șipeniț region was offered to Moldavia after 1395 by Władysław II Jagiełło in exchange for the abandonment of the debt payment offered earlier by Peter Mușat to his Polish liege in 1388.

C. Burac’s assumptions also contain a major flaw in adopting the vision of I. I. Nistor and T. Bălan about the origins of the title of starost from a hypothetical voivodeship of Șipeniț, considered to be a political entity that had existed before the foundation of Moldavia and the main cause of the battle of Plonini (1368) between the voivodes Peter and Stephen, the latter supported by his allies from Poland. At the same time, however, other contemporary historians, such as C. Cojocariu and A. Pinzar, question the existence of such an independent voivodeship between the Dniester and the Prut. The Anonymous chronicle of Kraków, which covers the period between the 13th and the early 17th centuries and of which a copy translated into French was written towards the end of the 17th century or at the beginning of the following century (first brought to the attention of Romanian scholars by C. Rezachevici), refutes this old view of interwar historiography, showing clearly that the two brothers, Peter and Stephen, were in fact direct nephews of Bogdan I and could not have been the leaders of a state independent from the Principality of Moldavia. Thus, there were no actual reasons to create a special territorial-administrative unit headed by a starost in parallel with the Hotin and Țețina pârcălbs, at least in the manner proposed earlier by C. Burac.

The uncertainties listed above are the weak points of the link between the four Moldavian officials and Khmeliv, which call into question the placement of the lords of this locality on such a high place in the ruling council of Peter Mușat, Stephen I, Alexander the Good, Iliș I and Stephen II. Together with the previous observations regarding the starosts of Putna from the middle of the
16th century, it shows the lack of any arguments behind the identification of the Moldavian starosts with some recently integrated lands into the east-Carpathian principality. Thus, if Hotin, Tețina, Khmeliv, Suceava, Siret, Neamț, and Dorohoi were not the residences of the Moldavian starosts, then the only possible option left among the county centers that were directly subordinated to Iliaș I after 1436 is the town of Cetatea Albă.

The main port of Moldavia has, like Khmeliv, several gaps in terms of the studies devoted to its political-administrative status: its first documented pârcălab, Iurghici, was mentioned since 1443 in the council of Stephen II. Researching the history of Cetatea Albă during its presence in the Principality of Moldavia is also complicated by its special position in relation to the princely power, which was highlighted several times during the 15th century. The title of Lord of Parthalassia associated with Alexander the Good, the peculiar local monetary emissions compared to those minted at the Suceava court during the first half of the 15th century (especially the Asprokastron coins bearing Greek inscriptions), the mention of a “dominus Maurocastrī” who had an unknown political status and negotiated in 1435 with representatives of Venice about the opening of a vice-consulate in the town, the withdrawal of Alexander II to Cetatea Albă in the last years of his life and the episode of the conflict between the inhabitants of Cetatea Albă and the Genoese colonies in Crimea over the settlement of Illice at the mouth of the Dnieper during the reign of Peter Aron portray a very active urban community in its relationship with the rulers of Moldavia, especially during the struggles for the Moldavian throne after the death of Alexander the Good. The facts listed above made it difficult to identify Iurghici’s predecessors as representatives of the ruling power in Cetatea Albă.

But the connection of Giula capitaneus, Mihail capitaneus, Dragoș the Brave, and Giurgiu of Frătăuți with the main port of Moldavia may explain the specific features of the starost governorship for the years 1387–1439. First of all, the leading positions of the starosts in the council of several Moldavian princes can be explained by the special value of Cetatea Albă in the eyes of the central power, which always needed to keep an eye on the situation in this town with a very active community, both commercially and politically. Secondly, the mentions of the starosts in the prince’s council until 1439 do not contradict the first appearance of Iurghici as the pârcălab of Cetatea Albă in 1443.

Thirdly, the hypothesis of a starost in charge of Cetatea Albă may explain the reason for Giurgiu of Frătăuți’s unexpected return to this governorship in 1418–1420. If we assume that he was appointed to this position around 15 January 1418, when Giurgiu comes in second place among the boyars of the prince’s council, this decision could have been prompted by the Ottoman successes in the conquest of Dobruja and the subsequent conclusion of the peace
with Wallachia led by Mircea the Elder in 1417.\textsuperscript{84} If the appointment of Giurgiu as a starost took place after 1418 and before the mention of “Giurgiu staroste” on 23 April 1420, the Ottoman intervention north of the Danube in the spring of 1420, the murder of the Wallachian Prince Michael I and the following Ottoman attack on Cetatea Albă may have motivated Alexander the Good to return the experienced former starost to the town on the Dniester estuary with the intention of strengthening the Moldavian defense system in this direction. Taking into account that, according to the letter of Władysław II Jagiełło to Sigismund of Luxembourg of 27 July 1420, the first message from Alexander the Good about the Ottoman offensive arrived on Pentecost (26 May 1420),\textsuperscript{85} the possibility of Giurgiu’s participation in the events around Cetatea Albă during April–May of the same year cannot be ruled out. Nevertheless, the attack of the Ottoman fleet was eventually repelled, which probably secured Giurgiu of Fratăuți’s position of starost for the rest of his life, except for an interruption in 1434–1435 due to him joining the camp of Iliaș I.

Another interesting moment is the absence of any mentions of Giurgiu of Fratăuți after 28 October 1439. M. Costăchescu suggested that the cause of this disappearance was the death of the long-serving dignitary of Moldavia due to old age,\textsuperscript{86} but the context of external events could provide further details on the circumstances of the demise of the last starost of Cetatea Albă. Both I. Minea and Ș. Andreescu drew attention to the changes in the title of the ruler of Wallachia Vlad II Dracul in his acts of 8 September 1439 and 16 September 1440, where the expression “as far as the Great Sea” was utilized for a short time, claiming that during this period the fortress of Chilia came under the control of the Wallachians.\textsuperscript{87} If I. Minea believed in the presence of Stephen II’s dignitaries in Cetatea Albă before these events (which is contradicted by the accounts of Iliaș I in his message to the Polish king dated 1 September 1435, where he did not mention Cetatea Albă among other cities and counties given to Stephen II\textsuperscript{88}), Ș. Andreescu highlights the prince’s name mentioned in the inscription of 10 November 1440 as the primary contributor to the reconstruction and consolidation of Cetatea Albă. He further suggests that Stephen II’s presence here was a result of the earlier loss of Chilia to Vlad Dracul.\textsuperscript{89}

Taking into account the reports of Grigore Ureche and Nicolae Costin about a Tatar invasion in the Lower Country in December 1439 (which was under the responsibility of Stephen II according to the compromise reached in 1435 with his elder brother, Iliaș I) and comparing them with the last documentary mention of Giurgiu of Fratăuți, on 28 October 1439, it is possible that the old starost died in the Tatar attack against Moldavia, especially since other major towns, such as Vaslui and Bârlad, were sacked during the same invasion.\textsuperscript{90} Stephen II’s later intervention in the strengthening of the fortress in 1440 could
be a sign of its transfer under his personal authority for a more effective defense of the Lower Country, which allowed him to appoint here his own pârcălabs, as was the case with the much later appearance of Iurghici on 6 March 1443—although it had already happened after the dethronement of Iliaș I.

Conclusions

Thus, according to the arguments listed above, we can argue that the list of the princely governors appointed in Cetatea Albă can be completed with the names of Giula capitaneus, Mihail capitaneus, Dragoș the Brave, and Giurgiu of Frătăuți, present in the prince’s council of the voivodes in Suceava in the late 14th and first half of the 15th century. The high position of these boyars among the witnesses to the princely documents issued in this period can be explained by the particular value that the Moldavian rulers ascribed to the commercial hub on the Dniester River, as well as by their intention to project their power as effectively as possible in the abovementioned region. In addition, the reconstruction of the list of dignitaries appointed in Cetatea Albă confirms the presence of the Moldavian administration here at least since before the time of Peter Mușat’s oath of fealty to the king of Poland, in Lwów in 1387.

In the light of these considerations, the question regarding the mystery behind Constantine, attested together with the Moldavian Prince Peter Mușat in the act issued at Caffa on 14 August 1386, can be brought up again. Was he also a starost/captain/pârcălab of Cetatea Albă? The idea of identifying this person with a Moldavian official is not new in Romanian historiography—V. Spinei formulated the hypothesis associating Constantine from the Genoese act with “a dignitary subordinated to Peter Mușat,” proposing to equate him with Costea the Brave, a member of the princely council during the reigns of the Moldavian voivodes Roman I and Iuga (1399–1400). However, this view is not commonly accepted among contemporary scholars, as there are also two other versions of Constantine’s true identity. According to Ș. Papacostea, Constantine should be identified with Costea Voivode, whose name was mentioned together with other previous Moldavian rulers in the Bistrița diptych of 1407 and whom the previously mentioned scholar regarded as the leader of another Romanian medieval state located in the Lower Country. Ș. S. Gorovei drew attention to the fact that the title “vayvoda” was used in the singular form and applied only to Peter Mușat, while the document itself was issued at a time when the process of establishing the Moldavian Metropolis on the basis of the ecclesiastical institution present in Cetatea Albă had already started, meaning that by 1386 Cetatea Albă was already under Moldavian administration.
Rezachevici claimed that the Constantine mentioned in the Genoese document was none other than Constantine Koryatowicz, the duke of Podolia between 1385 and 1390.96

Returning to the main source that led to the discussions around Constantine’s identity, the records of the Massaria contain only strictly financial data about the envoy sent by the Genoese and led by Illario de Doria—on 2 May 1386 a note was issued about Illario de Doria’s debt to a certain Gaspallo Spinola for his journey to Moncastro (Cetatea Albă), and on 14 August of the same year another document shows the payment of 2,000 aspres (akçes) by the Caffa authorities for the voyage of the Genoese representatives to Moncastro by sea during their travel to “Constantino et Petro vayvoda.”97 Taking into account all this information and the opinions expressed above, none of the three explanations can be decisively confirmed because of the absence of any mention of Constantine’s title—a mistake most likely caused by the strictly economic intent of the studied documents. If Ș. Papacostea’s arguments turn out to be true, the error would be the use of the word “vayvoda” in the singular form; in the case of V. Spinei’s opinion, it would be the placement of Constantine before the ruler of Moldavia; and for C. Rezachevici’s hypothesis, it would be the absence of the title of the Podolian duke, held by the Koryatowicz brothers.

However, the results obtained in this study raise additional questions. For example, were there any other holders of the title of starost during the reigns of Roman I and Stephen I, more precisely between Giula capitaneus and Mihail capitaneus, as well as between Mihail and Dragoș the Brave? Who took the role of starost after Giurgiu of Frătăuți’s removal from this office in the 1410s? Why the practice of assigning starosts to Cetatea Albă was abandoned in favor of pârcălabs after Stephen II removed his brother, Iliaș I, from the Moldavian throne? Was this a trend towards uniformizing the nomenclature of territorial governors initiated by Stephen II and continued in the fortress on the Dniester River by his successors? These and many other questions and considerations should receive special attention in a separate study regarding the political history of Cetatea Albă. The results obtained so far demonstrate new possibilities and perspectives in researching the history of the territorial officials appointed to the borders of the Principality of Moldavia in the 14th–15th centuries.

Notes

2. The earliest mentions of the Hotin (Khotyn) and Cernăuți (Chernivtsi) starosts can be found in the treaty negotiated by Petru Aron with the Polish officials Muzhilo (Mużyło) Buczacki, the starost of Sniatyn, Colomeea (Kolomyia) and Koropets, and Bartosh Buczacki, the starost of Podolia, on 1 April 1457—Ion Eremia, ed., *Relațiile externe ale Țării Moldovei în documente și materiale (1360–1858)* (Chișinău: Cartdidact, 2020), doc. 83, pp. 220–222—, while in the treaty between Stephen the Great and the Great Lithuanian Duke Alexander Jagiello signed on 14 September 1499 there is a mention of Costea, the starost of Soroca. Ioan Bogdan, ed., *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, vol. 2, *Hrisoave și cărți domnești, 1493–1503, tractate, acte omagiale, solii, privilegiții comerciale, salva-conducte, scrisori, 1457–1503* (Bucharest: Atelierele Grafice Socec & Co., Societate Anonimă, 1913), doc. 179, pp. 442–446.


5. Iгор Й. Бойко, *Органи влади і право в Галичині у складі Польського Королівства (1349-1569 pp.)* (Львів: Видавничий центр ЛНУ імені Івана Франка, 2009), 104.


9. Some examples of captains in Maramureș include the cases of Baia Mare (Frauenbach, Nagybánya), where in 1469 is mentioned a “castellanus et capitaneus de Rivulo Dominarum,” and of Berchez (Magyarberkesz), which “was a town between the 14th and the 16th centuries and had a captaincy.” Dorin Ștef, *Dicționar etimologic al localităților din județul Maramureș*, 2nd edition, rev. And enl. (Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2023), 94, 112.


17. Fig. 1 is based on the mentions of Dragoș the Brave in the Moldavian charters issued between 30 March 1392 and 15 June 1431, which can be found in DRH, A, 1.
18. DRH, A, 1, doc. 4, pp. 5–6.
23. Fig. 2 is based on Giurgiu of Frătăuți’s mentions in the Moldavian charters issued between 20 July 1404 and 8 October 1408, which can be found in DRH, A, 1.
24. Fig. 3 is based on Giurgiu of Frătăuți’s mentions in the Moldavian charters issued between 28 January 1409 and 13 April 1415, which can be found in DRH, A, 1.
27. DRH, A, 1, doc. 33, p. 47.
28. Stoicescu, Sfatul domnesc și marii dregători, 124.
29. DRH, A, 1, doc. 42, pp. 61–62.
30. DRH, A, 1, doc. 47, pp. 67–68.
31. Fig. 4 is based on Giurgiu of Frătăuți’s mentions in the Moldavian charters issued between 15 January 1418 and 10 February 1434, which can be found in DRH, A, 1.
32. Costăchescu, 1, doc. 80, p. 247; doc. 141, p. 437.
34. DRH, A, 1, doc. 119, pp. 171–172.
35. DRH, A, 1, doc. 126, pp. 177–178.
37. Fig. 5 is based on Giurgiu of Frătăuți’s mentions in the Moldavian charters issued between 8 October 1435 and 28 October 1439, which can be found in DRH, A, 1.
40. DRH, A, 1, doc. 183, p. 259.
42. Emeria, doc. 8, pp. 154–155.
43. Costăchescu, 1, doc. 168, pp. 616–617.
47. In the acts issued exclusively by Iliaș I on 30 November 1436, 12 March 1437, 23 February and 18 May 1438 Giurgiu is still listed first among the members of the prince’s council (DRH, A, 1, doc. 164, pp. 229–231; doc. 169, pp. 237–238; doc. 180, pp. 254–256; doc. 183, p. 259).

48. For example, the act of Stephen II issued in Vaslui on 10 May 1439 does not mention Giurgiu of Frătăuți among other witnesses (DRH, A, 1, doc. 195, pp. 275–276).

49. Although the first reference to a Moldavian pârcălab in Chilia can be found in the act of Stephen II to the monastery of Neamț written on 19 February 1446 (DRH, A, 1, doc. 262, pp. 371–372), the first known governors of Chilia, Isaia and Ion Bucium, will be mentioned here in 1465, immediately after the recapture of the town by Stephen the Great in 1465 (DRH, A, 2, doc. 129, pp. 185–186).

50. The only mention in the princely charters of Mihul, the pârcălab of Crăciuna, the border fortress in Putna County, is from 13 April 1484, in the context of the frontier struggles between Stephen the Great and the rulers of Wallachia (DRH, A, 2, doc. 260, pp. 398–399).

