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P A R A D I G M S

Romanian Geopolitics: From the Geographical Approach to Gusti's School of Sociology The *Coniunctionis Animae* Concept and Its Context

RADU BALTASIU



D. Gusti
(1880–1955)

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Preamble

DIMITRIE GUSTI's School of Sociology was a significant component of the social infrastructure after War World I. The period in question was the only one in the last century in Romania during which social sciences could develop in full, receiving political support. The Sociological School also operated in a remarkably interesting context, as geopolitics was a point of scholarly focus for other sciences as well. Highly active were, for instance, renowned geographers such as Simion Mehedinți and George Vâlsan. In what follows, we will discuss Romanian geopolitics from two vantage points: geographical and sociological.

On the Meaning of Geopolitics

THIS PAPER does not intend to discuss in depth the notion of geopolitics. The concept of geopolitics with which we shall operate is the power projection over a certain territory (Baltasiu 2011). It can be soft (cultural appeal) or hard (based on military deterrence). We note that the “original” concept coined by Rudolf Kjellén in the early 20th century states that geopolitics concerns the influence of geography over power relationships in international relations.¹

There is a significant distance between the two definitions, since the current concept covers the complexity of cultural and behavioral patterns overlapping geography, while Kjellén’s primitive definition of geopolitics stresses the role of geography itself.

The approaches of both the precursors and of Gusti’s School predefine the contemporary social/societal approach to geopolitics, that is, the issue of security as both internal and external policies.

The Gustian line of thinking is *nationally* rather than societally centered. Society exists as a component of nationhood, and the state as well. Simultaneously, both the Copenhagen School of geopolitics and Gusti’s School stress the importance of complete/complex and transdisciplinary thinking. The terms for this inclusive approach are “societal” and “monographic,” respectively. The latter will be explored in the chapter on Gustian geopolitics. In keeping with the concept of societal security, “The security of human collectivities is affected by factors in five major sectors: military, political, economic, societal and environmental” (Buzan 1991, 38).

Ole Wæver also discusses the concept of societal security: “More specifically, it is about the sustainability, within acceptable conditions for evolution, of traditional patterns of language, culture, association, and religious and national identity and custom” (Șerban 2008, 61).

The Precursors: The Geographical Approach—Vâlsan and Mehedinți

BOTH GEORGE Vâlsan (1885–1935) and Simion Mehedinți (1868–1962) stress the so-called anthropogeographic aspect of geography: the relationship between the Earth and humanity, “the latter being seen as a biogeographical entity.”²

Vâlsan: “The Geographical Individualities” Thesis

COUNTRIES ARE made of human individuals. Every country is also made of “geographical individualities”—the most important physical features embedded in the collective conscience. The Danube is one of the most important geographical individualities of Romania. The geopolitical axes of a country are also cultural components of a country’s individuality, elements underpinning the spiritual orientation of a country’s interests:

For me, a mountain, a plain, a river, a sea, are more important individuals, influencing each other to the extent of their power and, in the current stage of descriptive geography, I do not find anything more useful that can be done to clarify these individualities by detaching the characteristics and establishing relations with the neighborhood. (Vâlsan 1935, 39)

The corollary of Vâlsan’s approach is the importance of culture in foreign policy. The better we understand the intricate physical features and their cultural determinants, the better the country will be.

Geography is the basis of the social, Vâlsan infers from Michelet. In our turn, perhaps, we infer that the quality of governance—whose result is “the homeland”—depends upon the symbolic perception of the territory. Vâlsan contends:

Without a geographical basis, the people, the historical actor, seem to be hanging in the air like the characters in Chinese paintings, in which the ground is missing. In addition, take note—says Michelet—that the ground is not only the framework for action. Through nutrition, climate, etc., it influences hundreds of facets. Like the nest for the bird, as is the homeland, so is the inhabitant. (Vâlsan 1921, 18)

Vâlsan: The Geopolitical Constants Thesis

THE CLAIM whereby “Any geographical framework includes several possibilities for political development” (Vâlsan 1937, 25) is at the core of what we shall call the thesis of geopolitical constants. It stresses both the natural influence exercised by geography over the historical evolution, and the dimension of the public conscience of geography. The geopolitical constants consist of the important physical features (main rivers, mountains, etc.), the “façades”—the geopolitical doors of a country/society, as developed by Mehedinți, shaping the historical political attitudes of the surrounding nations:

Is it a small thing for all Romanians to know that, on the edge of our country and within it, a great river flows—Napoleon called it the king of rivers in Europe—meant to become the main transportation artery of Central and Eastern Europe? Is it a small thing to know that we have an alternation of mountains, hills, plateaus, and plains, helping each other, complementing each other, like a symphony composed of several parts that create a harmonious whole? Is it superfluous to know that in the middle of the Romanian land, there is a great fortress with mountain bastions and wide water gates, a precious vessel from which the flowers of Romanianism spilled in all directions? And, in other words, . . . that we have a narrow façade, facing east, with an inhospitable sea, almost closed, a sea that gives us poor and flat shores, where only after twenty years of work we managed to create a good port, but too close to an irreconcilable enemy. Should we not always remember that beyond the smoldering Dniester, hidden in its twisted ditch, far beyond the lazy Tisza, coiled like a water snake between reeds, lie the monotonous steppes that shelter hostile people? Is it not good to remember that we are alone, far from our natural relatives, alone and yet stubbornly keeping our distinct nature, predestined to always break with our chests the waves from the East of a restless sea without a determined bed? (Vâlsan 1921, 19)

Vâlsan: “The Intensification of Consciousness” Thesis

A THIRD THESIS of geopolitical relevance is the intensification of consciousness, as a factor of statehood and national security, the consciousness of national unity, and the sacrifice required for it:

The current Romanian state is based not on the land and its geographical composition, not on its wealth, nor on its desire for greater well-being. All of these are secondary. At the foundation is first and foremost this impalpable thing, stronger than diamond: the belief in our national unity. Moreover, only because this elusive and magical thing is there, all the others are worth it. (Vâlsan 1937, 30)

The intensification thesis is linked with the current geopolitical “idea of state”: “Without a widespread and deeply-rooted idea of state among the population, the state institutions by themselves would have great difficulty functioning and surviving” (Buzan 1983, 39).

At the core of this thesis is “the terrible sacrifice” of national reunification. That is, “the state-idea is not so much about the achievements of the order of civilization, as in Western nations, but comes from the perspective of social and national survival” (Vâlsan 1921, 11).

Mehedinți: The Ponto-Baltic Isthmus Theory

SIMION MEHEDINȚI brings geography much closer to the realm of geopolitics. His theory on the Ponto-Baltic isthmus has a contemporary correspondent in the American-Polish geopolitics of “Trimarium.”³ The aim is the same: the containment of Russia by countries from the Baltic to the Black Sea and the Adriatic, the pivotal countries being Poland and Romania. The Ponto-Baltic isthmus theory stresses the geopolitical function of geography. In the geography of the continent, the isthmus stretches from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, following a line from Narva (Estonia) to Kiev and Odessa (Ukraine), on the banks of the Dniester River. Mehedinți noted that this line contains a continental separation along several coordinates: climatic, related to the configuration of the terrain, and—more importantly—cultural, historical, and political ones. The mainstay of the Ponto-Baltic isthmus is the Romanian space, strengthened by what he calls the “Carpathian Fortress.” The Ponto-Baltic isthmus became a geopolitical imperative, writes Mehedinți, after Lenin and Stalin launched the thesis of the “permanent war” with the “capitalist world” in the 1920s. In this context, the main function of the isthmus was to separate and protect the “Europe of nations” from the “rogue state,” the dictatorship of the USSR. Specifically, the isthmus is to fulfill the role of a “sanitary cordon,” denying Russian access to the mouths of the Danube and to the Straits. The Russian aggressive drive is identified as “Moscovitism,” “Pan-Slavism,” and lately “Leninism.”⁴

Mehedinți: The Theory of Geopolitical Façades

THE GEOPOLITICAL façades are strategic openings, important terrain features, fostering nation-building and endowed with cultural significance. Some of them, like the sea, are a natural factor of expansion: “Every people goes to the nearest sea. . . . The sea means ‘freedom and light’; the shore of the sea is the most favorable façade for any state, and all nations that want to have a great future go to the sea and the ocean” (Mehedinți 1943, 163).