51. For example, “Dragoș staroste” appeared together with Șandru of Hotin on 28 June 1406, while Giurgiu of Frătăuți was mentioned in the same charter as Manoil Grecul, the pârcălab of Hotin, on 20 June 1438 (DRH, A, 1, doc. 13, pp. 18–20; doc. 184, pp. 260–262).

52. In the same act of 28 June 1406, Hotco of Țețina (Tsetsyno) is mentioned together with Dragoș, while Giurgiu is mentioned from 20 December 1437 until his last documentary record together with Șteful Jumătate, who was the pârcălab of Țețina long before the only mention of his presence in this governorship on 6 August 1440—more arguments in this regard can be found here: Alexandru Bejenaru, “Țara Șipenițului și problema cedării sale Poloniei în 1436,” Akademos 68, 1 (2023): 80–87.

53. For example, “Giurgiu staroste” appears together with the same Dragoș the Brave during the time when he was the pârcălab of Neamț on 8 March 1407 (DRH, A, 1, doc. 22, pp. 30–32), 6 October 1407 (Eremia, doc. 21, pp. 164–165) and 16 September 1408 (DRH, A, 1, doc. 23, pp. 32–34).

54. Giurgiu of Frătăuți has multiple mentions together with Mihail of Dorohoi, another long-lived dignitary during the rule of Alexander the Good, starting with the charter issued on 8 March 1407 (DRH, A, 1, doc. 22, pp. 30–32).

55. In the same act of 8 March 1407, we find the names of Oană, the vornic of Suceava, and Vlad of Siret, a possible vornic of this town, according to N. Stoicescu (Șfatul domnesc și marii dregători, 194).


57. Burac, 175.


63. Burac, 72, 79.
64. The earliest mention of a princely official in Hotin belongs to Ștefan of Hotin, who was present among the witnesses to the safe-conduct issued for Spytko II of Melsztyn, the duke of Podolia, on 3 February 1397 (Costăchescu, 2, doc. 168, pp. 616–617), while in the princely charters of 28 June 1401 and 7 January 1403 we find Hotco of Țețina, the first documented pârcălab of this town (DRH, A, 1, doc. 13, pp. 18–20; doc. 17, pp. 24–25).
65. Stoicescu, Sfatul domnesc și marii dregători, 205.
66. Eremia, doc. 13, p. 158.
68. Eremia, doc. 50, pp. 188–189.
71. Bălan, 11–12.
77. Chronica Moldovei, 131–132.
78. DRH, A, 1, doc. 225, pp. 314–316
81. Nicolae Iorga, Studii istorice asupra Chiliei și Cetății-Albe (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice Carol Göbl, 1899), 93.
Abstract
Starosts in the Principality of Moldavia: A Case Study (1387–1439)

The starosts distinguished themselves among other state officials in the Principality of Moldavia as overseers of the northern counties, on the border with the Kingdom of Poland and the Great Duchy of Lithuania, as well as governors of Putna County, in the south. While this description accurately reflects their duties since the rule of Stephen the Great (1457–1504), it remains to be seen if the same could be said about the previous time periods. The study presents a detailed analysis of the political and administrative role of the starosts in the Principality of Moldavia between the end of the 14th century and the first half of the 15th century, showcasing the political careers of their holders during this period and attempting to pinpoint the exact area of the starosts’ projected territorial power.

Keywords
Principality of Moldavia, starost, Alexander the Good, Hmielev (Khmeliv), Cetatea Albă (Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi)
Introduction

The ideal of Romanian national political unity achieved on 1 December 1918 placed new tasks and objectives on the agenda of the political elites. Greater Romania “also had to become Newer Romania, a state for all citizens, free and equal before the law.”¹ Under these circumstances, finding the best solutions for the administrative unification of the politically integrated provinces was one of the main issues that had to be solved. The political and intellectual elites of the integrated provinces were trying to solve this problem under the influence of the experience gathered during the foreign occupation. Being under foreign occupation for a very long time, the integrated Romanian provin-
ces took over governmental models, structures and practices imposed by those respective regimes.

The representatives of Bessarabia, together with the representatives of the other historical provinces, showed great interest in the matters pertaining to the full political, economic, legislative and governmental union, seeing them as essential to the consolidation and confirmation of the national Romanian state. One of the loudest and most representative Bessarabian political leaders was Constantin Stere, professor, writer, politician, and publicist. He was born on 1865, in Ciripcău village, Soroca County. In the late 1880s, he joined the populist movement in Russia. Suspected of affiliation to the Narodnaya Volya (People’s Will) and of encouraging Romanian nationalism, C. Stere was exiled to Siberia in 1888–1892. Following his “romantic wanderings through the Marxist and revolutionary dogmas for which he paid dearly with his exile to Siberia,” he settled in Iași in 1892, where, fairly quickly, he became a professor of constitutional law at the University of Iași, his classes being “attended, studied, commented.” His erudition and rhetorical talent made his lectures quite appealing. He managed to gain reputation as a professor, and his Constitutional Law class was often also attended by the students of other faculties. Iorgu Iordan, Romanian linguist, philologist, diplomat and politicain (1888–1986), described his professor as follows:

The problems he would raise could not be a matter of rhetorical exercise. They had concerned him and upset him since his early youth. He saw their fair and immediate settlement as an absolutely indispensable condition for the social and political progress of our country.

C. Stere decisively contributed to the union of Bessarabia with Romania, being, until he died in the summer of 1936, an important representative of the political and spiritual life in Romania. For four decades, he was a dedicated publicist, being the founder (in 1906) and editor-in-chief of the magazine Viața Românească (Romanian life). The writer Mihail Sadoveanu would describe Stere as a multi-faceted personality who

expended his energy in multiple directions: stirring Bessarabia, fostering populism, speeding up the universal suffrage and the expropriation, opposing the belief of a minority to general views, in foreign policy.

The main purpose of this paper is to study Stere’s views on the self-government of the sub-national territorial collectivities amid the emergence of a democratic
regime in unified Romania. Stere’s scholarly views on the sub-national territorial collectivity’s self-government are clarified and conventionally systematized in two distinct timeframes. The first period has as its starting point Stere’s move to Iași in 1892 and ends with the union of the Romanian provinces in 1918. The second period includes the years 1918–1923, that is, the first years of the political and legal establishment of unified Romania, and encompasses the efforts to consolidate the Romanian political architecture. Here, I particularly refer to the drafting and adoption of a new Constitution and the administrative unification of united Romania.

To achieve the proposed objective, we first of all discuss the Constitutional Law class taught by Stere at the Law Faculty of the University of Iași in the years 1910–1911, some articles which address various aspects of the sub-national territorial collectivity self-government published in the magazine *Viața Basarabiei* (The life of Bessarabia), and the statement of reasons to the *Draft Constitution Prepared by the Peasant Party Research Department* which contains the theoretical government structure devised by Stere for unified Romania.

1. Topics Approached by C. Stere in the Years Prior to the Great Union
1.1. Parliamentarism and Local Self-Government

The clarification of the interdependency between the evolution of parliamentarism and the level of development of local self-government in Romania may be deemed one of the most significant scientific achievements of Professor C. Stere. In his article “Local Organization,” published in 1906, Stere showed that the vitiation of Romanian parliamentarism was lethal and it was due to the fact that when the central institutions of English constitutionalism, borrowed from the Constitution of Belgium, were introduced in 1866, the constituents did not understand that “the local organization, borrowed from France in the most detestable era of its public life, was not compatible with these central institutions,” since in England, the central institutions are “a mere development, an outgrowth of local self-government.” Specifically, for these reasons, “the Constitution of 1866 prescribes the reorganization of our local government in compliance with the principles of autonomy and decentralization (Art. 37 and 107).” But Stere regretfully noticed that the respective constitutional prescription “remained a dead letter and, thus, our parliamentarism lacks a foundation and is suspended up in the air.”

Because of this reality, “each ‘change of regime,’ often following street riots or a backstage plot in Bucharest” had serious repercussions on local self-
government, since all local public authorities “pass into other hands,” meaning they had to comply with the requirements imposed by the new central public authorities. Under such circumstances, when the local public authorities do not have their own agenda but accomplish only the indications of the central authorities, “there can be neither any actual civic life at the basis of the body politic, nor an honest and industrious government.” The only efficient remedy to these situations was, in Stere’s opinion, the “growth of a healthy civic life in the depths of the national body—in the vigorous local bodies.”

Four years later, analyzing the provisions of the Constitution of 1866, in his Constitutional Law class held in the academic year 1910–1911 at the University in Iași, Stere would draw the attention of his students to article 37, which stipulated that “exclusive county or communal interests shall be regulated by the county or communal councils, following the principles established by the constitution and the special laws.” In his opinion, from the very contents of the respective text it resulted that in the state, there was still some manifestation of sovereign power which had been entrusted to the county and communal councils.

Thus, the Constitution enunciated an essential principle—that of local self-government. By local self-government, Stere understood a governmental organization aiming to regulate certain public interests, where all exclusively local interests were settled by “the very citizens of that locality, be it directly or by their representatives.”

C. Stere deemed it necessary to explain, in order to clarify the situation, the way in which the principle of local self-government, which in his opinion was absolutely natural, had entered the Constitution of Romania. By adopting the Belgian Constitution, Romania also adopted the principles of English constitutionalism, but what characterized the phenomenon of English constitutionalism was precisely the principle of local self-government. In his opinion,

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the entire English constitutionalism can be summed up in these words: all interests must be regulated by those concerned, either directly, or by their representatives. And those public interests start manifesting in the simplest public organization, in the cell of the political life, which is the commune, and that general principle finally starts manifesting itself in the commune. The communal interests must be regulated by the citizens themselves or by their representatives. The interests of several communes, gathered into a broader organization, the county, must be regulated by their citizens. The even higher interests of the state are regulated by the state’s citizens directly or by their representatives. This is only a logical consequence, but to England it is a historical reality.
In Stere’s view, the historical evolution of the English constitutional system was nothing but “an offshoot of the local self-government principle,” and English parliamentarism was but a “coronation of those local self-government institutions.” Stere considered that England’s history could not be conceived without local self-government, and the communes, “which there are called townships, have a much older constitutional life, as they existed before the English state.” In Stere’s view,

the primitive tribes have never ceased to exist. They have turned into nowadays’ townships, and kingdoms exist as shires which correspond to our counties. And civic life, which is always bubbling, pouring out of those townships, would inexorably lead, together with the organization of the English state, to the principle of civic autonomy by endowing itself with particular central institutions, which have developed into that parliamentary system.14

C. Stere thought that the evolution and dissemination of the English constitutionalist principles in Europe, the intimate connection between the local authorities constituted according to the principles of local self-government and central power authorities “was overlooked.” Thus, Europe was seeded with “English institutions as far as the central bodies were concerned, while the old ones were kept with regard to the local organization.” And only after a certain period of time, certain efforts were made to also implement the principle of local self-government. As Stere would indicate, things were being done “upside down.” Thus, this situation was inevitably “felt in the falseness of the constitutional regime.” In Stere’s opinion,

imagining a democratic, free state, where higher national interests are to be debated through national representation and citizens are to be called upon to elect this representation as far as their immediate interests are concerned, and for them to be unable to make use of these interests, this is but logical nonsense, and from this we sense the lack of civic education.15

C. Stere also insists on observing the principle of national sovereignty, stating that united Romania, as a state of the entire Romanian people, had emerged precisely by stating this principle. Having in mind this important aspect, the conditions and forms in which the Constitution of the unified Kingdom of Romania would be drafted and accepted could not run contrary to the principle of national sovereignty. And so, Stere considered that the Constitution of 1866, in force in the Old Kingdom, could not be extended to the united provinces without their express and freely declared will.16
In Stere’s opinion, it was precisely the lack of a “constitutional document accepted by the country, necessary to the application and forecasting of constitutional forms and norms, as well as to their enforcement,” that generated a “painful contradiction between the state of law and the state of fact, which is characteristic to the chaos we are struggling with.”

1.2. The Smallness–Largeness Dilemma in Establishing the Size of Sub-National Collectivities

In the abovementioned article, “Local Organization,” C. Stere expressed his opinions with regard to the projects to amend the Law for Urban and Rural Communes no. 394 of 31 March 1864, which promoted the need to increase the size of the communes in Romania.

According to C. Stere’s estimates, in the four decades since the adoption of the Law of 31 March 1864, no less than 19 projects and organic laws had been drafted in an attempt to reorganize the rural communes. Thus, on average, every two years there was a proposal for “some more or less in-depth change or a complete reorganization of the rural communes!” This fact, in Stere’s opinion, was the most eloquent reason behind the thesis that the “true grounds” of the organization of local self-government had not been found yet. This truth was confirmed by the fact that problem faced by all those projects of reorganization of the local government revolved around the minimum mandatory number of taxpayers necessary to create a commune in the rural area that the law had to impose. In the abovementioned draft bills, the number of taxpayers varied between 100 (the number established by the Law for Urban and Rural Communes) and 300.

These planned reforms were vitiated by an extraordinary confusion of ideas: the replacement, under the term “commune,” meaning a population center, a natural and historical formation, by another administrative unit which the English called “rural district,” and the Russians “voloste” and the Germans “Kreis,” meaning an intermediary unit between the actual commune and a constituency (rom. plasă).

In C. Stere’s opinion, this result stemmed from the fact that the Romanian lawmakers, by combining the communes as dictated by their “imagination,” with a number of taxpayers randomly established, had left without any legal organization the
According to C. Stere, these attempts showed that the “reformers” did not know the essential principles of modern government, going by a purely bureaucratic concept which reduced “that which had to be a living work of the citizens to a mere functioning of a bureau of chinovniki of the villages.” In Stere’s view, the very argumentation of the need to combine the communes through the “annexation” of hamlets, present in almost all the proposed reorganizations, showed “amazing superficiality and disregard of reality.” The only arguments called upon by the “reformers” were limited to the “lack of means for better government in the small communes.”

With such approaches of the “reformers,” Stere had one but natural question: “How could a communal government prove its worth?” Drawing on the legal provisions, he also indicated that among the main responsibilities imposed by the law to the rural communes was “building establishments for the town hall and the school, taking care of the church, contributing to the rural postal service, sanitary service, etc.”

To solve the smallness—largeness dilemma, Stere compared two counties: Neamț and Gorj, with similar characteristics from the point of view of their geographical location, lifestyle of the inhabitants, and number of taxpayers (Neamț—32,000 taxpayers, Gorj—36,000 taxpayers), with the difference that the first encompassed 47 communes, and the latter—161 communes. Stere, after having ascertained that Gorj, having smaller communes, exceeded Neamț when looking at the results obtained with regard to accomplishing the obligations stipulated by the law, concluded as follows: “With these positive data, all a priori appreciations with regard to the necessity to increase the communes with a view to a better government are refuted.”

Also analyzing the situation in Iași County, C. Stere noticed that in the larger communes, the distance between the villages was of 10–15 kilometers, and in some cases even longer. In these conditions,

among the members of a commune there could not exist that intimate connection, that joint life, that moral atmosphere which is generated by the collectivity of interests closer to the people, which is an indispensable condition for a healthy and true communal life.