Others are at the core of nationhood—the Carpathians (the Carpathian fortress, on its Transylvanian side):

Transylvania is the orographic center of the Romanian land . . . As a core of the Carpathian fortress and as a geographical entity, it forms the last bastion of Europe in front of “Greater Siberia.” . . . Transylvania is for us the kernel of an orographic whole, whose parts organically merge. (Mehedinți 1943, 187, 191)

In all, the Romanian territory has five façades—geopolitically relevant coordinates. Four of them—the Mountains, the Forest, the Danube, the Black Sea—are the “close façades,” and the last one, the Straits, is “the external façade,” since the Straits are an extension of the Danube façade:

The life of our people has had two coordinates: on the one hand, the Mountain and the Forest, on the other hand, the Danube and the Sea. Whoever mentions the Danube must immediately mention the Black Sea. However, there is more, for they must also add the Bosphorus (which is just an extension of the Danube), then the Dardanelles . . . The Danube cannot and must not be separated, not for a moment, from the Black Sea and the Straits, with which it forms a “fundamental coordinate” for the past and future destiny of our people. (Mehedinți 1943, 150)

The Geopolitics of Gusti’s School of Sociology

GEOPOLITICS WENT through an organic stage of development via the contributions of Gusti’s School of Sociology. Having far more instruments available at their disposal—ethics, philosophy, sociology, economics, psychology, anthropology, and statistics, alongside geography—the geopolitical branch of Gusti’s School would have become a mature, distinct discipline if communism had not been forcibly imposed by the Red Army in Romania after 1944. We may say that one of the starting points of sociological geopolitics is Gusti’s analysis of the European Union project in the early 1920s (Kalergi and Briand), and at the other end of the axis of development of the new science is the integrated paradigm of geopolitics and geohistory from the magazine *Geopolitica și Geoistoria: Revista română pentru Sudestul european* (Geopolitics and Geohistory: The Romanian Journal for Southeast Europe), published between 1941 and 1944. We shall discuss here the European Union’s prospects and the *Coniunctionis Animae* Project—“the unification in soul” of Greater Romania.

Gusti’s School of Sociology explicitly develops geopolitics not so much as a science of state power, as it was in German geopolitics. Geopolitics is a preoccupation with the inner reconstruction of an ethnically and historically determined space, a “problem of the soul” from which derive political power, the shape of the state, and the extension of its borders. We call this approach “internal geopolitics,” while the classical approach belongs to what is now commonly known as the “science of international relations.” Beyond the borders, this geopolitics aims at strengthening and protecting the historical communities (the “consanguineous” policy) and at building special policies with foreign countries to protect the borders of the Kingdom of Romania.

The last stage of maturation is dominated by the younger generation—Anton Golopenția, Mircea Vulcănescu, Ion Conea, and G. I. Brătianu. From this perspective, the geopolitical and geohistorical stage is post-Gustian, centered around Iorga's thesis of Romania—a state of European necessity. In this way, a Romanian geopolitics that owes a lot to the studies of Iorga on Byzantium and on Balkan peoples comes full circle, going back to its roots after being enriched by the interdisciplinary approach.

We shall briefly highlight some of the geopolitical concerns of the School.

On the Feasibility of the European Union (1929)

GUSTI⁵ is favorable to the project of European unification at the beginning of the 20th century: “A union of European states . . . is needed. It is necessary because the federal union is a stage of natural evolution and it is necessary especially in the tragic circumstances that Europe is currently experiencing” (Gusti 1934 (1929), 266).

First, writes Gusti, we must know what “Europe” means? “Europe is a rational and activist idea, culminating in scientific creations and their technical applications, which dominate and absorb other human cultures” (Gusti 1934, 256).

Gusti describes in detail two of the major European projects: Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi's Pan-European Movement of the “European confederation”/“Europäischer Staatenbund” (1923), and Briand's “Memorandum on the Organization of a Regime of European Federal Union” (1930).

Enthusiastic but astutely realistic, Gusti identifies seven categories of problems that the European project must address:

- culturally, Europe has little confidence in its “mission” and its cultural supremacy is over;
- politically, Europe is no longer a primordial factor in world politics;
- economically, the masses of Europe are on the verge of poverty, and continental chaos looms because of internal aggressive protectionist policies;
- poverty and cultural weakness will have geopolitical consequences: “Europe will become a vassal of one of the three unified white blocs: the American Union, the British Union, or the Russian Union” (Gusti 1934, 260);
- demagoguery: elites consisting of intellectuals and politicians are spending too much time in seminars and conferences;
- intracontinental geopolitical cleavages among the French, German, Italian interests;
- internal fragmentation: “While . . . the non-European world unites into strong political and economic federations, Europe remains permanently torn apart in 27 states” (Gusti 1934, 257).

European unification is necessary in order to solve these problems. Still, is it feasible? The stumbling block is the character of Europe—a Europe of nations: “If we have European states and peoples, can we talk about a Europe? This is the problem. This is Europe’s problem” (Gusti 1934, 256).

There is a fallacy in Gusti’s discourse: when listing the greatest European problems, the main one seems to be the intracontinental tensions—that is, the clash of ideologies and of the colonial and protectionist European powers. Gusti should have known that these are not one and the same thing with “the peoples.” Peoples and nations are suffering from poverty. That is, the nations are affected by ideology, not the effectors of the ideological divide of the great powers. To be correct, the European problem should have been stated as follows: “Can we speak of a united Europe while the great European powers are divided by geopolitical interests? This is the problem of Europe.”

To sum up this tragic dilemma, Europe is torn between the unification imperative of survival and the geopolitical divide among its major powers. On top of the European issues is the demagoguery of the European elites. The cost is geopolitical weakness and poverty, and, in the long run, the barbarization of society (“a barbaric Europe”) (Gusti 1934, 260).

To surpass this quagmire, writes Gusti, Europe must build its own federal identity, that is, “a European consciousness” and a “European patriotism.” Both would be based on “psychological security”—a concept foreshadowing the “societal security concept”⁶ which we have already described. Meanwhile, the pan-European intellectuals must solve the sovereignty issue: “Sovereignities cannot be organized without some limitations. Sovereignty is not a myth. Any commitment is a limitation of sovereignty” (Gusti 1934, 271). By limiting the national sovereignty, the European project must give up its legitimacy in front of the peoples. In other words, the cost of European unification is dramatic for it consists of its own legitimacy, which lies with the peoples, not with the elites.

The *Coniunctionis Animae* Project (Since 1922)

CONIUNCTIONIS ANIMAE/*unification in soul* is, perhaps the main geopolitical contribution of Gusti’s School of Sociology. It is more than a concept, it is a project, a component of *sociologia militans*—the militant sociology project. In the geopolitical terms of power projection over a certain territory, we may read the unification in soul project as follows: power comes from the soul and the ability to project power over a territory is unification—the unification of the “nation’s soul.”

The unification in soul is the imperative, the *next* country project after the successful realization of the Greater Romania. Sociology is not an abstract enterprise. It is an applied, assumed, militant academic endeavor in relation to the most important priorities of the nation. Therefore, sociology is *militant* and *monographic*—aiming at the whole of reality. At the core of this sense of wholeness is the soul, the collective soul of the nation. Once again, we recall the “idea of state” concept of modern geopolitics (Buzan).

The project was launched in 1922, under royal auspices:⁷

The marvelous integration between Wallachia and the liberated lands brought with it a series of problems, decisive for our national and state life. Culture is one of the undeniable issues. Our nation had to endure, under the dominations imposed by the vicissitudes of history, the influence of three cultures, quite different from the one established in the free country: in Bessarabia, the Russian culture, and in Bukovina and Transylvania, the German and Hungarian ones. Each of these cultures sought to compose its own soul in the fragment of the Romanian nation at hand. We would have found ourselves, if the process had followed its path to the end, four strangers and brothers centrifugal to each other. The cracks in this realm of the spirit are the most dangerous, and, in order to end and eliminate them, nothing must be spared, no sacrifice is too expensive, no matter how hasty. Thus, the most important of the socio-political aspects of our cultural problem is today the unification in soul. (Gusti 1934, 442)

We shall examine the intended sociological plan to study Romania from this perspective.

There are many other levels of thinking and sociological action attached to the imperative of unification in soul:

- *the cultural personality;*
- *the cultural state;*
- *the uplift of the nation;*
- *the Cultural House.*

Summing up these layers of thinking, we may say that, to *truly* achieve the unification of Greater Romania, the two concomitant imperatives to be fulfilled are the cultural state and the cultural personality. That is, the state should draw its power from a society in which individuals are educated to achieve their best according to the highest values (cultural state and cultural personality imperatives). The cultural state subordinates politics to culture (knowledge, i.e., science) in order to have good governance (social justice). Social justice means “uplifting of the nation,” that is, encouraging each person to live according to their own

“calling”—vocation, mostly through proper education. The main institutional instrument employed to elevate the people and to promote the unification in soul of the nation is to be the Rural Country House: “Finally, the Cultural Center is the one that must watch over the uplifting of people through a livelier Christian life, through an understanding of beauty and goodness, and through the proper use of the Book” (Gusti 1939, 200).

The New Science of Geopolitics (1937) and the Geopolitics and Geohistory Project (1941–1944)

IN ROMANIA, geopolitics as a system was established by Ion Conea and Anton Golopenția in the framework of Gusti’s School of Sociology. There were some breakthrough studies published in 1937 and 1939, most of them in the journal *Sociologie românească* (Romanian Sociology), others in geographical journals or books. Golopenția’s contributions were collected by his daughter, Prof. Sanda Golopenția, as the *Opere complete* (Complete works), vol. 2, *Statistică, demografie și geopolitică* (Statistics, demography, and geopolitics), published in 2002, and vol. 5, *Statistică, demografie și geopolitică, postume* (Statistics, demography, and geopolitics, posthumous), published in 2019. During the war (1943–1944), Anton Golopenția led a team of 17 researchers of the National Institute of Statistics behind the front lines. The studies were retrieved and published in 2006 by Sanda Golopenția in *Românii de la est de Bug* (Romanians east of the Bug River), in two volumes. Of particular interest is also one of his last papers (1949), which is also connected with his assassination in prison: “Suggestions for the Governing Program of the Future Regime,” published in *Ultima carte* (The last book) (2001).

In the confined space of this article, the historical writings of interest are “The Contribution of the Social Sciences to Conducting the Foreign Policy”⁸ (Golopenția), “A New Science: Geopolitics”⁹ (Conea), “Notes on Defining the Concern Called Geopolitics”¹⁰ (Golopenția), and “Foreword: Geopolitics” (Golopenția, Conea, and M. Popa Vereș).¹¹

Geopolitics, the State and Social Science. Golopenția states that geopolitics is a refinement of sociology, a social science applied to the business of state affairs, more exactly in foreign policy. It is national since its object of study is the understanding of other nations from the perspective of one’s own national interests. Golopenția identifies eleven coordinates of geopolitical thinking. For instance, geopolitics must be conducted in monographic fashion, by analyzing *the whole*, “all constitutive factors of the state: territory, nation, population, economy, so-

cial structure, culture, the way it is governed, its political environment. Geopolitical research . . . is at the same time geographical, demographic, economic, social, cultural, political” (Golopenția 2002, 536).

The main objective of geopolitics is to identify the states’ potential and to be able to inform in order to serve. Geopolitics is a direct administrative tool based on its own research considering the national priorities and perspective in international matters. Sociological theory and research are the basis and the premise for geopolitics. Given its broad field of interest, geopolitics is to be a synthesis of national scientific thinking, to be studied in a dedicated institution, as foreseen by Gusti: the Faculty of Social Sciences (Golopenția 2002, 538).

The relationship between nation and state is central to the analysis. There is also the new concept of “close relatives”/“consanguineous groups,” which are to be given great importance in foreign affairs. This is how he approaches the relationship between the nation and the close relatives:

The nation is not to be confused with the clearly outlined unity that lies within the borders of its state. Every nation extends beyond the borders of its political organization.

Each of these extensions increases a nation’s power and possibilities of assertion in the world.

Consanguineous groups across state borders can become the ramparts of these borders, if they are placed next to them, and mediators with the foreign nation that shelters them in case they are further away. . . .

Citizens who are earning a living abroad multiply the living possibilities of the nation, gaining additional space [for it]. . . (Golopenția 2002, 528)

The state is another revisited concept. The state is “the freedom of the nations to govern themselves in a given territory, through the leaders they give themselves...” (Golopenția 2002, 528). The mutual conditioning between state and freedom means that statehood is a constant effort to contain the permanent aggression of other countries. From this point of view, concludes Golopenția, nationhood, as the necessity of freedom, is also a matter of public consciousness.

Another component of geopolitics is *education*, which should be treated as a source of the nation’s power:

Education is the source from which the strength of peoples flows, the graduate of each high school being one of the centers around which it crystallizes, pervaded by the consciousness of its life meaning, . . . of the amorphous multitude that constitutes the substance of all nations; . . . all schools are . . . when they fulfill their purpose, the reservoir of all energies. (Golopenția 2002, 299)

With Golopenția, geopolitics stretches from the individual consciousness to the power projection of the nationhood over its consanguineous groups.

Conea's geopolitics—the situational awareness thesis: “If there is a disturbance somewhere, we must consider it in our midst . . .” (Conea 1937, 403)

With Ion Conea, “geopolitics became a focal point for the Romanian scientific thinking, too” (Golopenția 2002, 535). Again, the same concern for the whole. Geopolitics is the science of constantly reducing distance and increasing intensity in international relations: “Geopolitics will not study individual states but will study the political game between states. . . . Therefore, from what we have said so far, we can deduce that geopolitics is the science of the planetary political environment” (Conea 1937, 411). The geopolitical knowledge consists of the following: the neighboring states area, their demographics and economic geography, divergences and common interests with the neighboring states, their historical political traditions, and other current factual data (*ibid.*, 412).

Geopolitics and Geohistory: The Romanian Journal for South-East Europe was the last institutional line of development of the Gustian and post-Gustian thinking in geopolitics before its abrupt termination by the Soviet occupation of the country (Sept. 1944). After 1944, most of the contributors were either imprisoned or killed during detention, few of them managed to flee to the West (the most notable was Sabin Manuilă), some were marginalized and denied employment, and very few survived unscathed by the instauration of the communist regime.

We filed *Geopolitics and Geohistory* under Gusti's School of Sociology, even if the paradigm was more post-Gustian and much more transdisciplinary. Out of the five members of the editorial board, three were young Gustian sociologists (Golopenția, Vulcănescu, and Conea), one was a young historian close to the French Annales School (G. I. Brătianu), and one was the founder and director of the modern Institute of Statistics (Sabin Manuilă). The journal was published under the aegis of the Romanian Society of Statistics and its offices were hosted by the Romanian Central Institute of Statistics.