In the larger communes, “many inhabitants of the same commune do not even know or meet each other”; they are connected by nothing else than the “phan-
tasy of an alderman (praefect) who fancies the ‘annexations and separations’ of hamlets.” As a result, the local government plunges into bureaucracy and the

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\text{mayor, instead of being a trustworthy man of the village, turns into a master, the communal incomes are spent on their wages and wages of other mandarins, transferred from the cities into the paragraphs of the communal budget.}^{23}
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A completely different situation was attested in the small communes where “living conditions were closer to those normal in a healthy communal organization” and which “do more to satisfy the needs of the villager and for a better government.”\(^{24}\)

C. Stere reached the conclusion that only a governmental organization having as its starting point the village,

\[
\text{this center of population spontaneously created throughout history, under the pressure of economic needs, of the geographic landscape, of the distribution of arable lands, waters, forests, in a word: created naturally under the action of the entire complex of material and moral needs of the inhabitants, only such an organization would meet the requirements of public life in a modern state.}^{25}
\]

At the same time, C. Stere admitted the necessity and role of the intermediary level of public power, on condition it should not affect the good functioning of the primary level:

\[
\text{Of course, besides these cells of the social body, a more comprehensive governmental unit could and should also be organized, like in the current communes and even larger, let’s say—counting at least 1,000 taxpayers to satisfy those needs which exceed the powers of isolated villages, but this organization cannot, without vitiating the entire public life as in the current system, take the place of the \textit{primordial} organization of the state.}^{26}
\]

Rhetorically asking: “in the end, what is a commune?” Stere would give the following answer:

\[
\text{it is a population center which is spontaneously created, based on certain historical conditions which could barely be noticed. There are no towns for the birth of which we could not find a historical explanation. This or that town was created because it found itself at the interflow of two water courses, another because it was located close to the major trade routes, yet another to serve as protection against enemies. And eventually, in the old times, when there were no trains or telegraphs, every man lived in the same population center where they were born.}^{27}
\]
In support of his reasoning, Stere resorted to the analysis of the historical evolution of the local self-government forms of organization, contending that “our old crafting of states . . . encompassed, undoubtedly, the germs of an organization superior to the one we have nowadays.” Admitting the still rudimentary character of village governance organization, Stere believed that “instead of abolishing it in 1864, by introducing the Napoleonian centralization, we have the duty to develop it, taking into account the experience of other peoples,” invoking “liberal England,” “the strong republic of America,” “the rural democracy of Switzerland” and “the Russian autocracy.”

1.3. The Principles of Local Government Reform

All reforms, regardless of their nature, are based on certain principles. Their role is that of offering guidance towards what is desirable or what “should” happen. This guidance refers to actions, processes, structures, etc. Understood as basic rules, the principles are formulated based on scientific data on processes and social phenomena. They imply critical thinking and the ability to forecast effects and results.

The integration of the four provinces clearly entailed a reform. In designing and accomplishing it, Stere ascertained that the principles in discussion were nothing but the expression of some superficial thinking which gave birth to phrase-mongering directed against “the inference of politics into government,” and “sterile attempts to artificially create an immovable mandarinate in all public functions.”

In Stere’s view, the sole efficient remedy to the existing situation was to create a healthy civic life in the depths of the national body—in efficient local bodies. This desiderate required, besides the reorganization of rural communes, the adoption within the county and communal councils of the following principles:

1) the abolition of the right of the Ministry of Home Affairs to dissolve the councils and the replacement by withdrawing the counsellor mandate in court for the cases specified by the law, “to ensure the independence of the local bodies and protect them from the interflow of political fluctuations”;

2) the abolition of the procedure of integral renewal of the councils and the introduction of the partial renewal principle, “one third of the members of the council every two years, to give stability and continuity to the local government”;

3) providing for a census of minorities in the councils, “to ensure an efficient control and further shelter the local bodies from political fluctuations.”
In C. Stere’s view, only the implementation of these principles, together with a reform of the voting system, could improve the public atmosphere,

only they can give solid grounds to our institutions and complete, in time, the political education of the masses, only they can stimulate the entire national vigor and energy, facilitating the introduction of the great economic and social reforms that we need so much.\textsuperscript{30}

Achieving the abovementioned principles would have also had as an effect the establishment of administrative functions which greatly concerned the reformers of those times and would have had as a final result “the settlement of the entire public life on healthy grounds.” Or, the reforms implemented by the governing representatives “which start from the end, only repeat the old story about Penelope’s cloth.” Only thus, thought C. Stere, could Romania acquire a local government organization “that would not be inferior, from the point of view of democratic principles, to the one enjoyed by the Romanians in Transylvania, Bukovina, and even Bessarabia . . .”\textsuperscript{31}

\textbf{2. Topics Discussed by C. Stere in the Years Following the Great Union}

\textbf{2.1. Administrative Unification}

Following the Union, in Romania there were four governmental models, different from the point of view of their conceptual argumentation, organizational structure, modalities of incorporation and of the applied governmental practices: the one in the Old Kingdom, the Austro-Hungarian symbiosis in Transylvania, the Austrian version in Bukovina, and the Russian-origin one in Bessarabia.

The diversity of legal regulations and governmental structures represented a considerable impediment in consolidating and developing united Romania and, from this perspective, governmental unification was an indispensable condition for the development of the Romanian nation.

The search for governmental unification solutions was one of the most important tasks of the politicians of those times. The work of unification was difficult to accomplish also due to the fact that the annexed Romanian provinces had been under foreign occupation for a very long time and had taken over foreign models, structures, institutions, and governmental practices.\textsuperscript{32}

The governmental unification could be achieved by two methods: a) the expansion of the legislative, governmental and institutional system in the Old
Kingdom to Bessarabia and b) the preservation for a certain transitory period of time of the existing governmental institutions and laws in the constituent provinces, the unification being achieved by stages. Even though from the technical point of view the first method would have been much easier to achieve, the political decision-making factors deemed the second method as more advisable.

The governmental unification by extending the governmental legislation to the annexed territories could not be achieved for the following reasons:

a) the governmental legislation in the Old Kingdom stipulated a centralized type of governmental organization, and the annexed provinces had a decentralized local governmental organization;

b) as the annexed provinces had been under different political and governmental regimes, a centralized regime would not have been adequate to the existing realities;

c) the governmental legislation of the Old Kingdom required an assessment and update in compliance with the new scientific and governmental developments of the time.33

The political and governmental elites of the annexed Romanian provinces had their own vision of the governmental unification of united Romania. To identify the best solution to this problem, Stere started from the idea that unified Romania included several provinces, which were authentic historical formations, each having “a centuries-long past of a special lifestyle, mentality, morals, special cultural and economic conditions,” shaping thus a well-defined uniqueness.34 Namely, based on these considerations, an “honest and serious governmental organization,” according to C. Stere, could not avoid taking into account the existing realities, having to rely, as much as possible, on the living bodies and not on “some randomly and artificially combined mechanisms, without a spirit of their own.” Only in this way could one “engender a rich national energy and sources of civic activity.” What would be more natural, said Stere, than the future organization of Romania using the provinces as governmental units?35

C. Stere subjected to harsh criticism the reform projects that ignored the natural population centers constituted throughout historical evolution. Some “reformers” would propose the creation of some artificial regions, resulted from combining territorial fractions of the distinct historical provinces, such as, for instance, parts of Bessarabia, Moldavia, Wallachia, and Dobruja, without taking into account the lack of the means of communication among them. To support such “governmental tailoring,” they could invoke “the interest of unification.” But a unification of this kind, thought Stere, could not be associated with the Union. Stere explained his position accordingly:
we do not need only a mechanical unification, but an intimate union in thought and feeling, which could only result from respecting all particularities and natural characteristics and from a truly free activity. Real power could never spring from the monotony of outside mechanization, but only from organic diversity, full of life.36

Debating with his opponents, C. Stere would ask rhetorically:

the chimera of a mechanical unification is natural to rise in the souls desolated by long-time despotism, from the contempt for public liberties and for civic life, but under the regime of a Constitution based on the principle of national sovereignty, how could this evil mentality appear, thanks to which, for the emancipated provinces, the union had as an effect the disappearance of the very signs of local self-government which they enjoyed under foreign oppression?

The respective phenomenon, C. Stere believed, was a

natural and necessary result of the fact that the parliamentary superstructure, under the regime of the Constitution of 1866, remained without guaranties of freedom and justice, without hotbeds of civic life in the depths of the national body, the Romanian constitutional regime being thus “distorted from the root.”37

And, in the statement of reasons to the Draft Constitution Prepared by the Peasant Party Research Department, Stere criticized the fact that the new Draft Constitution for the governmental organization of Romania had not considered the provinces, which were natural population centers, as governmental units.38

Subsequently, after the adoption of the new Constitution, C. Stere raised objections in the session of the Chamber of Deputies of 21 November 1923, stating that it had been voted “without the approval of a strong party in Transylvania and without the approval of the majority of Parliament members in Bessarabia . . .”39

2.2. Ensuring Human Rights and Local Self-Government

C. Stere treated the problem of local self-government in close connection to the issue of civic rights and liberties. When examining this subject, Stere looked at the emergence and functioning of the English model. In Stere’s vision, English constitutionalism, based on the “rule of
law,” was characterized by two defining dimensions: “completely ensuring civic rights and liberties and local self-government.”

Stere believed that Romania could serve as a classic example of a country that limited itself to just copying the central institutions of English parliamentarism. The model copied by the Romanian lawmakers was a perfect one—the Belgian Constitution, which Professor Dicey described as the most successful attempt to draft in writing the essential principles of English constitutionalism. Undoubtedly, the Romanian Constitution of 1866 was, at the time of its adoption, one of the most progressive in Europe, acclaiming in abstracto all the liberties and individual rights, as well as “governmental decentralization” and “communal independence.” But, as Stere noticed, the problem was that, in fact, it was followed “neither by real guarantees of the civil rights and liberties, nor by the local self-government institutions.”

In Stere’s opinion, the secret of the “English institutional vitality and of the triumphant energy of the English people” was due to the fact that the English state, born from the gradual fusion of local collectivities, “not only did not suffocate their own life, but built the entire political structure on this ground.” Thus, the central institutions of English parliamentarism emerged as an offshoot of local self-government. The countries which introduced the English central institutions, but which did not take into account the defining premises of English constitutionalism, “do not follow the road which could lead to a healthy constitutional and democratic life.”

C. Stere was convinced that without the rule of law and without local self-government, that is, without ensuring individual liberties and communal liberties, no matter how perfect the central government apparatus of these countries, their constitutionalism would remain a mere façade behind which the fiercest vacuity and despotism could hide. Also, no matter how rudimentary its central apparatus, a country having fully secured civil rights and liberties and local self-government would surely have a good and democratic government, because the people who can rely on these guarantees would know how to derive from them the necessary strength to overcome all the deficiencies of the central institutions.

According to C. Stere, in the field of local self-government, the second essential condition of a democratic regime, the situation in Romania was no less bleak. Since the Constitution did not specify the norms of local self-government organization, “based on more complete decentralization and communal independence,” and the subsequent laws and draft bills in the field of governmental organization, adopted or proposed after 1866,
not only completely ignored the constitutional prescriptions, but came to mystify within our dominant class the very idea of local self-government, as in the case of civil liberties.\textsuperscript{47}

In this sense, the most relevant proof, for C. Stere, was the precarious situation imposed on the rural population. Starting from the premise that in Romania peasants “do not live scattered on their lands, as in many countries in the West, but gather in villages and hamlets,” from the perspective of instituting a vital local self-government, “the starting point of governmental organization” should be exactly those “natural population centers where the overwhelming majority of the nation lives.”\textsuperscript{48}

But, in Romania’s legislation, the villages and hamlets did not have the status of a territorial-governmental unit. The governmental organization was based on an “artificial territorial-governmental unit, the ‘rural commune,’ which each ‘reformer’ felt entitled to ‘combine’ and reshuffle at will.” C. Stere exemplified the situation stating that in Romania there were “communes encompassing villages as far as 20 and 30 kilometers apart, the inhabitants of which could not even know one another.” Under these circumstances, the rural population remained an “amorphous mass, since in the natural hotbeds of national life, in villages and hamlets, there could not emerge and develop any centers of civic activity, 80 percent of the citizens being excluded from public life.” The communal and county councils created on this constitutional ground had a fictitious existence, without actual duties of civic government, being mere offices receiving the commands of the central authorities.\textsuperscript{49}

If the future Constitution of Romania, in Stere’s opinion,

\begin{quote}
\textit{did not bring efficient remedies in this respect, if it did not make available to the citizens the actual means of protection for the individual rights and liberties, if it did not create centers of delivery of civic activities, in the villages, towns, counties and provinces, then whichever the adopted central apparatus, we would not have a real constitutional regime, we would not have a democratic state, we would not even have the rule of law, in the true sense of the word}.\textsuperscript{50}
\end{quote}

2.3. The Establishment of Protection Mechanisms for the Rights and Liberties of Citizens

\textbf{T}he solution to protect the rights and liberties of the citizens from the abuse committed by the public authority entailed, according to C. Stere, the creation of an institution of Contentious Administrative Matters. In the \textit{Draft Constitution}, as opposed to the other conceptual design proj-
ects, an important emphasis was on organizing the means of legal protection of
the civil rights and liberties, which should have been the “center of mass of the
entire constitutional system.”

To identify a solution, argued Stere, we should answer the following ques-
tion: “which is the legal protection system of the civil rights and liberties against
governmental abuse that could or should be adopted in Romania”? The an-
ter to this question, as offered by Stere, is a clear one:

The Romanian citizens must have not only the possibility to ask the judiciary for
reparations for the abuse committed, damages and the punishment of the guilty
parties, but also the legal means to impose the making or remaking even of govern-
mental acts, in keeping with the law. In this sense, it is necessary to create certain
jurisdictions with an area of competence well-separated from the ordinary courts
of law.

To achieve this desiderate it was necessary to set up provincial administrative
Courts of Law and a State Council, such as stipulated by articles 116—123 of
the Draft Constitution. Thus, the citizens would have had the right to appeal
in the governmental jurisdictions, independent from the government, against
any governmental decision or act issued by the public governmental body, on
grounds of illegality. Also, the citizen could submit complaints to the respective
courts of law in the case when the public authority representatives did not fulfil
their legal duties, as well as in the case when these would refuse or neglect tak-
ing decisions according to the competence assigned by the law. The conflicts of
assignment would be the competence of the Court of Cassation, in compliance
with the principles of the separation of powers.

Following the adoption of the new Constitution, which did not take into
account the proposals regarding the necessity to institute mechanisms of protec-
tion of the rights of the citizens, C. Stere, in his speech held in the session of the
Chamber of Deputies on 21 November 1923, stated that Romania had not set
up a constitutional regime, but a police regime, because the new Constitution
“did not sufficiently guarantee individual freedom and in no way did it specify
the responsibility of the executive power.”

Stere proved that the constitutional mechanism of democratic states relies on
the following fundamentals: a guarantee of civil rights and liberties, local self-
government, and fair elections. Only if these conditions are guaranteed, can a
people “ensure that self-government, without which, by the modern concept of
world order, it cannot even constitute itself as a Nation.”