In this interdisciplinary project were involved, alongside the ones mentioned above, renowned young Gustian sociologists (H. Stahl, O. Neamțu), well-known historians (C. Daicoviciu), demographers and statisticians (S. Manuilă, D. C. Georgescu, N. Dunăre), anthropologists (V. Mihăilescu), geographers (C. Brătescu), etc.

The Program of the journal states that thinking geopolitically means to understand Iorga's idea that Romania is a state of European necessity:

Romania has the good fortune—and the misfortune, of course—to stand at such geopolitical crossroads. We are what Nicolae Iorga called a state of European necessity. . . . Our Romania lives and speaks here not only for itself. . . . It means,

therefore, that more than anywhere else, the watch at such [key] points must always be awake (your watch, that of the properly seated one). (Geopolitica și Geoistoria 1, 1 (1941): 4)

Geopolitics is about “the great geopolitical fords” of the planet, where conflicts brew and business are conducted. The state should be able to monitor these international pulsations and take care of their interactions with their internal order.

The five critical elements of this situational/geopolitical awareness are the following:

- the rim idea—Iorga’s concept, which states that borders are more than administrative limits, being a cultural process, where different societies interfere with one another;
- economic power projection;
- some degree of autarchy;
- political independence.

All of them must work in parallel, both at the level of state officials and at the level of citizens with individual conscience—“like an obsession.”

Geopolitical thinking means situational awareness both at the decision-making level and in the broad sense of civic culture. The geopolitics of Gusti’s School is precisely what we mentioned at the beginning of this paper, an approach to the security of the whole society as a nation, a forerunner of the geopolitics of contemporary societal security and, we believe, something more than that. □

Notes

1. “Geopolitics is the teaching of the state as a geographic organism or a manifestation in space: therefore, the state as land, territory, district or, most obviously, as an empire. As a political science it has the state unit constantly in its focus and wished to contribute to the understanding of the essence of the state; political geography, on the other hand, studies the earth as the site of human communities in their connections to the other properties of the earth.” Kjellén, quoted in Christopher Richard Wade Dettling, “Rudolf Kjellén: Statecraft As a Form of Life,” *American Idealism*, 10 Dec. 2018, accessed 17 March 2021, <https://medium.com/@christopherrichard-wadedettling/the-state-as-a-form-of-life-the-aim-of-statecraft-b270a16b5804>.
2. S. Mehedinți discussing the concept of anthropogeography introduced by Friedrich Ratzel (Mehedinți 1943, 60).
3. See Friedman 2017 and *World Atlas*, “What is the Three Seas Initiative?,” accessed 17 March 2021, <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-is-the-three-seas-initiative.html>.

4. See Mehedinți 1943, 268–307, especially the chapters “Frunteria României spre Răsărit” (Romania’s eastern border), and “Geneza celui mai mare stat continental—Observări geopolitice” (The genesis of the largest continental state—some geopolitical observations).
5. “Problema federației statelor europene [1929],” in *Gusti* 1934, 255–276.
6. For a review of the concept see Șerban 2008.
7. “Memoriu înaintat Președinției Consiliului de Miniștri, în urma Înaltei dispoziții a ASR Principelui de Coroană Carol, din partea Direcției generale a Casei Culturii Poporului, la 16 iunie 1922,” published in *Gusti* 1934, 442–447.
8. “Contribuția științelor sociale la conducerea politicii externe,” *Sociologie românească* (Bucharest) 2, 5–6 (1937): 193–196, published also in *Golopenția* 2002, 527–532.
9. “O știință nouă: geopolitica,” *Sociologie românească* 2, 9–10 (1937): 379–385.
10. “Însemnare cu privire la definirea preocupării ce poartă numele de geopolitică,” *Anuarul Societății Studenților în Geografie “Soveja”* (Bucharest) 10–11 (1937–1938): 110–116.
11. “Cuvânt înainte: Geopolitica,” in *Golopenția* 2002, 539–540.

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Abstract

Romanian Geopolitics: From the Geographical Approach to Gusti’s School of Sociology: The *Coniunctionis Animae* Concept and Its Context

Geopolitics is not a superfluous field, secondary to the social sciences. It is a necessity as long as societies have states, and states are sovereign. Romania solved its first historical imperative—the realization of one state, one society/nation in 1918. After 1918, a second imperative emerged almost immediately: the “unification in soul” of the liberated provinces, as D. Gusti called it. We shall call it *coniunctionis animae*. These two geopolitical emergencies were approached from historical, sociological, and geographical perspectives long before becoming part of a Romanian geopolitics designated as such. The *coniunctionis animae* was of particular concern for Gusti’s School of Sociology, with some important ramifications related to the historical communities of Romanians abroad, to the geopolitical role of the state, etc. We also highlight some important contributions to Romanian geopolitics coming from forerunners such as Simion Mehedinți and George Vâlsan.

Keywords

Gusti School of Sociology, state, society, power, administration, consanguinity, European Union

The Danube, an Element of the Modern Romanian Statehood

A Discussion on Geography, History and Identity

OVIDIANA BULUMAC

“Wherever you see it, in our country, the Danube is a complex creature, which has seen and suffered a lot and bears on its face the traces of all its struggles . . . [The Danube] is the only natural axis of Central Europe.”¹

G. Valsan

Ovidiana Bulumac

Sociologist and Researcher at the European Center for Ethnic Studies, Romanian Academy. Author, among others, of the vol. **Infrastructură și societate: Considerente teoretice și studii de caz** (Infrastructure and society: Theoretical considerations and case studies) (2018).

THE DANUBE is part of the history of the places it passes through, often being a link between peoples or a unifying factor for social units. In the present article, we propose an analysis of the river starting from the sociology of infrastructure. At the same time, we will review some references of important geographers, geopoliticians and historians who highlight the crucial role of the Danube in shaping the modernity of the Romanian space, as well as its continental importance.

The Danube is the most political river in Europe—more political than the Rhine. Therefore, the Romanian state, the master of the Lower Danube and the Delta, acquires, with or without its will, a superlative historical significance in the life of contemporary Europe. This accounts for the presence of the ‘European Commission’ in Galați.²

A Sociological Approach

THE SOCIOLOGY of infrastructure is a new field of research in the social sciences, which refers to the link that is created between the elements of infrastructure and the social, economic, cultural or even (geo)political space. The permanently built connection between the interior and the exterior space of a community can be discovered (also) by studying the infrastructural connections.³

*Infrastructure represents (1) that expression of connections within a socio-economic unit and, at the same time, (2) that connection permanently built between the inner space of a community and its exterior, where by inner space we mean a network of “soul interdependencies,” while through the external one we refer to the (inter) national economy or to society as a whole.*⁴

Thus, according to the theory, infrastructure can be understood with the help of several auxiliary concepts. For example, in terms of *appearance*, an element can fall into the category of natural or artificial infrastructure.⁵ In terms of *form*, the infrastructure can be divided between land, air, sea, river, telecom, and virtual.⁶ From the point of view of the *content*, there are two constituent forms that can be observed: the material and the social infrastructure,⁷ which do not exist per se, but are interdependent.⁸ If we look at infrastructure in terms of its *nature*, we can operate with two other categories: positive infrastructure (which generates linkages necessary to coagulate a social unit) or negative (which “consumes” the space through which it passes and weakens the social unit).⁹ As for the infrastructure *visibility* indicator, it is inversely proportional to the integration of elements in the socio-economic space (the better integrated and in line with the infrastructure potential, the more invisible they become through the function of fluidization, saving time or money).¹⁰ Finally, the infrastructure can be analyzed through the three functions it can fulfill: 1) preserving a social unit and organizing its own contents; 2) adaptation to new forms, and 3) integration/connection and circulation.¹¹

From the perspective of this new theory,¹² the Danube can be analyzed both as an element of material infrastructure—of continental importance because it has had and will continue to have a “decisive contribution to the physical organization of the world,”¹³ and as an element of social infrastructure, being the source of specific representations in the collective mentality of the Romanian communities on both banks, reaching the point of becoming part of the symbolic infrastructure, therefore of the identity framework.

*The only heirs of the Eastern Roman world are the Romanians. Many times the genesis of our nation was treated superficially, considering that we are the descendants of the Daco-Roman synthesis and that the space where the Romanian people was born is the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic one. It is true that part of the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic space later became part of the Roman Empire, but we believe that the Latinized Thracians brought an important contribution to the Romanization of the newly conquered area. As the Dacians were part of the great Thracian family, it would be more correct to use the name of Thracian-Roman synthesis when discussing the formation of the Romanian people. Because, until the arrival of the Slavs, there was a Romanian ethnic unity separated only by the Danube. This is how we can explain the strong Vlach movements in the Balkans between the 10th and 12th centuries, and the support that, at a certain moment, the Vlachs Peter and Asen found beyond the Danube. There were not two Latin nations in the Balkans, but a single Romanian one, having as its component parts the Aromanians, the Megleno-Romanians, the Istro-Romanians (like in fact all the Balkan Vlachs).*¹⁴

*The great importance of the Danube is that from this historical issue a new nation was created.*¹⁵

The Geographical, Geoeconomic, and Ethnopolitical Perspectives

AT THE macro-level, the Danube is the second longest river in Europe, relevant not only for the ten countries and four capitals it crosses, but for the whole world. Specifically, N. Iorga argues, the Danube gained economic relevance after “the export of grain of our country started, and, secondly, when steam navigation began.”¹⁶ This is explained by the fact that the river is significant not for its upper course (where it is a “national river”), but only for its part from the outflow.¹⁷ S. Mehedinți calls it “the eighth sea of the world” and integrates it into a “river diagonal,” along the Rhine. Its location has proved to be, over time, ideal for a trade route which connects the Anglo-German space to the (Far) East.¹⁸

*Running parallel to the Mediterranean, it can borrow part of the Mediterranean’s attributes, establishing links between the continental part of Europe and the continental part of Asia, just as the Mediterranean establishes the connection between maritime Europe and maritime Asia. Before the Suez Canal was dug, this was the most favorable connection in existence. Since the opening of the Suez Canal, the Danube was remained a secondary branch of this link, but quite important because it can offer Central Europe an easier access than the Mediterranean.*¹⁹

After 1992, when the Main–Danube Canal was completed, the river crossing corridor between Rotterdam and Constanța became the shortest navigable connection between the North Sea and the Black Sea.²⁰ Moreover, goods from Australia and the Far East destined for Central Europe shorten their journey by 4,000 km,²¹ which in terms of reducing costs and time is a useful solution for international trade.

*The Danube still has a lot to say regarding the future of the Romanian nation and state. . . . I have shown . . . quite clearly the geo-economic and geo-political role of the Rhine–Danube river diagonal. Taken together, these rivers form the “eighth sea” of Europe, incomparably more favorable than the Mediterranean in terms of shortening the route of goods between the Anglo-Germans and the Indians and the Far East.*²²

From this perspective, without taking into account the flow of the Volga, which is “doomed to spill its waters in a sea closed between the Caucasus and the deserts of Central Asia,”²³ the Danube has the quality of being the largest European river directly connected to the planetary ocean. “The Volga crosses only the Russian plain and flows into a sea closed like a sack.”²⁴

The particular position of the Danube, which flows, unlike other waters, in the W-E direction, right through the center of the continent, not only provides a navigable route, not only unites distinct geographical areas, but also acquires a geocultural dimension, as it connects

*people with a high density, with a strong industrial and commercial activity. Three large cultural circles connect the Danube: Central Europe, the Mediterranean through the Balkan Peninsula, and the eastern steppes that end on the banks of this river.*²⁵

On the scale of history, this special location of the river has generated on its banks a space permanently found on the “to conquer list,” especially in the Lower Danube region,²⁶ turning the Romanian Lands as a whole into a *route*.^{27, 28, 29}

Romania has the good fortune—with all the associated risks, of course—to stand at such a geopolitical crossroads. We are what Nicolae Iorga called a state of European necessity. Leaning on the Carpathian fortress and watching over the mouths of the Danube, standing guard here in the name and in interest of the whole of Europe behind it—and even beyond—it can be said that our Romania lives and speaks here not only for itself. Our state is, therefore, in the attention of the East and the West, the North and the South alike—and at all times. This is, as has been said, a truly

key position. And this attention of another for you can come under the form of care and sympathy, it can be protection, but it can also be appetite or danger. It means, therefore, that more than anywhere else, the watch at such points must always be vigilant (your watch, that of the one sitting there). The idea of boundary, of international economic power and appetite, of autarchy and independence, must always be borne there in the consciousness, as an obsession. We are, through our position on the globe . . . like a Carpathian sheepfold in a wolf's ford. Shepherds, as such, must all have a good cudgel and... sleep as little as possible. It is understood, therefore: for a State in such a situation, in which the winds, the waves follow you everywhere, it is the duty, first of all, to know this situation, to be permanently aware of it, good and bad, with all that it entails. All the members of this state, and first of all its ruling class, must always keep their thoughts on them.—But all these, let's note, are concerns and notions of strict order and par excellence geopolitical—and only through geopolitics they are understood and lived. And, then, isn't it superfluous to ask ourselves if the flower of this young discipline must be planted in the glade of the Romanian mind? Yes, we can say that we are born to be... geopolitical.³⁰

In fact, both Iorga and Vâlsan³¹ argue that the Danube was a road and an intersection of spheres of influence at the same time, which favored the preservation of a state of instability over time, but also the emergence of a particular typology of people, meant to cope with the vicissitudes, “which the Danube needed.” In short, during all this time, along the river, the only factor of historical permanence was the Romanian people:

When the North wanted to go to the South, when the West wanted to touch the East, this is where they met . . . How not to be a resilient nation, how not to trust in our endurance, when for so many centuries we had to gather our strength before daring to be ourselves? . . . What creates an admirable unity in these regions, despite those who fight on the banks of the Danube, is this fact: the existence of a special people that feeds, eventually defends, and keeps the continuity in these places. And this people of ours is seemingly created for this very purpose. In those destructive clashes . . . a permanent factor was needed—us. This permanent factor was also needed for another purpose than feeding the others, or guiding and informing them . . . We were created as a nation by the political circumstances of these parts, out of the mixture between Romanized Thracians and Roman colonists later enriched with the blood of the Slavs and other peoples who came to these parts, but all in moderation, taking as much as it was necessary so as not to endanger the character of our language, popular conscience, culture—we were and are the people that the Danube needed.³²

From a geographical point of view and, simultaneously, relevant for the Romanian space, the Danube is part of a “circle of waters” (along with the Tisza, the Dniester and Black Sea) that outlines “a geographical land shaped with a rare symmetry,”³³ a geographical harmony made up of rivers and the sea, passes, mountains, hills, plateaus, plains and the delta.³⁴

In this geographical harmony, the Danube finds its place as part of an ethnopolitical whole, a fundamental coordinate of the Romanian people, along with the sea and Carpathians. More precisely, this is a geopolitical “façade,” as the geographers Vâlsan³⁵ and Mehedinți called it in their studies.

*For simplification, we begin with the conclusion: The life of our people has had two coordinates: on the one hand, the Mountain and the Forest, on the other hand, the Danube and the Sea. Whoever mentions the Danube must immediately mention the Black Sea. However, there is more, for they must also add the Bosphorus (which is just an extension of the Danube), then the Dardanelles . . . The Danube cannot and must not be separated, not for a moment, from the Black Sea and the Straits, with which it forms a “fundamental coordinate” for the past and future destiny of our people.*³⁶

The Danube cannot be understood from a geoeconomic point of view outside the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits, which condition its opening to the East by the political and economic context that governs the two crossings.