When speaking in the plenary session of the Chamber of Deputies, on 21
November 1923, Stere submitted to a critical analysis the voting regime stipu-
lated by the new Constitution, considering that by waving the idea that the election results should be validated by the Court of Cassation, no constitutional guarantee was offered to parliamentary elections. Stere believed that any elections not guaranteed by the constitutional text undermine

the trust of the masses in their leaders, since what confidence could the villagers have when they go voting in groups, they know how they vote, and see that the result is different from what they voted? In such circumstances, we have the right to wonder not how long the Constitution will last, but if we actually have a Constitution.\(^{57}\)

2.4. Local Self-Government in the Draft Constitution Prepared by the Peasant Party Research Department

Following the Union, the politicians of those times (Ion I. C. Brătianu, Vintilă V. Brătianu, Ion G. Duca, Iuliu Maniu, Virgil Madgearu, and others), as well as the scientists in various fields (N. Iorga, D. Gusti, Mihail Manoilescu, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru) believed it was necessary to adopt a new Constitution, with applicability on the entire territory of united Romania, to have thus a legal confirmation of the national unity of the Romanians.\(^{58}\)

In the process of drafting the new Constitution, there arose the problem of configuring the governmental system of unified Romania, starting from the premise that the new provinces had their own governmental systems resulted from the long period spent under foreign occupation. The opposition parties balanced their own visions against the draft Constitution of the Liberal Party.\(^{59}\)

Four drafts of the fundamental law were prepared: the draft of the National Liberal Party Study Group (1921), with an argument by D. Ioanîtescu; the draft of the Romanian National Party in Transylvania, prepared by Professor Romul Boilă (1921); the draft of Professor Constantin Berariu in Cernăuţi (1922), and the draft of the Peasant Party (1922).\(^{60}\)

As far as the last draft is concerned, although the published document was prepared by the Research Department of the Peasant Party, and only the statement of reasons would belong to C. Stere, in reality, the actual version of the text of the draft was also written by Stere, professor of constitutional law at the University of Iaşi.\(^{61}\)

In the statement of reasons to the Draft Constitution, Stere said:

Unfortunately, the absence of a constitutional act formally accepted by the country, necessary to applying and specifying the constitutional forms and norms, as well as to ensuring their observance, could give birth to that painful contradiction
between the state of law and the state of fact, which is characteristic to the chaos we are struggling with.\textsuperscript{62}

Also here, Stere reaffirms his convictions with regard to the necessary essential conditions to the emergence of a democratic regime: the rule of law and local self-government, which include ensuring individual liberties and communal liberties.\textsuperscript{63} Local self-government, according to Stere, as also previously presented in his university lectures, as well as in his works as a publicist, was a governmental organization tasked to regulate certain public interests, in which all interests, exclusively local, were in connection with the very citizens of the locality, be it directly or through their representatives. And

these public interests start manifesting themselves in the simplest public organization, in the cell of state life which is the commune, and that general principle finally starts manifesting itself in the commune. The communal interests must be regulated by the citizens themselves or by their representatives. The interests of several communes gathered into a more extended organization, the county, must be regulated by their citizens.\textsuperscript{64}

Starting from the premise that the peasants in Romania “do not live scattered on their lands, as in many countries in the West, but gather in villages and hamlets,” Stere believed that these “natural population centers where the overwhelming majority of the nation lives,” from the local self-government point of view, should represent the starting point of the governmental organization of the state.\textsuperscript{65}

The most important task of the future Constitution of united Romania was, in Stere’s vision, to effectively ensure the conditions of “freedom and intense civic life.” And if the future Constitution did not make available to the citizens efficient means of protection for their individual rights and liberties, if it did not support the civic emancipation centers in the villages, towns, counties and historical provinces, then regardless of the structure, duties and competence of the central authorities, it would be impossible to set up a functional and democratic constitutional regime. An essential condition for the emergence of a democratic constitutional regime, besides ensuring the citizens’ liberties and local self-government, was to ensure free and fair elections.\textsuperscript{66}

Article 137 in chapter IV (On Local Self-Government Institutions) of title III (On State Powers) of the Draft Constitution defined the status of the local self-government institutions. It stipulated that the activity of the provincial, county, communal and village institutions was to be regulated by laws based on the principles of decentralization and local self-government.
The villages and hamlets deemed natural populated centers would form a governmental unit. The villages and hamlets with a population of up to 500 inhabitants were to be led by the Society of the village, and those with a larger population—by an elected council. But in these villages, the decisions which entailed financial duties and expenditures were to be also confirmed by the vote of the community. The villages with a population below 500 inhabitants, but which had at the most 100 villagers, could also elect, with the approval of the county council, a village council. It was stipulated that the executive bodies be elected.

The villages and hamlets were to be grouped into rural communes, with a total population of at least 10,000 inhabitants. The deliberative body of the rural commune was the elected communal council, which would elect its executive bodies. The villages and small towns with a population of at least 8,000 inhabitants could also form a rural commune, organized along the same principles.

The towns with a population of up to 50,000 inhabitants would form urban communes, and those with a larger population—municipalities. The elective communes and municipalities were to be governed by communal or municipal elective councils which elected their executive bodies. The urban communes were included in the counties, and the municipalities would form a governmental unit equal in rank to the county.

The counties and provinces were to be governed by their elective councils, which elected their executive bodies. The county and municipal councils were given the possibility to send delegates to the provincial council to represent and protect their interests.

All councils and local councils had to be elected by universal, equal, direct, secret, and mandatory vote, based on proportional representation. The right to vote belonged to all the citizens of the respective governmental unit, included on the electoral lists for the Assembly of Deputies.

It was stipulated that the village, communal, county, and provincial authorities are responsible for all matters of local, village, communal, county, or provincial interest, under the reserve of the potential approval of their acts, in the cases and manners determined by the law with a view to observing the general interest.

The possibility of association was stipulated for the village councils or the communal, county or provincial councils, under the conditions established by the law, to regulate and pursue the matters of common interest.

As far as control and governmental wardship were concerned, the county councils and their executive bodies were to be the first court of law for the village and communal governments, and the provincial councils and their executive bodies—the second court of law on the control and governmental wardship
for the village and communal governments, and the first for the municipality and county governments.

The police, in the rural and urban communes, was to be subordinated to the communal authorities, and in the counties and provinces, to the county and provincial authorities.67

Conclusions

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TUDYING THE vast scientific and publishing creation of the illustrious scholar and politician C. Stere, I have reached the conclusion that his observations regarding the matters of sub-national territorial collectivity self-government still apply today. Knowing the opinions of the scholars at the time of the Great Union and of emergence of the unitary Romanian state, with regard to the modalities of ensuring the development of democracy at local level by providing self-government conditions, by upholding human rights and liberties, would very much help the political decision-making factors of the two Romanian states understand the logic behind the functioning of democratic mechanisms in the contemporary world and would serve as the main theoretical foundation for pragmatic and efficient decisions.

C. Stere treated the matters of sub-national territorial collectivity self-government in a pluri-dimensional manner, considering the historical, national specificity and the mainly rural character of the sub-national territorial collectivities in the Romanian lands. Also, Stere believed that the multitude of problems regarding the sub-national territorial collectivity self-government may and should be treated only by starting from the need to observe the citizens’ rights and liberties, especially the right to elect and to be elected.

Studying the theoretical visions, projects, proposals with regard to the sub-national territorial collectivity self-government, the prevalence of theoretical concepts and of the hands-on experience accumulated by the scholars who actively took part in the creation and strengthening of unified Romania offers the chance to the current generation of politicians, scholars, and practitioners not to repeat the mistakes of our forefathers and to capitalize to the maximum the accumulated scientific achievements and practical experiences.

The results of C. Stere’s research continue to be relevant even at the beginning of the 21st century and they could underpin any attempt to identify, research and solve the matters regarding the governance of public affairs at regional and local level in the contemporary Romanian area.

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Notes

32. Sergiu Cornea, “Unificarea administrativă a României întregite: Perspective ba- sarabene,” in *Perspectivele și problemele integrării în spațiul european al cercetării și

33. Erast Diti Tarangul, Tratat de drept administrativ român (Cernăuţi: Tipografia Glăsul Bucovinei, 1944), 147.


38. Ante-proiect de Constituție, 44.

39. Adevărul (Bucharest) 36, 12216 (22 November 1923).


44. Stere, “Din carnetul unui solitar (III),” 11.


55. Adevărul 36, 12216 (22 November 1923).


57. Adevărul 36, 12216 (22 November 1923).


Abstract
Constantin Stere’s View on the Self-Government of Romania’s Sub-National Territorial Collectivities in the First Decades of the 20th Century

Contemporary democratic states make a clear distinction between the matters of national importance and those of regional or local importance. The population of sub-national territorial collectivities, by means of the elected deliberative or executive public authorities, handle an important part of the regional- and local-interest affairs. Thus, the level of local self-government development may be deemed an index of democratic development of the contemporary states. A century ago, the professor, publicist, writer and politician Constantin Stere (1865–1936) used to treat the issues of sub-national territorial collectivity self-government considering the historical, national, and mainly rural particularities in the Romanian area. C. Stere considered that the local self-government phenomenon might and could be treated just starting from the necessity of upholding human rights and liberties, especially the right to elect and be elected within the deliberative and executive public authorities. The results of C. Stere’s research have not lost their relevance and may serve as theoretical grounds for the study and settlement of issues regarding public affairs governance at regional and local level in the contemporary Romanian space.

Keywords
Romania, Constantin Stere, self-government, sub-national territorial collectivity
L’opinion des critiques qui se sont occupés de l’œuvre de Vian est quasi unanime : tous les écrits de Vian sont irrigués, de façon sous-jacente, par l’obsession de la mort. La présence de ce thème n’est pas sans liaison avec des circonstances biographiques, sa maladie cardiaque, d’abord, et ensuite la mort de son père (en 1944) et celle de son meilleur ami, Jacques Loustalot (Le Major) (en 1948). C’est ce qui explique, dans l’opinion de Jacques Duchateau, « l’urgence de vivre » de Vian : « Cette présence de la mort lui donna un sens aigu de la précarité et ne fit que renforcer son goût pour le présent, sous sa forme la plus irrémédiable. »

Florian Zeller est du même avis, considérant que la maladie de l’écrivain a été le moteur de son œuvre entière :

L’angoisse de la mort l’anime depuis toujours. Le temps lui manquera, il le sait : c’est sans doute ce qui explique sa fécondité extraordinaire. Son cœur est malade, et cette angoisse liée à la maladie nourrit toute son œuvre.

Letiția Ilea
Mais le thème de la mort apparaît chez Vian déjà dans les *Cent sonnets*, écrit entre 1941 et 1944. Il y a d’abord des images de la désagrégation, signes avant-coureurs de la mort, comme dans le sonnet *Hellade*, du cycle *Détente* :

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Le scolopendre rongeur} \\
\text{Commençait de percer le cœur} \\
\text{Du chêne sombre comme l’encre.}^3
\end{align*}
\]

Dans *Gruelle aventure*, du cycle *Les Proverbiales*, qui contient des sonnets dont le dernier vers est un jeu phonétique ayant à la base l’homophonie avec le verbe : « Tant va la cruche à l’eau qu’à la fin elle se casse », Vian réalise un contraste entre la mort de la grue et le final amusant du poème, réussissant ainsi à en neutraliser l’effet dramatique :

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{La douce bête, alors, décidée de le suivre} \\
\text{Et vola haut, si haut, dans l’éther qui l’enivre,} \\
\text{Que, las ! ses frêles os se rompirent d’un coup} \\
\text{Et l’Océan, bientôt, baisa sa tête lasse} \\
\text{Et son corps disparut dans un léger remous ;} \\
\text{Tant va la grue là-haut qu’à la fin l’aile se casse.}^4
\end{align*}
\]

Dans le même recueil, c’est toujours la mort des autres qui apparaît ; dans *Hauts fonds*, le poète met en scène la glorification de la « mort heureuse » par l’eau qui devient en final du poème « une mort amoureuse » :

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Heureux les blêmes noyés balancés par la houle !} \\
\text{Les vers ne les lardent pas dans un cercueil obscur…} \\
\text{[…] Vous riez à grandes dents, arrondis par l’orgueil} \\
\text{D’aimer aux abîmes gris le corps froid des sirènes.}^5
\end{align*}
\]

Dans *Nord* est présentée la mort d’un pêcheur parti dans des contrées lointaines, attendu par sa bien-aimée :

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Elle chantait : « Brise légère, ô brise douce} \\
\text{Dis-moi s’il reviendra dans sa maison d’Armor. »} \\
\text{Et, loin sur la falaise et sur la lande rousse} \\
\text{En un soupir éteint l’écho répondit… « mort »}.^6
\end{align*}
\]

Dans *La Roue*, du cycle *La Détente des Cent sonnets*, la mort est brutale, sanglante, lors d’une exécution publique :
Le condamné parut. Sur son col déchiré  
Son visage inquiet semble pâle et tiré.  
Du sang coule en filet de sa lèvre qu’il mord.  
Et le bourreau saisit la barre, habile et preste.  
Il brise en quatre coups le corps las qui se tord…

Dans le même recueil, est déploré la mort des victimes de guerre, dans La Bal-lade de notre guerre, à laquelle Vian ajoute un « Sous-titre à Julot », comme réplique à l’exhortation de l’hymne français « Aux armes, citoyens ! » : « Aux cercueils, les potes ! » :

Si l’appétit vient en mangeant  
La mort vient en faisant la guerre  
La guerre, c’est fait pour tuer les gens.

C’est toujours de la mort des victimes de guerre dont il s’agit, dans Les Frères du recueil suivant, Cantilènes en gelée, qui contient des poèmes écrits entre 1946 et 1949 ; mais cette fois, c’est la Première Guerre mondiale qui est répudiée :

Comme ils étaient copains, ils s’habillaient pareil :  
On n’faisait pas de jaloux : y avait pour chacun d’eux  
Un bon mètre de terre avec une petite croix.  
Signe particulier : néant.

Les Araignées, dans Cantilènes en gelée, est dédié à Odette Bost, amie de l’écrivain morte prématurément ; la mort, sous l’hypostase de vieille personne, rend visite à de petits enfants :

Dans les maisons où les enfants meurent  
Il entre de très vieilles personnes  
Elles s’asseyent dans l’antichambre  
Leur canne entre leurs genoux noirs. […]  
Et puis, lorsque l’enfant est mort  
Elles se lèvent et vont ailleurs.

Dans Le Grand passage, du même recueil, il y a une autre évocation de la présence foudroyante de la mort, dont le caractère étrange est souligné par l’invention lexicale du dernier vers :

Le seuil de l’immortalité  
Est assez haut, en pierre, avec des plantes
On ne s’apercevait pas du tout qu’on le passait
Mais de l’autre côté
Des tripotées
D’oiseaux sans ailes ni sans eau
Poussaient des cris d’échiran…

Dans *Précisions sur la vie*, le titre prétentieux est contrefait par la dédicace : À mes zenfants ; le poème, dont le titre et la dédicace pourraient faire le lecteur s’attendre aux conseils qu’un père donnerait à ses enfants, fruits de son expérience, ne contient en réalité rien de tout cela. La manière plaisante du poète d’aborder ce thème est peut-être celle qui convient le mieux dans le cas d’un tel sujet. La mort y est pourtant présente :

*La vie, ça tient de diverses choses
En un sens, ça ne se discute pas
Mais on peut toujours changer de sens […]
Il peut se faire que l’on meure
– Même, ça peut très bien se faire –
Mais pourtant, ça n’y change rien.*

Le premier poème où Vian se réfère à sa propre mort fait partie des *Poèmes divers* : *Que tu es impatiente*, où la mort est personnifiée, en tant que jeune fille « à la robe d’iris noir », qui rend visite d’abord à des enfants puis au poète. Il n’y a pas de grandiloquence dans l’évocation de la mort, pas de grands mots, pas de lamentation, le poète enchaîne une série de constatations simples et touchantes :

*Que tu es impatiente, la mort
On fait le chemin au-devant de toi
Il suffisait d’attendre
Que tu es impatiente, la mort
La partie perdue, tu le sais déjà
Tout recommencera […]
La mort est revenue ce soir
Avec sa robe d’iris noirs
La mort est revenue chez moi
On a frappé… Ouvrez la porte… La voilà.*

Le lyrisme direct de ce poème va déterminer sa mise en musique après la mort de son auteur et son inclusion dans l’édition de *Chansons* de Vian. Outre la présence de la mort, le poème contient l’affirmation de la force intarissable de la vie :
Le soleil sur l’eau
Tu n’y peux rien
L’ombre d’une fleur
Tu n’y peux rien
La joie dans la rue
Les fraises des bois
Un sourire en mai
Tu n’y peux rien.¹⁵

Il y a d’ailleurs, dans plusieurs écrits de Vian où la mort est présente, son pendant : la joie de vivre, l’exacerbation des forces vitales, qui viennent rétablir une sorte d’équilibre.