*The Danube, in a certain respect, does not end at Sulina. The Black Sea is almost a closed sea. The commercial movement of the Danube will never stop on the shores of the Black Sea. The real trade mouths of the Danube are at the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles and the whole life of the river is dependent on what happens around these Straits. Therefore, the problem of the Danube is partly the problem of the Straits and everything that will be decided there will be of great importance for the river and for our entire country.*³⁷

In essence, the river in question is one of the elements of natural geography that attaches “a European significance”³⁸ to our country, both by the “relevance of the unhindered traffic at the Danube mouths” and by the “security of the vital Bucharest–Constanța road.”³⁹ In order to understand how the European dimension was acquired due to the Danube, especially during the modernization of the state, we will describe below the relevant geohistorical processes.

Because of the Danube, the inhabitant of the Romanian Plain feels closer to Bavaria, for example, than to the beautiful plain of Rumelia which is at a compara-

*tively smaller distance. The Danube is the geographical thread that connects us to the West, and one of the reasons we are not Balkan is the fact that the Danube separates us from the Balkans.*⁴⁰

Geohistorical Perspective on the Axiality of the Danube

THE PRESENCE of the Danube in these places generated a nation *on both its banks*, a well-defined identity construct both locally⁴¹ and nationally, clearly distinct from the rest of the peoples in the region (Slavic or Hungarian). From this point of view, the Danube did not represent a dividing line, but a connection between its banks, i.e. it was an axis.

Ever since the time of the state structure established by Burebista, the lower course of the Danube was seen rather as an “internal water,” as the historian N. Iorga stated about the upper course located in the later German territories. In fact, the “Danube issue,” which is different from that of the Rhine, represents precisely this characteristic of the river: to generate in its vicinity *a certain type of people*.⁴²

*At first, the Danube flows between German lands, and no one thought to raise claims on these regions where the river passes through perfectly national territories. Moreover, this upper course of the Danube does not flow between rival German territories. Up to a certain point it passes across a well-defined territory, then across another, just as well-defined. All the Germans consider the Danube as a kind of national river, Donau, just as we consider the Danube as a national water—the popular songs are full of references to it, to us and to those across the Danube.*⁴³

The Danube, as an element of natural infrastructure, has oscillated throughout history between its dividing function and that of connecting the two shores and the worlds on them. On the one hand, it represented a link between the communities on both banks (the Romanian historical communities in Hungary, Serbia, Bulgaria, Moldova, Ukraine), acting as a *passageway*.^{44, 45}

If the East-West circulation is impossible, we saw that the N-S, or S-N traffic is much easier on the Danube. This is a significant matter. The Iron Gates massif allows the transition from the Southern Carpathians to the Balkans and vice versa, of course to a mountain population with a predominantly pastoral occupation. Since Trajan until now, in the whole Carpatho-Balkan land, there was only one such population: the Romanians. This is something that none of our neighbors have ever disputed. The notion of Vlach is so closely related to that of shepherd that

*in the Balkan Peninsula today Vlach means shepherd. So if there was a nation that could enjoy the benefits offered by the Iron Gates massif, this nation could only be the Romanian one.*⁴⁶

On the other hand, the Danube had the function of demarcation from the Slavic or Ottoman Other, especially during the Phanariots or after the appearance of nation-states in the Balkans in the early 19th century.

*In the presentation made before the Romanian Affairs Commission, in Paris, on 22 February 1919, Ion I. C. Brătianu, presenting his (geopolitical) arguments for a Greater Romania within its natural borders, declared . . . “We cannot conceive the existence of the Romanian nation without the Dniester, just like we cannot conceive it without the Danube and the Tisza, in order to separate us from the Slavic element.”*⁴⁷

*The Danube, with the arch that it makes south of the Banat, constitutes a border between the Slavic Balkan world and the Romanian North-Danubian space.*⁴⁸

As a digression, a river is one of those geographical features that give *individuality* to a territory, whether it is already national or emergent, an individuality defined by scientific criteria and filtered through the prism of the researcher’s national consciousness.⁴⁹ George Vâlsan is one of the Romanian intellectuals who often drew attention to the relationship of interdependence between national consciousness and the geographical framework in which it manifests itself. According to him, the Danube is one of those geographical conditions that proved to be favorable to the unity and cohesion of the Romanian nation, a matter that goes beyond Renan’s definition of the nation, fashionable at the time. Thus, Vâlsan concludes that the national consciousness is “an evolving soul force”⁵⁰ which is directly determined by particular material elements, such as the geographical conditions.

*But when you ask yourself how the great mass of the Romanian people acquired this consciousness, you have to admit that you are almost faced with a mystery. . . . For the Kingdom, the time of schooling and military service was decisive, but for the whole of Romania some geographical and ethnic influences may have contributed more. The rivers that pierce the mountains are scattered, accompanied by roads, from central Transylvania to the four winds, there are quite numerous passages, the Danube, which allows a relatively lively movement of goods and fishermen from the Serbian lands towards the sea, and even the mountains gather every year shepherds from one cline and the other, then in the population movements in so many forms and so numerous . . .*⁵¹

Furthermore, it is important that these geographical conditions have a direct influence on the actions of a nation over time^{52,53}: “The geographical basis fundamentally conditions the development and orientation of a people.”⁵⁴

This digression was necessary in order to emphasize the connection between the geographical framework and the process of formation of the Romanian people, which followed the two axes of the Carpathians and Danube, on both sides of it. Moreover, this connection is not a superficial one, but one of the utmost importance. Both Vâlsan and Mehedinți, and even Iorga discuss in detail *the axial character of the river* in the formation of the Romanian people.

*The thing was natural: the Danube was . . . the axis of our nation's life, since the earliest historical references . . .*⁵⁵

*The Danube [is characterized by] its geographical position, as the axis of the Carpatho-Balkan basin.*⁵⁶

*The Danube is not a border at all in the Iron Gates region and it is even less the edge of a world, and whoever lived to the north, had to live to the south. The Danube was in the past rather a Romanian national axis, as is the Carpathian chain, and not a border. A river only separates in times of danger, in times of peace it is an element of connection and propagation.*⁵⁷

During the Thracian rule, the polity stretched on both banks, as mentioned earlier, transforming the Danube into an inland river for the outlined state structure. And this peculiarity of habitation has been preserved to this day:⁵⁸

*The Thracians held both banks of the Danube. We must think of the Getae. We are told that they lived on the right bank as well as on the left, and this finding leads us to establish an important point for the present circumstances. Can it create any right for us or set a precedent? Is the Danube meant to have the same masters on both banks? I would think so. Especially since today most of the right bank of the Danube is inhabited by Romanians: they are found in Morava, in Timok, and as far as Negotin, in two whole circles in Serbia, in parts of Vidin, in significant numbers, and in the eastern part, in the vicinity of Dobruja, close to Silistra. This is not denied by anyone; state needs may falsify the figures, but there are always means to arrive at an accurate statistic, at least to partially correct the figures doctored by the official agents concerned.*⁵⁹

The next stage experienced by the Danube is the expansion of the Roman Empire, when it becomes *Rome's border* (after previously being an inland river as mentioned above), especially since the southern branch of the Thracians was con-

quered before the northern one, more than a century earlier. Thus, with the Italic advance, the battle for the Danube line began between the Dacians and Romans.

The Romanization process began with Rome's advance into the Balkans and ended before the collapse of the Danube line in 580–602, when the phrase "Torna, torna, fratre" was recorded—according to Byzantine chronicles, the oldest evidence of the Proto-Romanian language, long before the division of the Romanian space done by the Slavs.