Le thème de la mort éclatera très puissamment dans le Dernier recueil (qui contient les poèmes inédits de Vian écrits entre 1951 et 1953), où il est déjà annoncé par le premier vers : Je ne voudrais pas crever. Le choix du conditionnel comme marque de politesse et le terme argotique « crever » ont pour fonction de réduire le pathétisme de l’affirmation, en la rendant aussi moins banale. Le titre choisi par Vian est beaucoup plus poétique et plus personnel que le neutre « Je ne veux pas mourir ». Pourtant, il ne faudrait pas faire beaucoup de spéculations sur le titre de ce recueil, vu qu’il a été donné par les éditeurs posthumes de Vian. Le poème qui donne le titre du recueil est en fait une énumération des constituants d’un univers idéal :

Je voudrais pas mourir
Sans qu’on ait inventé
Les roses éternelles
La journée de deux heures
La mer à la montagne
La montagne à la mer
La fin de la douleur
Les journaux en couleur¹⁶,

suivie d’une affirmation paradoxale qui semble contredire ce que l’on avait affirmé avant :

Je voudrais pas crever
Avant d’avoir goûté
La saveur de la mort...¹⁷
La pensée de la mort va de pair avec l’affirmation de la soif de vivre et des joies de la vie quotidienne, configurant une conception qui va dans le sens d’un certain épicurisme :

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Pourquoi que je vis [...]} \\
\text{Pour toucher le sable} \\
\text{Voir de fond de l’eau [...]} \\
\text{Pourquoi que je vis} \\
\text{Parce que c’est joli.}^{18}
\end{align*}
\]

On peut déceler aussi un « mal de vivre » chez Vian, dans \textit{La Vie c’est comme une dent}, suggéré par une comparaison banale en apparence, qui se transforme en paradoxe à la fin du poème :

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Et pour qu’on soit vraiment guéri} \\
\text{Il faut vous l’arracher, la vie.}^{19}
\end{align*}
\]

La menace de la mort est présente de nouveau dans le poème \textit{Quand j’aurai du vent dans mon crâne} où le poète met en scène sa future désintégration ; le tragique d’une telle vision est contrecarré par le registre argotique utilisé par Vian et par l’impression de jeu verbal que donnent certains vers :

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Quand j’aurai du vent dans mon crâne} \\
\text{Quand j’aurai du vert sur mes osse} \\
P’têt qu’on croira que je ricane \\
Mais ça sera une impression fosse \\
Car il me manquera \\
Mon élément plastique \\
Plastique tique tique.^{20}
\end{align*}
\]

Même quand il s’agit des choses les plus graves, Vian donne l’impression de vouloir se déguiser, de vouloir détourner l’attention du lecteur de la gravité du fait en soi par une plaisanterie, un jeu de langage etc. C’est « la politesse du désespoir » dont parlait Jean Clouzet. L’angoisse de la mort devient évidente dans le dernier poème de \textit{Je voudrais pas crever}, \textit{Je mourrai d’un cancer de la colonne vertébrale}, où les visions macabres :

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Je mourrai d’une jambe arrachée} \\
\text{Par un rat géant jailli d’un trou géant}^{21}
\end{align*}
\]
laissent la place à une sorte d’indifférence curieuse dans les derniers vers, comme si le poète assistant en spectateur à sa propre mort :

*Je mourrai un peu, beaucoup,  
Sans passion, mais avec intérêt  
Et puis quand tout sera fini  
Je mourrai.*

Suivons maintenant l’évolution de ce thème dans les écrits en prose de Vian. En ce qui concerne *L’Écume des jours*, l’opinion de Gilbert Pestureau est que « Tout un réseau d’images et de significations mène le monde euphorique du roman vers la dégradation inéluctable, espace pourrissant et mort universelle. »

Dans ce chef-d’œuvre de Vian, la mort est annoncée dès le début : l’anguille du tuyau de la cuisine dont Nicolas, le cuisinier de Colin, sectionne la tête avec une lame de rasoir (épisode que Chick considère d’une façon extrêmement détachée : « C’est tout ? dit Chick. Redonne-moi du pâté. J’espère qu’elle a une nombreuse famille dans le tuyau » et ensuite le désastre de la patinoire, que Vian décrit avec indifférence, comme si la mort était la chose la plus naturelle :

*Il se rangèrent en arrivant à l’extrémité droite de la piste pour laisser place aux varlets-nettoyeurs qui, désespérant de récupérer, dans la montagne de victimes, autre chose que des lambeaux sans intérêt d’individualités dissociées, s’étaient munis de leurs raclettes pour éliminer le total des allongés.*

Cette indifférence, ce « manque d’intérêt » à considérer la mort, bien qu’omniprésente, est une constante de l’œuvre de Vian. Même si, dans l’univers de Vian, la mort est le plus souvent violente – on se suicide en avalant de clous rouillés, on est déchiqueté par une mine etc. –, elle est envisagée avec détachement, avec une « politesse du désespoir », syntagme lancé par un des critiques de l’auteur.

Mais, à notre avis, l’inacceptation, le refus, l’injustice de la mort se traduisent chez Vian précisément par la violence, la cruauté avec laquelle est envisagée, comme unique moyen d’exorciser une réalité inéluctable.

La mort ne s’attaque pas seulement aux êtres, d’habitude frêles et jeunes, elle s’étend à l’univers entier : le monde vianesque contient de nombreux événements et métaphores qui renvoient à la destruction, à l’usure du règne animal et végétal, de toutes les choses qui le composent. On pourrait citer, dans ce sens, dans le premier roman de Vian, *Trouble dans les Andains*, la destruction de l’hôtel particulier de la baronne de Pyssenlied ou celle de l’immeuble de l’oncle d’Odilonne Duveau dans *Vercoquin et le plancton*. Dans *L’Écume des jours*, les
transformations de la maison de Colin annoncent la mort de Chloé : les carreaux qui « respirent mal », les murs qui rétrécissent, le plafond qui rejoignait presque le plancher… De même, la maladie de la souris, « ange gardien » de la maison ; la souris mourra elle aussi, à la fin du roman, après avoir mis sa tête dans la gueule du chat, sur la queue duquel marcheront « onze petites filles aveugles », détail qui n’est pas sans liaison avec la déesse Fortune, aveugle. L’Automne à Pékin (publié en 1947) abonde lui aussi en événements annonciateurs de la « cascade de cadavres »27 dont est jonché le roman. Comme l’observe Gilbert Pestureau, « Le décor lui-même respire, matière vivante, grandit puis vieillit et se réduit au néant, accompagnant l’homme vers la mort. »28 Cette présence en excès de la mort et l’accumulation de détails qui la préfigurent, parfois d’une violence hors du commun, ont un effet paradoxal, celui de dédramatiser cette réalité, que le lecteur, au bout du compte, arrive à considérer avec sérénité, comme constitu-ant intrinsèque de l’univers de Vian. En ce qui concerne l’Herbe rouge, ce roman finit aussi par la mort du personnage principal, dépourvue de toute signification transcendante, de tout sens :

Le corps de Wolf, nu, presque intact, gisait la face tournée vers le soleil. Sa tête, pliée contre son épaule à un angle peu vraisemblable, paraissait indépendante de son corps. Rien n’avait pu rester dans ses yeux grands ouverts. Ils étaient vides.29

La mort de ce personnage apparaît en tant que suite logique à ses affirmations, empreintes d’un cynisme à la Vian :

Quoi de plus seul qu’un mort … murmura-t-il. Mais quoi de plus tolérant ? Quoi de plus stable… […] et quoi de plus aimable ? Quoi de plus adapté à sa fonction… de plus libre de toute inquiétude ? […] Un mort, continuait Wolf, c’est bien. C’est complet. Ça n’a pas de mémoire. C’est terminé. On n’est pas complet quand on n’est pas mort.30

La mort, jusqu’à présent menaçante et tragique, change de signification dans ce roman, devenant consolatrice, apaisante.31

La plupart des textes du recueil Les Fourmis, contenant onze nouvelles, bien qu’ayant des sujets d’une grande variété, disparates, sont apparentés par l’omniprésence de la mort. Le thème est fréquent dans le théâtre de Vian aussi, et il suffit de penser à sa pièce la plus connue et la plus accomplie, Les Bâtisseurs d’Empire, dont les personnages disparaissent un à un. Seul subsiste le Schmürz, sur l’identité duquel la critique a longtemps glosé, sans qu’il y ait jusqu’à présent une explication unanimement acceptable. Il est possible que toute interprétation du Schmürz appartienne au domaine des spéculations et
qu’il ne soit que cela, un Schmürz… mais d’autre part, par sa laideur, par ses qualités répugnantes et par les bruits disharmoniques dont il est l’auteur, ne serait-il pas possible de le considérer, lui aussi, comme un signe avant-coureur de la mort, qui triomphera à la fin de la pièce ?

En ce qui concerne la présence de la mort dans presque tous les textes de Vian, la critique a parlé d’une sorte de prédestination, d’une volonté supérieure qui anéantit tout :

_Tantôt l’homme triomphe, et impose ses goûts, mais plus souvent une volonté supérieure et fatale, tel le _fatum_ latin ou la _moira_ grecque, fait danser vers la mort les êtres multiples qui peuplent un univers où la dégradation – la mode d’aujourd’hui dirait l’entropie – est la loi la plus implacable, du vivant vers la mort._

Il est évident que cette manière de Vian de faire aboutir la destinée de ses personnages n’est pas sans liaison avec sa propre obsession de la mort, provoquée par sa maladie. Mais, à considérer la structure des personnages de Vian, la mort apparaît comme seule issue possible, d’un point de vue strictement narratif. Voilà la caractérisation de Jacques Duchateau, concernant les six personnages de _L’Écume des jours_ :

_[ils] possèdent la particularité d’être beaux, très jeunes, […] sans passé, sans projet d’avenir, sans famille, sans souvenir, sans psychologie, bref, des personnages rigoureusement sans autre épaisseur que celle qui leur est conférée par leurs actions, leurs désirs immédiats, leurs goûts, leurs passions._

On pourrait, à notre avis, appliquer cette observation à tous les personnages créés par Vian : ils sont tous dépourvus de consistance, « transparents », « bidimensionnels », manquant de relief et de profondeur psychologique. C’est peut-être la conséquence de l’« humanisation » du règne animal et végétal chez Vian : la réification des humains. En ces conditions, du point de vue de l’économie narrative, la mort apparaît comme unique issue possible pour ces personnages, capable de leur donner des contours fermes, de la consistance. Pour Hegel, rappelons-nous, la mort a une valeur salvatrice, en ce qu’elle met fin à la négation de l’être individuel qui ne peut vivre d’une façon adéquate aux exigences de la vie spirituelle. Pour Dilthey aussi, le rapport entre la vie et la mort a une signification décisive, dans la mesure où la limitation de notre existence par la mort est fondamentale pour comprendre et évaluer la vie. La mort donne de la profondeur aux personnages de Vian, elle transforme leur existence, superficielle pour la plupart du temps, en destin.
En ce qui concerne la mort de Chloé de *L’Écume des jours*, si nous pensons à l’affirmation faite par Edgar Allan Poe dans *La Philosophie de la composition*:

*De tous les thèmes mélancoliques, lequel, selon le consentement universel des hommes, est le plus mélancolique ?* Réponse évidente : la Mort. Et quand, me dis-je, ce thème le plus mélancolique est-il le plus poétique ? [...] la réponse, ici encore, découle évidemment : *Quand il s’allie le plus étroitement à la Beauté : la mort d’une belle femme est donc indiscutablement le thème le plus poétique du monde*\(^{35}\),

c’est un des éléments qui contribue à la poéticité de ce roman, outre la vision du monde qui s’en dégage et le langage tout à fait particulier et novateur.

Chez Vian, la mort n’entraîne aucune interrogation angoissée, aucune prise de conscience existentielle, comme chez Camus, par exemple. D’ailleurs, Vian a bien marqué ses distances par rapport à l’existentialisme. On ne peut non plus établir aucun rapprochement avec la manière dont Sartre envisage la mort : pour Sartre, la mort ôte à la vie toute signification, la rendant absurde. Pour Vian, à notre avis, la mort est un prolongement prévisible d’une existence déjà absurde, à cause du travail, de la guerre, de l’amour impossible...

Pourtant, quand il s’agit de Vian, il faut faire attention aux hypothèses que l’on avance, puisque la faute la plus grave concernant ses textes serait de les lire avec une clé « réaliste », « cartésienne ». Il est communément admis qu’il est le créateur d’un univers parallèle au nôtre, aux lois propres, où il est fort possible que ce que nous comprenons d’habitude par « mort » ait un tout autre sens.

Un des critiques de Vian, Michel Gauthier, affirmait que le fait que Vian a choisi presque sans exception des personnages jeunes était une tentative d’exclusion de la mort, dont la vieillesse est le signe.\(^{36}\) La préférence de Vian pour les personnages jeunes s’explique, à notre avis, par le choix de mettre en scène un univers familier – comme par exemple dans *Vercoquin et le plancton* – mais aussi parce que la jeunesse et tout ce qu’elle implique donnait à l’auteur la possibilité d’établir les pôles d’une dichotomie, dont l’autre terme est le monde des adultes, un monde de la déshumanisation à cause du travail, un monde où la religion est un leurre et la guerre une menace permanente. L’univers que Vian crée dans *L’Écume des jours* par exemple a une pureté enfantine, comme celle qui existe dans *Les Enfants terribles* de Cocteau, et la mort y apparaît d’autant plus tragique. Mais ce caractère tragique se résout (et se dissout) chez Vian au niveau de l’écriture. Comme l’observe Gilbert Pestureau, l’écriture

*transforme l’horreur en beauté, en burlesque ou en loufoque, jouant avec les mots sur notre sensibilité ; la délicatesse lyrique alterne avec l’horrible, la farce avec le*
macabre, le comique surgit dans le pathétique même et l’ironie dans l’émotion ; l’humour grinçant et noir permet de dominer l’angoisse de la fin fatale.37

En fin de compte, le lecteur, sous l’effet des « bacchanales linguistiques » de Vian, pris dans un univers dont il s’efforce de déceler les lois cachées, perçoit la mort comme un son étouffé, lointain.

EN CONCLUSION, on voit que l’obsession de la mort, qui a hanté Vian dès son plus jeune âge à cause de sa maladie, sous-tend son œuvre entière. Ce thème est présent dans la première œuvre structurée par Vian en vue de la publication, les Cent sonnets, pour éclater avec force dans ses romans et ses pièces de théâtre, sans que les chansons de l’écrivain en soient exemptes. En ce qui concerne la manière dont ce thème est traité dans la poésie de Vian, on peut observer qu’il est abordé en tant que dégradation de l’univers et mort des autres dans les premiers recueils, pour devenir, dans le dernier recueil, une présence angoissante en tant que mort du poète lui-même. Ce thème a pourtant son pendant : l’affirmation de la joie de vivre, doublée par la recherche du bonheur.

Notes

4. Ibid., p. 96-97.
5. Ibid., p. 46.
6. Ibid., p. 44.
7. Ibid., p. 79.
8. Ibid., p. 107.
10. Ibid., p. 153.
12. Ibid., p. 158.
13. Ibid., p. 215-216
17. Ibid., p. 233.
18. Ibid., p. 234.
19. Ibid., p. 235.
20. Ibid., p. 235-236.
21. Ibid., p. 250.
22. Ibid., p. 251.
25. Ibid., p. 70.
30. Ibid., p. 527.
Abstract
The Theme of Death in the Works of Boris Vian

The writings of Boris Vian are underpinned by an obsession with death which lends a sharp sense of precariousness to the auctorial vision. However, the same element gives additional meaning to the fleeting present and to the lived experience, to the joy of life, turning the mundane daily existence into a genuine destiny.