The logic of the acculturation process called Romanization helps us understand that it did not happen only between the conquest of Dacia (106) and the Aurelian retreat (271), but with the initiation of cultural and economic contacts. The Romanization process began at the latest in the 3rd–2nd centuries, with the conquest of Illyria, respectively Macedonia (Thrace) by Rome, and lasted long after the Aurelian retreat, through permanent exchanges between the Roman Empire (later the Byzantine Empire) and the Daco-Romans on the Danube and Carpathians. It should be noted that the Roman Empire (Byzantine) recaptured the Danube line in depth, on the Turnu-Severin–Curtea de Argeș–Ploiești–Galați line, in the 4th century . . . , and that Byzantium had military bases in Dobruja until the 11th century.⁶⁰

In fact, the Latin language came "from the West on the valleys of the Sava and the Danube, it extended to the shores of the Pontus, where until then only Greek had been spoken. . . . it was the sign that the sea, once barbaric, then Greek, had now become a great Roman one."⁶¹ After the acculturation process was started by the conquest and Latinization of the Dacians, after the proto-Romans already developed their own linguistic elements, for the 4th–8th centuries we can already contend that the Romanian people was fully formed, having as its axes the Danube, along both of its banks, and the Carpathians.

The first moment when the Danube becomes a dividing line (but which becomes really relevant only after the appearance of the Balkan nation-states in the 19th century) is the one in which the Slavic migrations divided the Roman world in two: the North-Danubian one and the Balkan one.⁶²

The Danube regains its axiality through the determination of the communities on the two shores to stay in contact. Moreover, there are projects of state value that appear alongside the Danube, or, more precisely, are *centered on the Danube*, such as the Asen dynasty empire, a creation of the southern Romanians that today is increasingly confiscated by Bulgarians, who try to legitimize their presence in the current space they control.

Another interesting medieval formation is that of the Bulgarian and Romanian-Bulgarian Empire created on the axis of the lower Danube and spanning for some time the Balkans and partly the Carpathians. A Carpatho-Balkan state, with the

*Danube as its axis, is logical, although the Danube in these lands is not so much an axis of union, but rather an obstacle, given its too wide and too swampy meadow. Today such a formation is impossible, as a nation-state, due to ethnic differences on both sides . . . In the past, however, when the chronicler Villehardouin showed that the whole Balkan platform was Romanian and later when, according to the testimony of the Bulgarians, the Bulgarian people retreated to the valleys of the Balkans, such a formation was possible not for Bulgarians but rather for the Romanians.*⁶³

Moreover, until the 17th century, the axial quality of the Danube is preserved, as evidenced by the reigns of Mircea the Elder, who was “ruler of both banks up ‘to the great sea,’”⁶⁴ of Stephen the Great, who reached the mouths of the river where he erected the fortress of Chilia Nouă,⁶⁵ or of Michael the Great⁶⁶ who came out victorious at Călugăreni and “along the Danube.”⁶⁷ In fact, at the historical level, the Romanian voivodes understood that the security of their states depended on their control over the Danube—in other words, they had to practice geopolitics *ex officio*.

*As soon as a Wallachian principality gained power, it spread over the mouths of the Danube and Dobruja. The name Bessarabia is the result of this ancient rule of the Basarab family in the 14th and 15th centuries. Stephen the Great did not consider his Moldavia thoroughly defended until he conquered Kilia, “the key and gateway to the whole country of Moldavia, Transylvania and the Danube parts,” as he himself confessed.*⁶⁸

This period represents the end of the era in which the Danube acted as a link for the Romanian people on both banks. With the arrival of the Turks, the access of the Romanians to the Danube was blocked, which generated evolutionary fractures⁶⁹ in the development of the state, a situation that persisted until the Treaty of Adrianople (1829).⁷⁰

*Then darkness comes. The Black Sea becomes a “Turkish lake.” It is deserted all winter, the ships enter it only over the summer, for three months, and only with a designated pilot. The waters of the neighboring sea have become unknown! The Danube was also languishing. Only the Tutrakan people and other Romanian fishermen crossed it, from the sea (Portița) to the parts of Banat.*⁷¹

Thus, in 1812, through the loss of Bessarabia, the Romanians lost “any contact with the seashore.”⁷² As a result of this, regaining access to the Danube–Black Sea geopolitical binomial becomes one of the urgencies of the Romanian space at the dawn of the 19th century, which takes place at the same time with the “decadence of the Turkish empire.”⁷³

Along with the unification of the territory of the two principalities, the founding of a dynasty and other internal reforms, the big problem was: the liberation of the banks of the Danube, approaching the sea routes and the recolonization of the lost land that led to the seashore.⁷⁴

The Danube returned to the attention of the great powers with the involvement of Napoleon and the 1815 Treaty of Vienna, when the river “began to play a European role, involving the trade of all countries from the Rhine to the Black Sea.”⁷⁵ Basically, after 1829, the Romanians began to regain not only access to the river itself, but also to their own development, through the direct involvement of Western powers (especially the British), interested in trade at the mouths of the Danube.

The Treaty of Adrianople, among other things, had driven the Turks away from the left bank of the Danube, from the rayas, had freed the Romanian countries from the Turkish monopoly and allowed Romanian navigation on the river. As soon as the free contact with the river was restored, a new life sprung in our countries. Everything that went to Constantinople and was paid for by the Turks as they pleased was now free for export at competitive prices. The plains that had never felt the plow were presently plowed, the forests exploited, the herds of large cattle and sheep multiplied. All this wealth could only be shipped on the Danube, the only point of contact of the Principalities with the Sea. The Danube acquires a Romanian national importance and the Romanian principalities of that time begin to have a policy of the “mother Danube”—the words belong to the ruler Michael Sturdza.⁷⁶

The rayas . . . were then reattached to Wallachia, and the Turks withdrew, forever, to the right bank of the river. At that moment, the Danube became our true border to the south. . . . The reason was this: Europe, and especially England, needed free movement on the Danube. Just then, the British archipelago was in great need of grain . . . The British Liberals constantly demanded free import . . . Conclusion: the Danube should also be a free way for the export of Romanian cereals, and for the import of goods from English factories.⁷⁷

Although the liberation of the Danube from the Ottomans was achieved, it was replaced by the growing influence of Russia. As a result of the same Treaty of Adrianople, Russia maintained control over the Romanian Lands for more than three decades. The abuses committed by the Russians against the Danube trade intensified, as well as the non-fulfillment of the obligations assumed by the treaty to ensure the cleaning of the Danube canals from a technical point of view. Thus, the fate of the Romanian Danube ports was increasingly endangered and the blockade of the mouths of the Danube more and more possible.