Keywords
*L’Écume des jours*, death obsession, disease, the joy of life
The volume reviewed here is the most complete edition of Nicolaus Olahus’ work to date. It has been published in a prestigious series, “Opere fundamentale” (Fundamental works), curated by the Romanian Academy and the National Foundation for Science and Art, which follows the model of the French Pléiade. It is a semi-critical rather than a full critical edition. The series aims to provide access to reliable texts to as wide an audience as possible, along with the most important critical apparatus. The foreword to the volume was written by Ioan-Aurel Pop, who places Olahus among the European humanists of the sixteenth century and discusses how Olahus’ Hungarian intellectual contemporaries related to the fact that he had a Romanian ancestry. This is followed by Maria Capoianu’s study, where the author describes Olahus’ stay in Western Europe. Hungarian King Louis II died in the battle of Mo-

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hács (29 August 1526), after which his widow, Queen Mary, stayed in various Western-European cities (Augsburg, Leuven, Brussels). Olahus, serving as the queen’s secretary until 1542, accompanied Mary. During his stay in Western Europe, Olahus met or corresponded with the most famous humanists of the time, including Erasmus.

The two-volume work is bilingual: it contains both the original Latin text and its Romanian translation. Olahus wrote his historical, literary, and religious works, as well as his letters, exclusively in Latin. That is why it makes sense to also publish his writing in the Latin original. In his private and official letters (to his representatives, family members, etc.), he also used the German and the Hungarian languages. Only some of these letters have been published so far, and most of them remain unpublished. The book has the following structure: the historical works open the volume (Hungaria, Athila, Chronicon breve). The second part comprises the ecclesiastic works (Catholicae ac Christianae religionis praecepta, Ordo et ritus, Processus sub forma Missae), which have received little attention so far (with the exception of Processus). These are followed by the poems (Carmina), minor records (Genesis filiorum serenissimi regis Ferdinandi, Brevis descriptio cursus viate Benedicti Zercheky, Ephemerides), selected letters, two of Nicolaus Olahus’ patents of nobility (1548, 1558), finishing with some details of Olahus’ will. With the exception of Hungaria, Athila, Carmina, Processus, and the correspondence, the rest of Olahus’ writing has not been published in print since the sixteenth/eighteenth century. The work of the editors and translators (Florentina Nicolae, professor at Ovidius University of Constanța, Dorin Garofeanu, instructor at several Canadian universities and researcher at the G. Călinescu Institute of Literary History and Theory in Bucharest, Ioana Costa, professor at the University of Bucharest, as well as the reputed longtime researcher of the oeuvre of Nicolaus Olahus, Maria Capoianu) is certainly commendable.

Hungaria, which was translated into Romanian by Maria Capoianu, is a republication of the text published by Ádám Ferenc Kollár in 1763. The present publication reprints Kollár’s text without any changes, including his preface and annotations. For the present publication, Florentina Nicolae and Dorin Garofeanu compared Kollár’s text and its Romanian translation with the text of the Hungaria published by Mátyás Bél in 1735, as well as the critical edition of Hungaria. The editors did not use any original Olahus manuscripts for this edition. However, even if they did not have the opportunity to look at these texts, they could have mentioned the fact that two manuscript versions of Hungaria have survived. One is held in the Austrian national library in Vienna (ÖNB Cod. 8739), while the other is in the Erzbischöfliche Diözesan- und Dombibliothek in Cologne (EDDB, Hs. 293, fols. 3–39). The Vienna version is also currently available:
This version contains a lot of marginalia and corrections, some of which are in Olahus’ hand. However, there are also notes and corrections that were not added by Olahus but by another hand, which has not been identified so far. The text of Hungaria thus continuously underwent changes both already during Olahus’ life and after his death. Incidentally, Olahus himself also noted in the poem he wrote as a preface to Hungaria (Ad lectorem) that he would correct the text as soon as he returned to Hungary (he wrote Hungaria in 1536, during his stay in Brussels). He especially promised to make corrections in connection with the place names, which he did indeed do. This situation presents considerable challenges for the publishers of Olahus’ text. Identifying these toponyms is of major significance for research in both history and onomastics, and identifying place names also presented the biggest problem for the publishers of this volume. Chapter XVI is especially rich in toponyms. If we look at the manuscript of Hungaria, we can see that Olahus later rewrote almost all of this chapter. It can therefore also be concluded that Mátyás Bél published the earlier version, while all the other editions (Kollár, Eperjessy-Juhász) printed the later version of the text, the one rewritten by Olahus. Mátyás Bél thus used a text that did not contain Olahus’ retrospective corrections, so Bél’s text differs from all the other versions in this chapter. Although the publishers of this volume corrected Kollár’s text based on Mátyás Bél’s text in some cases, or they highlighted the difference between Bél’s and Kollár’s text (e.g., Opere 1: 26), in the case of chapter XVI, they failed to point out the differences between the texts, even though Juhász and Eperjessy also published the original text that was later crossed out by Nicolaus Olahus. Unfortunately, Juhász and Eperjessy did not identify the places listed by Olahus in their critical edition, either.

The editors were unable to identify the following places in chapter XVI, which they claimed “do not appear in the archival collections that list which locations still exist and which ones have disappeared” (Opere 1: 145–147): Velete, Zathar, Paled, Forgola, Bathe, Kallo, Bezermeny, Guta. However, most of these locations can be identified. Velete is Велятин, located in Ukraine today, close to the border (in Romanian: Velatiin, in Hungarian: Veléte); Paled = Botpalád in present-day Hungary, next to the Ukrainian border; Forgola = Forgolány (Ukraine today, Форголань); Kallo = Nagykálló (Hungary); Bezermeny = Hajdúböszörmény (Hungary), Guta = Gut, the area south of Nyíradony (Hungary). Zathar indeed has not been identified yet. Bathe is Bátor accord-
ing to some, i.e., Nyírbátor (Hungary), which is also supported by the fact that Mátyás Bél’s text contains Bátor instead of Bathe, although Olahus’ autograph text contains Bathe.\(^5\)

I indicated above that Olahus’ poem _Ad lectorem_ was printed before _Hungaria_, something like a preface. In this edition, the last two lines of the Romanian translation of the poem are the following: _Strălucita victorie a hunilor odinioară,/_ _Rege Atila fiind, soarta spre bine le-ntoarse_. However, these two lines are not part of the Latin text (_Opere_ 1: 16–17). The editor of the poem, Florentina Nicolae, also notes that _Ad lectorem_ is poem 35 in Olahus’ collection of poems (_Carmina_), without these two lines (see _Opere_, 1: 15, 874–877.) At the same time, the two Romanian translations are also two different texts. On the one hand, the editors adopted Maria Capoianu’s translation in the case of _Ad lectorem_; on the other hand, Florentina Nicolae also translated the same poem again as poem 35 of Carmina. This volume contains the _Hungaria_ that was published by Maria Capoianu in 1993. In that edition, Capoianu again published Kollár’s Latin text, in parallel with its Romanian translation. The two abovementioned lines were added to the Romanian translation of Olahus’ _Ad lectorem_ in this version.\(^6\) It is a mystery why Capoianu added these two lines to the Romanian version, since they are not part of Kollár’s text, either. The two lines were in fact written by János Thuróczy, rather than by Olahus. Thuróczy finished his _Chronica Hungarorum_, which was published in Augsburg in 1488, with this distich: “Sorte nova redit Hunnorum clarissima quondam,/_ Tempore, quae fuit Atilae victoria Regis.” The distich also appears in the Mátyás Bél edition of Olahus’ _Chronicon breve_ (_Opere_ 1: 386) as a motto (also published in this edition). Capoianu also published the _Chronicon_ in 1993, along with its Romanian translation. She did not explain there either why she added the two lines in question at the end of the Romanian translation of _Ad lectorem_. Thus, the distich about the king of the Huns was not written by Nicolaus Olahus but by János Thuróczy. Olahus only adopted it as a motto for his _Chronicon_, which contains autobiographical records from the time period between the coronation of King Matthias and 1558.

A similar editorial inconsistency can be identified in the edition of _Carmina_. The editors number the poems based on Cristina Neagu’s edition.\(^7\) The poems of the present edition were translated by Florentina Nicolae. The editors indicate in the introduction that they did not include poem 76 of the Neagu edition because it is not Olahus’ poem but rather three lines quoted from Virgil’s _Aeneid_ (III, 493–495) (_Opere_ 1: XLI). This is an excellent observation on the part of the editors, which Emőke Rita Szilágyi also points out in her review of the Neagu edition.\(^8\) Nobody besides Cristina Neagu considers these three lines by
Virgil to be Olahus’s poem. Szilágyi also highlights the fact that Olahus quotes the three lines by Virgil in one of his letters addressed to Tamás Nádasdy (Vienna, 17 November 1539). Regardless, the editors included it among Olahus’ poems as poem 77 (Opere 1: 931), noting that these three lines are “adaptations of Virgil’s Aeneid.” The editors’ decision mystifies me because this is not an adaptation but a simple quotation. Olahus only rewrote a single word in the poem (nobilis instead of nullus), which does not justify calling it Olahus’ poem. All the more so because one word was also changed in the Latin text of this edition: Iam sua, non alia replaces Iam sua, nos alia, which Olahus quotes accurately. That being said, the Romanian translation is correct: Noi suntem chemați... This is thus a simple typo, just like nullus~nobilis must be a simple slip of the pen rather than an adaptation. Or it may be the case that Olahus himself quoted a Virgil text that contained the word nobilis.

A similar issue is the fact that Processus sub forma Missae was included in the edition. Processus is a piece on alchemy, describing the alchemic transmutations of matter by analogy with the Catholic mass. This work is popular among those researching alchemy, and even Carl Gustav Jung analyzed it. Cristina Neagu has tried to prove in various studies that Processus was written by Olahus, based on an unfounded claim by István Weszprémi, an eighteenth-century physician. Neagu later also began to doubt this idea, writing in 2019 that the author of Processus cannot be identified accurately. The editors nevertheless included it in the volume, noting that it is “a piece attributed to Nicolaus Olahus” (Opere 1: XLVIII). Except for István Weszprémi and Cristina Neagu (who later revised her position), nobody has ascribed this piece to Olahus. The English, Hungarian, or French editors of Processus have all rejected Olahus’ authorship. In spite of this, it is salutary that this highly popular and fascinating sixteenth-century piece has now also been published in Romanian, although there is nothing to prove that it was written by Olahus.

The inclusion of the brief autobiography of Olahus’ secretary, Benedek Szercseky (Zercheky) (Brevis descriptio cursus vitae Benedicti Zercheky), in the volume is also problematic. Szercseky also mentions Olahus’ death in the text: “[Olahus] died between 10 and 12 o’clock on 17 January 1568 in Nagyszombat” (Opere 1: 958–959). Therefore, this cannot have been written by Olahus himself. It is strange that neither the editors nor the translator (Florentina Nicolae) commented on this passage. Brevis descriptio was thus not written by Olahus but by Szercseky. If the editors wanted to include these two pieces (Processus sub forma Missae and Brevis descriptio) in the volume anyway, it would have been better to include them in a separate chapter, as pieces of uncertain authorship.
Except for *Hungaria*, *Athila*, a few poems, and parts of the correspondence, the rest of Olahus’ works are published in Romanian translation in this volume for the first time. This is indeed a serious achievement on the part of the editors and the translators (Florentina Nicolae and Dorin Garofeanu in particular), even if the editors adopted Maria Capoianu’s earlier translations in the case of *Hungaria*, *Athila*, and the correspondence. Therefore, only those letters were included in the edition, for instance, that Olahus wrote to his humanist friends during his stay in Belgium. These are clearly very valuable pieces of Olahus’ correspondence, but they comprise only a fraction of it. The editors publish the Latin text of the letters based on the Arnold Ipolyi edition: *Oláh Miklós levelezése* (Monumenta Hungariae Historica, Diplomataria, XXV) (Budapest: M. T. Akadémia Könyvkiadó-Hivatala, 1875). Ipolyi completely disregarded the genesis of the codex containing the correspondence (*Epistolae familiares*). In other words, he did not consider the fact that Olahus, having selected the letters he wanted to include in the codex, gave them to three clerks to copy them. Olahus then checked and corrected the letters, in some cases completely rewriting them. Interesting conclusions can be drawn from these changes regarding Olahus’ writing strategy, as well as the image he wanted to project about himself for posterity. Unfortunately, Ipolyi’s edition omits these important details. That is why it would have been a good idea to use the latest critical edition of the letters, which is also available online, during the publication and fine-tuning of the Latin text and its Romanian translations. For example, some of Capoianu’s incorrect dating could also have been corrected this way. *Calendas Septembris* is not 18 August but 19 August (*Opere*, 2: 1016–1017), while *sexta Idus Februarii* is not 7 February but 8 February (*Opere*, 2: 1040–1041). These two letters were written to Olahus by Levinus Ammonius, whose non-Latinized name is Lieven van den Zande rather than Levin von der Mande, as it appears in our edition (*Opere*, 2: 1010).

I also do not understand why the editors did not draw attention to the fact that they are also publishing new letters, compared to Capoianu’s two above-mentioned editions and translations. These include, for instance, letters written to Ioannes Arnoldus, István Báthory (palatine of Hungary), provost Imre Bebek, Bishop of Trent Bernhard von Cles, Joannes Boclerus, Paulus Borius, and others. The editors justify publishing the letter written to Arnoldus by stating that “on the one hand, this is the earliest known letter by Olahus; on the other hand, it was written during the carefree days before the disaster of Mohács, and it highlights some of the unique characteristics of Olahus’ personality” (*Opere*, 2: 1116). Both conclusions are incorrect. The publishers of the letter could also easily have seen this, had they looked at the abovementioned
critical edition of Olahus’ correspondence. More specifically, Olahus wrote his first known letter to the College of Canons in the Chapter of Brașov (Kronstadt, Brassó) on 9 February 1523, while in Esztergom.¹⁴ The letter to Arnoldus was written on 23 May 1529, in Znojmo. It must have been an inadvertent mistake for the editor and the translator (Dorin Garofeanu) to say that the letter was written in the carefree days before the disaster of Mohács (Opere, 2: 1106), since it is well-known that the battle of Mohács took place three years earlier, on 29 August 1526. Znojmo (Znoyma) is also identified incorrectly. According to Garofeanu, it is Znairn, located by the Danube between Vienna and Linz (Opere, 2: 1151). In fact, it is Znojm, located in Czechia, on the left bank of the Dyje River, the German name of which is Znaim or Znaym.

One particularly valuable aspect of the volume is that it publishes Olahus’ religious works, some of his minor historical works, as well as his two patents of nobility and parts of his will. Even in Latin, these were last published in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and this is the first time that readers can read them in Romanian. This has resulted in the most complete Olahus edition and translation to date, which naturally constitutes a real novelty for the Romanian readers and researchers. The Romanian translation is excellent, I did not find any mistranslations or errors in it. This edition will certainly give new impetus to the research on Olahus. The summary of the history of the reception of Olahus’ works at the end of the volume is certainly of great help to researchers, as is the first-rate index of places and persons. The work of the editors and typesetters also deserves praise, since setting the bilingual texts parallel with each other is a very difficult task, but the typesetters and editors of this edition have done an excellent job. Even though a typo has remained in the edition of the correspondence (on page 1010, the name of Levinus Ammonius remains in the header, so it seems that we are reading his correspondence rather than that of Olahus), but none of this detracts anything from the value of this well-executed volume.

It also follows from the above that publishing Nicolaus Olahus’ texts requires great attention and erudition, posing numerous challenges for the editors. That is why the work of the publishers, editors, and commentators of this edition deserves praise. This volume also shows that it is time for a critical edition of Olahus’ works. This can only be achieved with the collaboration of a number of authors and Olahus researchers (Romanians, Hungarians, Slovaks, etc.). In any case, the reviewed volume will also certainly be of great help to the authors of any future critical edition.
Notes

5. Bél, 29; önb, Cod. 8739, 25v.
John D. Hosler
Jerusalem Falls: Seven Centuries of War and Peace
New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 2022

Whosoever has not visited Jerusalem at least once—or has otherwise read about the holy city in the Bible, in history or theology books? It is likely that most of those who read this review have done both. The remainder, in the minority, were presumably informed in some measure about the holy city through digital media, especially since Jerusalem hits the headlines every year on Easter or whenever interreligious clashes occur in Israel.

Viewed through the convoluted theological and religious history of the world, Jerusalem is Yahweh’s promise to the chosen people, as well as the locus of manifestation of the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam). Taken as a religious identity landmark in the works of Christian writers and Church Fathers through its sacred biblical geography, this paradigmatic city became the center of the world, metaphorically linked to Adam’s paradise and to the heavenly eternal city, the place where the righteous will enjoy life after death.

This city full of history is the focus of Hosler’s book; however, the interpretation I offered above is not what Hosler wants to convey to the reader. As the book’s title seemingly suggests, the author’s primary interest lies not in engaging with the phenomenology of a sacred Jerusalem and its entangled theological history (even though, in the introduction, he does not eschew from making the reader familiar with the cultural appurtenance and spiritual heritage of the city for all three Abrahamic religions, pp. 1–10). Rather, he notably intends to illustrate a well-told story about the socio-military memoirs of this city. Hosler’s monograph emphasizes the transformations brought about by military phases within the history of the holy city. It epitomizes how Jerusalem was the scene of military confrontations, explicitly so from the time of Islam’s emergence to the period of the crusades (7th–13th century). This is not a book illuminating Jerusalem in every aspect of medieval life and power, but, as the author states: “it is a book about conquest: those ‘falls,’ or moments from the seventh through the thirteenth century when possession of the city passed from adherents of one religious confession to another by way of conflict,” and especially, “the story of concord and resolution” (p. 3).

The narrative is divided into 5 chapters. The book also contains 17 illustrations and 7 useful maps, portraying the area of the city under the various local powers, from the time of early Islam to the period of the Third Crusade. As the author confesses, underpinning the book were some of the courses in military history he taught at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, especially “Deep Roots of Conflict in the Middle East” and “Warfare in the Age
of the Crusades,” together with his general interest in the topic of the holy city, a study area he moved to on the advice of his Ph.D. supervisor, Daniel Callahan, “a Jerusalem scholar of the first rank” who urged him: “Go East, young man, Go East!” (p. xi).

Chapter I opens with the emblematic report of Christian sources: “Jerusalem was captured” (p. 11), a motto announcing the beginning of an entangled religious history with the arrival of Islam in the landscape of the holy city. From the outset, the author shows a solid knowledge of both Christian and Muslim sources, which he collated in his attempt to reconstruct the memories of conquest and concord in the life of the holy city. Hosler presents the status of Jerusalem during the early Islamic conquest as a vulnerable city during the transition from Byzantine/Persian to Muslim power. One brutal story in the history of Jerusalem is the coming of the Persians; for this chapter, Hosler relies on findings from the most relevant sources, especially with regard to the conundrum related to the number of victims discovered by archeologists at Mamilla cave (pp. 21–22). Although not avoiding the socio-historical content, it is easy to notice that the author’s main concern is with the military narrative, focusing on the strategies of armies and battlefield tactics (how the Byzantines or Persians advanced in their campaigns, how they organized their defense and fortifications, how they prepared for future confrontations). In this dynamic frame of military strategy, the focus lies on how historical sources capture and substantiate these moves around Jerusalem (encapsulating major religious events such as the Persian seizure of the cross and its return to Jerusalem), making the reader grasp that these are not technicalities of military clashes decisive for the historical narrative, but changes with a significant impact on the public life and interreligious future of the holy city. Hosler builds well intertwined narrative sections, turning comfortably from clashes between Persians and Byzantines to battles between Byzantines and Arabs, with the Battle of Yarmuk of the year 636 meticulously described as the decisive event for the advance of Islam toward the holy city (pp. 37–45). The last section contextualizes the legendary Assurance of ‘Umar for Patriarch Sophronius that allegedly granted rights for Christians and their legacy in the Holy City (pp. 49–54), a pact invoked as model of tolerance for non-Muslims, although its origin remains a matter of dispute in the intellectual history of Christian–Muslim relations.

Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the leadership of Islam, with its Sunni/Shia split, in the 11th–12th centuries. In addition to the general framework of the growth in importance of the two centers at Mecca and Medina, Hosler well understands how Jerusalem maintained its importance in Islam, stemming from the apocalyptic traditions (p. 66). The trend of the sources that Hosler attempts to highlight, of looking for tolerance from the pact of ‘Umar onwards, is interrupted by the al-Hakim attack and by the attack on the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in 1009 and its destruction (p. 75). Such incidental facts, and many more, prove the existence of discord in the fabric of Jerusalemite society of the 11th century and onwards, and make Hosler remain steadfast behind his thesis, which he enunciates again: “Violence between Jews, Christians, and Muslims certainly manifested in and around Jerusalem itself, as has been shown. However, in that particular urban center, physical conflict was highly episodic and not
the dominant theme, nor anywhere close to being so” (p. 97). The exception to this rule is the First Crusade, or military campaign (1096–1099), the “elephant in the room, a single event universally remembered for its viciousness and lingering effect on memories of Jerusalem’s place in the history of violence and warfare” (p. 98). Apart from this scene of social disharmony that can be motivated more or less by a reverberation of the “sacralization of warfare” (p. 103) and an apocalyptic conviction, Hosler contends that in medieval times there was a normal life in Jerusalem, with schools and intellectuals of all Abrahamic religions (p. 106), as indicated by the reports of Jewish and Muslim pilgrims such as Benjamin of Tudela, al-Maqdisi, Ibn al-‘Arabi, or al-Ghazali. The author also gives space to reports of the crusaders’ arrival, their military tactics, the cohorts of soldiers, their circuit in the city alongside the procession of the clergy, and many other substantial narratives from period sources concerning insensitive actions and massacres. The author addresses the lessons of the crusade with the irenic point, related to the historian’s vocation, to look to “resolving differences,” pointing out that it is “always easier to use history to denounce the other” (p. 136).

Chapter 4 presents Jerusalem’s built infrastructure during the Frankish rule, the administration of faith in the holy city, and the relocation and the shaping of a new community with the Church of the Holy Sepulcher at its center. An appealing question is whether some Muslim residences remained in the city during the Frankish period. Hosler does not argue for a Muslim presence, but instead for a form of tolerance of Islamic worship occurring in the holy city (pp. 148–154). The chapter also reviews the (sometimes obscure) records on the capture of Jerusalem by the famous Ayyubid sultan of Egypt, Saladin, in 1187. Hosler considers that, after so many centuries, parts of the “status quo” brought by the Pact of ‘Umar retained their validity during Saladin’s rule, and that “Saladin was, therefore, a key figure in the re-diversification of the city’s population by amplifying the trend lines of settlement and public devotion that had manifested in the Kingdom of Jerusalem” (p. 173). Another crucial aspect was that the routine of Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulcher also entered into the tolerated syllabus of the local power.

Chapter 5 (pp. 176–213) looks at other sources, drawing on lesser-known facts about a long history of expeditions, less concerned with warfare and more with strategic alliances, clashes between the ambitions of the Franks and the Ayyubid Muslims, diplomatic efforts and negotiations, betrayals, and attempted deals to secure power in Jerusalem or change the status of the holy city. As Hosler closes his chapter, all these complicated factors of the 13th century lead to the contention that “Jerusalem’s society was returning to its state during the days of ‘Umar in the seventh century: small, poor, and sparsely populated but, nonetheless, religiously diverse. The city remained vulnerable to attack, and indeed, in 1299–1300 the Mongol soldiers of the Ilkhanate territories may have entered it during the course of their war against the Egyptian Mamluks” (p. 213). The complicated history of the society of Jerusalem did not stop here, but continued onward to face other challenges, discord balanced with concord—this is Hosler’s key term in the book—, injustice but also tolerance. Hosler’s conclusion begins by quoting a relevant phrase attributed to Rashid Khaladi, professor at Co-
“If the past has lessons for the future anywhere on the face of the earth, Jerusalem is the place” (p. 214). This can be the concluding remark of my review as well.

Finally, if anyone were to wonder why there was a need for another book about the history of Jerusalem, given that we already have an impressive monograph written by Simon Sebag Montefiore (2011), one should acknowledge that Hosler’s own work offers a different perspective on historical events, telling the story in an unconventional manner and with a better focus on time and space. This makes it a significant contribution, both through the exhaustive treatment of medieval sources, and through the way in which a thrilling narrative can be constructed and a plausible thesis defended, even if the author’s favorite approach challenges modern research on the medieval holy city. I can well recommend this book, which not only informs the reader interested in medieval socio-military history, but also illustrates a vital principle, valid today more than ever, whereby avoiding conflicts and engaging in the search for a sustainable peace based on tolerance between the Abrahamic faiths and traditions, especially in Jerusalem, the city that every religious community historically claims for itself, must be done by looking back and considering the lessons of the past, as Khaladi himself rightly and concisely states.

Cătălin-Ștefan Popa

LORÁND L. MÁDLY (Hg.)


Berlin, Frank & Timme, 2023


Das im vorliegenden Band verwendete Archivmaterial wurde während eines Forschungspraktikums im Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv Wien ermittelt und später, während mehrerer Forschungsaufenthalte am Leibniz-Institut für Ost- und Südosteuropaforschung, Regensburg, kontextualisiert.


Die Verbundenheit zwischen den beiden Politikern ist aus dem Inhalt ihrer Korrespondenz ersichtlich. In diesem Zusammenhang sei daran erinnert, dass Crenneville Nádasdy duzte, weiterhin erfuhr wir über ihre gelegentlichen Treffen in Wien während der Zeit des Brief-

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CORINA CIOLTEI-HOPÂRTEAN

Mircea-Gheorghe Abrudan
Biserica Ortodoxă și clerul militar din Monarhia Habsburgică între Pacea de la Carlowitz și Primul Război Mondial (1699–1914)
(The Orthodox Church and military clergy of the Habsburg Monarchy between the Peace Treaty of Karlowitz and the outbreak of the First World War, 1699–1914)
Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2022

The concern for the identity-related specificities of the ethnic and religious communities integrated within the Habsburg Monarchy remains a challenge for contemporary historical writing. The history of this singular power structure that originated during the crisis of the medieval imperial experiment inspires the oscillation between the distrust of authors animated by the echoes of modern national militancy and the enthusiasm of the advocates.
of integrationist projects, which can put into question a historian’s objectivity, that crucial pillar of the profession. Conversely, having been part of a state that applied the paradigms of institutional modernization in its own way starting as early as the 16th century has generated a variety of written sources of unequal significance, which threaten one’s historiographic enterprise with the risks of variations on a given theme, all the more so when following an interpretive line inspired by suggestions from the official authority. Such a cluster of opportunities and risks has generated an eclectic historiographic production, of varying scientific value, yet confined to reflections stemming from different interpretations of events and public policies involving the Habsburg Monarchy and the social structures aggregated by its subjects. The work of historian Mircea-Gheorghe Abrudan propounds a much-needed retrieval of certain religious realities, from the perspective of a medium-term evolution, within a chronological interval perceived as a time of change par excellence. The topic provides the opportunity to reflect upon the history of the region, while also resorting to data pertaining to institutional history. The originality of this scientific endeavor resides in the analysis of the relationship between two institutions placed by historiographic prejudice in a state of irreconcilable conflict: the House of Austria and the Orthodox Church. One indisputable merit of this work, due to its author’s double specialization as both historian and theologian, consists in its overlap with highly-frequented historiographic genres of the last two decades, such as the history of minorities or the history of collective mentalities. The foreword, authored by Fr. Prof. Dr. Habil. Gabriel-Viorel Gârdan, defines the place of this research within the context of the historiography of the issue, highlighting its innovative nature and its concentric structure, from analyzing the position of the state in relation to the denominations of its subjects, to the spiritual assistance provided to those called upon to ensure its security. The author’s succinct observations included in the reasoning that begins the work per se outline the intellectual biography of the project, inspired by scientific and personal reasons, while also paying homage to the masters, namely, personalities of church history. The introduction is governed by that critical rigor essential to the investigation of the past and goes from defining the topic’s place within historiography and specifying the first forms of organization of spiritual assistance within the imperial army of the 16th century, tackled in the first subchapter, to the historiographic studies of the 20th century evoked in the next subchapter. The author analyses the status of the knowledge of the history of the Orthodox Church in Central and Eastern Europe and dedicates the following subchapter to the Romanian historiography that emerged at the crossroads of ecclesiastical, military, and cultural history. The second section is a succinct history of the Habsburg Monarchy, from its expansion into Danubian Europe in the late 17th century, to the reformistic experiments initiated by Maria Theresa and Joseph II under the auspices of the enlightened absolutism of the Austrian Empire, tackled in the first two subchapters. The developments generated by the 1848 Revolution and the sequence of political formulae intended to save the state, up to the annexation of Bosnia and the collapse of the Monarchy at the end of the First World War, are the focus of the final subchapters.
The third section studies the evolution of the Orthodox Church in the Habsburg Monarchy in a positivistic manner. The author prioritizes institutional and disciplinary changes, while also focusing on intersectional elements, such as the effort to reconcile the interests of the state with the existence of religious pluralism, the mutations underwent by the state–church relationship in the context of Maria Theresa and Joseph II’s reformism, as well as on demographic and statistical data. The reader has the opportunity to re-evaluate the significations of events which have been less tackled by Romanian historical writings in the last few years, yet which have produced long-lasting effects on the history of the Western Balkans, such as the great Serbian migration towards southern Hungary mentioned in the first subchapter. There follow several distinct subchapters dedicated to the “Illyrian privileges” and the role of the Metropolitan See of Karlowitz in the re-establishment of the Orthodox Episcopate of Transylvania. An overview of the evolution of Orthodox episcopal centers in the Habsburg Monarchy gives the author the opportunity to sketch the biographies of the hierarchs who were representative for local Orthodoxy, in their double capacity as leaders of the clergy and of the community of believers. Of particular note are the subchapters dedicated to the parishes founded on the initiative of Greek-Macedonian trade companies that emigrated to the Empire from the 17th century onwards, whose contribution to the success of the Romanian national movement of the mid–19th century is insufficiently known. One subchapter relevant to the crystallization of the identity of Orthodox communities concerns the evolution of the designation used by the official authorities when referring to them, which evolved from the deprecative notion of “schismatics,” borrowed from the Counterreformation tradition, to that of ‘ununited Greek’ believers adopted during the reign of Joseph II, followed by that of believers of the “Greek-Oriental Church,” generalized during the dualist era.

The final subchapters continue the examination of a relationship that still fuels current debates, namely, that between church and nation. Rigorously following the rules of chronological factual exposition, the string of events seemingly tailored for the professional historian brings forward the depth of the church–society relationship, as highlighted by the national ecclesiastic congresses initiated in the early 18th century and intended to tackle matters of church organization, which became representative forums for the communities of believers, as well as frameworks for the discussion of matters of general interest, such as the loyalty to the state and the sovereign. The fourth section brings an in-depth analysis of the work’s core topic, namely, spiritual assistance within the imperial army. The first subchapter succinctly presents these concerns, dating back to the Concilium Germanicum (742) and to the instructions of Emperor Charles the Great, which were taken into account by the House of Austria throughout the Middle Ages. The organization of such a service having been made permanent during the reign of Emperor Maximilian, there followed the creation of an Apostolic Vicariate subsequently placed under the authority of the Jesuit Order and reorganized in the form of the institution of the Superior Chaplain, occasioned by the de facto emergence of the permanent imperial army in 1649. The next subchapter analyses the manner in which Maria Theresa and Joseph II’s reformism left its mark on
this aspect of military life in the Empire as well, by placing military chaplains under the authority of an Apostolic Vicariate, whose administrative activity, recorded by the author with the detail-oriented thoroughness specific to archival work, reveals the tasks entrusted to the military clergy and a constant concern with the intellectual instruction and the conduct of its members, as well as the changes undergone by the functioning of these bodies during the various institutional reforms that were implemented. The final subchapters have the merit of serving as a starting point for subsequent research, potentially inspired by the elaboration of biographical sketches of those who held the position of Apostolic Vicar between 1773 and 1918. Along the same lines, the brief presentations of the activity of Protestant chaplains and of the concerns for the spiritual assistance of Jews and Muslims, who joined the imperial army after the Empire took over the administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1878, as well as the observations regarding the organization of the Apostolic Vicariate archives meet the requirements of the social history-interested reader.

The fifth section tackles the evolution of the Orthodox military clergy within the imperial army, starting with its institutionalization thanks to the efforts of Metropolitan Pavle Nenadović, which are accounted for in the first subchapter. The following subchapters are concerned with the appearance in official documents of the first Romanian military priests and their contribution to the mobilization of Orthodox communities for the defense of the Monarchy, their involvement in the affirmation of the national agenda of the Romanians of Transylvania and Bukovina, as well as the efforts to preserve the Romanian linguistic and educational identity in the context of the legislation adopted by the Budapest Parliament. The chronological exposition of these developments is intertwined with biographical details regarding prelates who stood out as both promoters of religious values, essential for those involved in experiences specific to military operations, and exponents of national culture and of civic commitment through their everyday actions and memorialistic initiatives. The final section proposes a brief overview of the Habsburg Monarchy’s impact on the evolution of the communities it incorporated from the 17th century onwards and the religious structures thereof.

One undisputable merit of this remarkable historiographic excursus resides in the balance between its established aims, which position it within the logic of a positivism capable of generating an objective approach on the realities under analysis, and the accessibility of the text, which is less engaged in interpretive speculations and conceptual debates. One factor that contributes to making the work so accessible is the rigorous organization of the exposition, as each of the major sections includes notes of general history, chronologically structured analyses, biographical data, and statistical sources. From the perspective of recent historiography, the author brings before his readers a history of two realities invested by historiographic tradition with exclusively conservative significations, namely, the state and the church, approached from a completely new angle, that of vectors of social responsibility and of the progress of the communities they governed politically and spiritually. Without having explicitly undertaken such an objective, the work puts forward another
kind of debunking, prioritizing a history of long-lasting structures, which promote a potentially less spectacular evolution, yet produce more durable effects than revolutionary outbursts and battlefield clashes.

**FLORIAN DUMITRU SOPORAN**

**Maricica Munteanu**

Gruparea de la “Viața românească”: O literatură a spațiului și comunității
(The group from “Viața românească”: A literature of space and community)
Foreword by ANTONIO PATRAȘ
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The book deals with the literary circle that coalesced around the journal *Viața românească*, one of the most important periodicals in Romanian cultural history. Its life extends from 1906 until the present, with interruptions from 1916 to 1920 and from 1940 to 1944. Initially based in Iași, it moved to Bucharest in 1930. The focus here is on the first period, 1906–1930. It belongs to the category of journals founded by a literary circle. In its classical expression, exemplified by the *Cénacle de l’Arsenal* of Charles Nodier, this form of socializing around literature differs from the *salon*, being defined by a more informal atmosphere. The Romanian circles belonging to this category include Sburătorul,1 Junimea, and Literatorul.

Some research has already been dedicated to the circle around *Viața românească* before 1989. These studies placed undue stress on populist ideas to conform with the socialist-realist agenda of the time and the need to be accepted by the censors.3 Post-communist scholarship on the activities of the editorial team of *Viața românească* has focused on group identity and on the importance of marginality and the Moldavian identity. The phenomenon of literature on the margins has been analyzed remarkably well by Anthony Glinoer and Vincent Laisney in their elaborate study *L’Âge des cénacles: Confraternités littéraires et artistiques au XIXe siècle* (2013).

The monograph of Maricica Munteanu, based on her Ph.D. thesis, provides a significant addition to the study of this phenomenon. An outstanding contribution is her ability to test certain concepts expressed in literary criticism, art history and the history of ideas by applying them to the circle around *Viața românească*. She demonstrates that some of these theories (such as the ideas of Bertrand Westphal and of Robert T. Tally Jr.) can be applied nicely, whereas others, such as the concepts developed by Derek Gregory, are only partially useful. She also demonstrates that the ideas on the rise, decline and demise of literary circles developed by Glinoer and Laisney do not apply to *Viața românească*. The circle became institutionalized, its members became well-known, some were even honored with memberships in the Romanian Academy, yet the circle lived on.

Munteanu’s study consists of two parts: “Inventarea moldovenismului” (The invention of ‘Moldavianness’4) and “Cenacul ‘Viața românescă’” (The circle around *Viața românească*). Each part contains five chapters, numbered from one to five. This perfectly symmetric structure is no coincidence. It aids the fulfilment of the author’s desire to suggest that there is a close connection between a literary circle and its space, its medium (p. 19).5
The first chapter analyses, with the aid of key concepts from Soja’s thirddspace theory and heterotopy as developed by Foucault, the polarization created by writers at *Viața românească* between a Center (Bucharest)—modern, vulgar, mercenary, full of energy, but spiritually dead, economically prosperous, but spiritually poor (pp. 35–38)—and a Periphery (Iași)—proud of its important personalities, nostalgic for its glorious past, patriarchal and conservative, in decline, but with a well-established set of values (pp. 38–50). This presentation is nostalgic and illusory. It is however not uncommon as it was also advocated by other circles of ‘peripheric’ origins, such as Junimea. After it moved to the ‘Center’ (Bucharest), its members were unable to adapt, and it lost, in the words of Z. Ornea, “its spirit as a literary circle.” The second chapter examines how the members of the circle provided resistance against the pressure of the Center. One of their strategies was the application of a “radical provincialism,” in which the changes coming from the Center were countered by an oppressive conservatism, radically rejecting everything new. The next chapter explores how the intellectuals who did not wish to adapt to the expectations of modernity found a refuge in the marketplaces in Moldavia at the end of the nineteenth century (pp. 70–77). The result is a space comparable with a museum, at the same time admired and despised.

Chapter four deals with another way in which the perceived differences from the Center were enhanced: by storytelling, creating an “other space,” using images such as a road, ruins, or hunting (pp. 101–109). Munteanu underlines the importance of space in these identity-forming stories. The fictionalization includes both heroic and everyday aspects (pp. 123–131). In my opinion, the novel *În preajma revoluției* (In the eve of the revolution) by Constantin Stere (a Bildungsroman, in eight volumes) is relevant in this context. In it the author invents, in an ironic way, characters inspired by fictive places and events. It surprises me that Munteanu largely ignores the work of Stere, who, in spite of his origins in Bessarabia (the eastern part of Moldavia), has been an important influence on the circle around *Viața românească*.

The fifth chapter deals with the view of Moldavian authors that authentic national literature could only develop once serfdom had been abolished, the peasants emancipated and the unification of the nation state completed. Although serfdom had been abolished with the Rural Law of 1864, and peasants received the right to own properties, the situation of peasants in Romania remained insecure. They, the majority of the population, did not have political rights. One of the core motivations of the circle around *Viața românească* was the desire to cause the “withdrawal of the borders of marginality” (p. 159) via the central role they allocated to Moldavia in the creation of a national identity and national culture, characterized by its conservatism and critical spirit.

This relationship between the environment (the space) and the circle around *Viața românească* receives even more attention in the second part of the book. For the members of the circle, the space was less important than the fact that they were together. They, mostly lone wolves, were brought together by their preference for simplicity and austere living conditions. In spite of their differences, they felt comfortable within the circle (pp. 167–174). They even started to develop common habits and “specific ways of doing the same thing” (p. 196). This phenomenon can
often be seen within such circles, for ex-
ample in the case of Sburătorul, the circle
led by E. Lovinescu.

G. Ibrăileanu (1871–1936) was es-
pecially important for the life of the cir-
cle around *Viața românească*. He hosted
them in his house, which was a space “de-
dicated specially to living in a communi-
ty” (p. 199). Reflecting the chaos which
characterized the host, the messy yard and
the overflowing library expressed his way
of life. In the third chapter of the second
part, Maricica Munteanu draws attention
to the interactions between personal and
literary life, as the meetings of the circle
coordinated with the lifestyle of its host
(pp. 214–230).

Chapter four, in its second part, discus-
ses several rituals developed by the circle
in more detail. The author explains that,
in addition to the literary conversations
which formed the basis of all such circles,
there were two defining activities which
made the circle around *Viața românească*
different from other groups: excursions
and hunting parties. Maricica Munteanu
explains how excursions, undertaken in
their beloved Moldavia, functioned as a
protest against modernity (pp. 264–290).
Hunting served the purpose of what is
now called team building, it strengthened
the bonds between the members of the
group. The difficulties they went through
together and their shared stories led to a
loosening of hierarchic structures and the
development of the image of the writer-
hunter. It is surprising that the author
does not engage with recent research on
constructions of masculinity in this con-
text. She does mention that hunting
might have functioned as a “corrective”
to the perceived “feminine” character of
Ibrăileanu. In her work on Sburătorul,
Ligia Tudurachi contrasts the two literary
circles exactly in respect to the gender ba-
lance, or lack thereof, of their participants.
She mentioned that while Sburătorul was
(even for the time) well attended by
women, the meetings of *Viața românească*
were almost exclusively masculine affairs,
with some notable exceptions of occa-
sional female participants, such as Sofia
Nădejde.

In the last chapter the author makes the
very relevant observation that the image
a group presents of itself differs from
its real portrait. The circle around *Viața
românească* cultivated a common memo-
ry, a group identity, and a shared irony,
a markedly different sense of humor than
that expressed by the members of Junii-
mea (pp. 328–331). The public image as
presented by its members, of a circle cha-
acterized by a lack of hierarchy, where
anybody who was competent was able to
publish their work, was in reality some-
what limited. However, the authority of
the leader was much more moderate than
in other circles. For example, Lovinescu
exercised an almost tyrannic authori-
ty over “his” circle, Sburătorul. Maricica
Munteanu concludes that, in spite of the
emphasis placed on the native region of its
members, on conservatism and the specific
view on the modern Romanian nation sta-
te, the provincial character of the writers
around *Viața românească* was not as de-
fining as has previously been understood.
It was rather part of an image, the social-
cultural ideology presented by the journal
(pp. 396–402).

Altogether it can be concluded that the
book represents a real contribution to the
study of the history of literary circles in Ro-
mania. The study covers a lot of ground
and brings together many ideas that seem,
at first glance, somewhat unconnected.
On further thought, the main ideas form
in fact a well-connected central topic: the connection between community and space in the 19th century. Maricica Munteanu has developed an innovative approach which is waiting to be tested when applied to other groups and contexts.

Mihnea-Andrei Haitur

Notes

1. This group has been studied in detail by Ligia Tudurachi, “Grup Sburător”: Trăitul și scrisul împreună în cenuaclul lui E. Lovinescu (Timișoara: Editura Universității de Vest, 2019).

2. For example, D. Micu, Poporanismul și “Viața romînească” (Bucharest: Editura pentru Literatură, 1961).


4. In translating this review, we have opted for this calque, because a more natural English expression, such as Moldavian identity, does not cover the meaning sufficiently well. This “Moldavianness” was an elitist notion, fed by the Moldavian feelings of superiority vis-à-vis the “Romanian Land” (internationally better known as Wallachia), with which a union was formed in 1859. Moldavian intellectuals associating with this concept were not separatists. They fully supported the union (some even fought for it), but they did not want to be dominated by Wallachia. They were proud of their distinct, Moldavian identity.


Dr. Jörg Biber

Aventurile lui Paul Biber, mecanic de precizie pe aerodromul Sânandrei de lângă Timișoara: Nume de cod “Adebar” (1915 și 1916)

(The adventures of Paul Biber, a precision mechanic at the Sânandrei airfield near Timișoara. Code name “Adebar,” 1915 and 1916)

Edited by Rudolf Gräf, translated from German by Raluca NelePCu

Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2023

Eleven decades after the outbreak of the First World War, or the Great War, as the people of that time called it, there are still many unknowns about this topic. Therefore, Jörg Biber wrote a book about the adventures of his father, Paul Biber (1891–1957), a soldier in the German Imperial Army during the First World War, deployed as a precision mechanic for airships, attending to the zeppelins stationed at the military base at Sânandrei, near Timișoara, between 1915 and 1916. Before going into the details of the volume’s structure, it must be specified that it is a heavy book, literally, albeit not voluminous, due to the quality paper used for printing, allowing for the inclusion of a significant number of photographs and accompanying notes from soldier Paul Biber’s war album.

The Foreword and the Introduction (pp. 23–49) provide general information on the evolution of the First World War in the Balkan area, but also on the political-historical context that allowed the establishment of an airship airfield at Sânandrei, a village near Timișoara.
The first chapter (pp. 50–71) describes the formation and training of the Royal Saxon Land Airship Division no. 14 (Lt14), and the historical information is supported by photos. In fact, the photographs are the novelty and the strong point of the book. They are group or individual shots, in which Paul Bieber or his comrades appear dressed in military uniforms, but there is another picture that conveys a strong message of humanity, even in the context of the anticipation of war—the grave of Bob, the company dog—and on the back of the photos there are details, even on the death of Bob, hit by a car.

The second chapter (pp. 72–103) traces the journey of Paul Biber’s unit from Germany to Sânandrei, with a stop in a village in the Hungarian countryside, where some photographs were taken. The photographic itinerary continues in the third chapter (pp. 104–151) with the presentation of the metal frame of the warehouse where the airships would end up being parked. Also, there are pictures of the construction of workshops, warehouses and living quarters; in other words, the infrastructure of the military base. Paul Biber also took photos of the airfield’s surroundings, without forgetting the local people; for example, a picture taken in front of the train station in Timișoara where two men were sitting, one wearing a hat, dressed elegantly, the other in poor clothes, with a sheepskin hat on his head; the first one sits almost dejectedly, while the poor man is looking at the camera, almost smiling, an interesting antithesis, especially since Paul Bieber himself wrote on the back of the picture: “In front of the train station in Timișoara. Those two in the left corners are amazing!” The album also contains other pictures about the inhabitants of Timișoara and their daily activities. Chapters five (pp. 194–213) and six (pp. 214–241) are dedicated to photographs that capture the various maintenance activities of the aircraft inside the military unit, but also the combat flight of an airship departing from Timișoara to attack the city of Thessaloniki in Greece. At the same time, we can see the zeppelin which was to attack Bucharest in 1916, but technical problems appeared en route, and the ship crashed in Bulgaria; all these stages were also all immortalized. In the seventh chapter (pp. 242–259) there are photographs that capture the last actions of the aircraft in the Balkans, at the end of 1916, when Bucharest and part of Romania had been occupied by the German and Austro-Hungarian imperial troops. Further photographic materials show the hangars of the airfield, generally the life after the end of the war. Finally, the eighth chapter (pp. 260–275), the last one, comes as an overlay of the present over the past; in other words, a field search of the remains of the airfield near Timișoara.

In conclusion, if we were to be guided by the expression “a picture is worth a thousand words,” the photographs taken by Paul Biber, which are the main subject of this volume, are worth a lot. So, it is a heavy book not only literally, but also figuratively, which deserves to be browsed not only by those interested in military history, the history of photography, or the history of aviation—especially since we are talking about zeppelins, devices that are no longer in use nowadays—but also in general by anyone interested in the past.

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