Russia had reached the Black Sea and it did not rest until 1812, when it captured Bessarabia, not so much for its land—the Russian Empire had enough land—but for the mouths of the Danube. And it managed to seize them, through the peace of Adrianople, in 1829. Thus began an era of decadence for the river. Turkey, which had understood its interest in navigating the Danube on which grain, wood, sheep, butter and honey were brought to Constantinople, had taken care to give a convenient depth to the Sulina arm. Russia, as the mistress of the mouths, found the opportunity to give a death blow to the tendencies of Austrian monopolization. It allowed transshipments. The life of the Danube was paralyzed.⁷⁸

The messages of the Romanian rulers did not remain without an echo, Russia's policy to prevent navigation on the Danube being confirmed by England, a direct victim of the traffic congestion which drove to bankruptcy its trading house in the area. Russia's strategy of petty steps culminated in the desire to gain absolute control over the Romanian Principalities by attempting their annexation in 1853. As a result, Russian imperialist tendencies were opposed by Turkey, England, the Kingdom of Sardinia, and France, which emerged victorious from the well-known confrontation, the Crimean War, and imposed the conditions of the Paris Peace. This is when Moldavia obtained the three counties in southern Bessarabia and the Delta, while the Danube was regulated as a free zone for the navigation of commercial vessels. Thus, after more than a century and a half of limitations, access to the mouths of the Danube was finally obtained and the proximity to the sea became possible after the defeat of the Russians in the Crimean War (1856). The Danube becomes a decisive factor for the Union of the Principalities, an aspect recorded by S. Mehedinți:^{79, 80}

England and France intervene in the Danube affair. Don't think it is political romance. There are much more serious and powerful causes that determined the intervention of these powers. By harnessing the power of steam, by creating industrial machines, England and then France, around 1800, underwent a total transformation. From agricultural countries they become industrial countries. In about 30 years, most of the population leaves agriculture and moves on to industry. This has three important consequences, especially in England: a good condition that multiplies the population, a decrease in agricultural production which becomes increasingly insufficient as the population multiplies, and a large increase in manufactured goods that had to be sold. Without urgent measures, a dangerous crisis could be triggered. It needed to look for cheap wheat for the English workforce and markets for industrial products. . . . the Romanian principalities could offer a lot of cheap wheat, had a large capacity for industrial consumption, were close compared to other lands and could be reached by water, the best thing for a maritime power such as England and partly for France. The Danube enters the political circle of

*these countries. But the mouths of the Danube were occupied by Russia, which deliberately let them become clogged. . . . A clash was expected and it happened in 1853, during the Crimean War. France, England, and Italy collaborated with Turkey and defeated the Russians in their own country. The result was Russia's departure from the mouths of the Danube and the complete freedom of navigation on the Danube. This result was enshrined in the Treaty of Paris of 1856. Through it, Moldavia regained three counties in southern Bessarabia and both principalities were so protected as guardians of the mouths of the Danube that they could soon unite, remaining only under a formal suzerainty of Turkey. So, the Danube, through its European importance and given the fact that it wets our earth, was our good fortune. She facilitated our Union.*⁸¹

The lower course of the river becomes the object of activity for a new international body: the European Danube Commission (1856) that manages to keep up with Austria's desire to turn the Danube into an "Austrian river." Two years later, the new sailboats appeared in the area:

*The establishment of the Danube Commission (1856), which would take care of the lower end of the great European river, a kind of United States of Europe with an ideal sovereignty . . . was and will remain in the history of the country our moment of the greatest significance. . . . A new danger arose, however, this time from the west. Goods entered the mouths of the Danube, coming from countries with a more sophisticated industry and being thus cheaper; Austria, in order to secure its markets on the lower Danube, tried to neutralize the influence of the European Commission . . . by a treaty concluded (1857) with Turkey, Bavaria and Württemberg, which in its art. XXI provided for the right to charge navigation fees for works, which would make the Danube independent of the Danube Commission! That is, the Danube was to become indirectly an Austrian river. In Paris (1858), however, this attempt was neutralized . . . which put us even closer to the sea by annexing Dobruja, over which passed the shortest road to Constantinople.*⁸²

However, the great interests in the Lower Danube determined in time the distancing of the European Commission of the Danube from its original mission, as instead it became a 'state within a state' (a fact that hastened its end, in 1938, when Romania withdrew its support), although Romania's contribution to the systematization, cleaning and maintenance of the river increased yearly, a special role in this respect being played by the long reign of Carol I, who ensured the freedom of the Danube and guided the Romanian element toward the sea.^{83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88}

The recovery of the mouths of the Danube after Adrianople triggered a series of crucial events for the Romanian state. Basically, the role of the Danube in

the unification of Moldavia with Wallachia, and then of the Principalities with Dobruja, was decisive: the Union of the Principalities (1859), the independence (1877), the recognition of the Kingdom (1881), the rectification of the borders (1913), the Great Union (1918), rural reform (1921), economic modernization (1919–1938). This is the reason why Simion Mehedinți stated that the Danube was in itself a geopolitical condition of the Romanian state. “The territorial integration of the Romanian State, in the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century was determined, for the most part, by the Danube.”⁸⁹



Notes

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16. Ibid., 4.
17. Ibid., 5.
18. Mehedinți, 158.
19. Vâlsan, “Dunărea,” 46.
20. The route includes the rivers Rhine and Main, the Main–Danube Canal, the Danube, and the Danube–Black Sea Canal.
21. Info available at <http://www.murfatlarorasul.ro/atracție/canalul-dunare-marea-neagra>.
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Abstract

The Danube, an Element of the Modern Romanian Statehood:
A Discussion on Geography, History and Identity

The article focuses on the importance of the Danube River in the unification and modernization of the Romanian state, using a multidisciplinary approach. Thus, using geographical, sociological, ethnopolitical and geoeconomic arguments, the axial character of the river is outlined, relevant for the formation of the Romanian people, along both its banks.

Keywords

Danube, modernity, Romanian state, axis, sociology of infrastructure

The Invention of the “Moldavian Language” in 1924

As a Political Weapon in the
Conflict between Romanian
and Ukrainian Bolsheviks at the
Beginnings of the Soviet Union

GEORGE DAMIAN
MOCANU

*The Soviet project of
creating a “Moldavian
language” separate from
Romanian was an utter
failure.*

THE CONSTITUTIONAL Court of the Republic of Moldova ruled on 5 December 2013 that Romanian is the official language of the country. This ruling superseded the provisions of the Constitution of 1994, which states in Article 13 that the official language is Moldavian.¹ While the majority of linguists agree that there is no fundamental difference between the Romanian and Moldavian languages, the issue of the name of the idiom spoken in the Republic of Moldova remains a hot subject during electoral campaigns, a strong indicator that it is a political issue. The aim of the present article is to determine the moment when the “Moldavian language” became a political issue and to elucidate the process behind this development.

The province of Bessarabia, the region of the medieval state of Moldavia located between the rivers Prut and

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Dniester, was annexed by the Russian Empire in 1812, and most of this province became the nowadays Republic of Moldova, after having been part of Romania between 1918–1940 and 1941–1944, and part of Soviet Union between 1944 and 1991. While Bessarabia was part of Romania, in 1924 the Soviet Union formed a Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR) on the left bank of the Dniester with the stated objective of re-annexing Bessarabia and launching a Soviet-style revolution in Romania. The MASSR was the crucible for the Moldavian language as a political concept, aimed at building a Moldavian ethnic and national identity separated from the Romanian identity. At the end of World War II, the MASSR was united with Bessarabia and eventually, during the dissolution of the USSR, the former MASSR on the left bank of the Dniester formed the secessionist Transnistria. The origins of the disputes regarding the denomination of the language spoken in the Republic of Moldova can be traced back to the formation of the MASSR.

A Vague Origin

THE EXPRESSION “Moldavian language” was used in writing at least since the 16th century, describing the language spoken in the medieval principality of Moldavia, but the chroniclers mentioned the fact that the vernaculars used by Romanians in Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania were basically the same language, commonly referred to as Romanian. Grigore Ureche (1590–1647), Miron Costin (1633–1692), Dimitrie Cantemir (1673–1723) went to great extents to argue for the common origins and language that the people of Moldavia shared with the inhabitants of Wallachia and Transylvania.² While Bessarabia was part of the Russian Empire there was no attempt from the central or local government to build a separate identity for the inhabitants of the province. They were named Moldavians, but at the same time there was no doubt about their Romanian ethnic identity, while the language was either called Romanian or, when it was called Moldavian, it was not deemed different from Romanian.³

The project of a Moldavian language separated from the Romanian language was started in the MASSR, but the specific details about the exact circumstances are not revealed in any of the recent extended studies devoted to the issue. Wim van Meurs presented the ambiguity faced by the Soviets in the case of the language to be used in Bessarabia or on the left bank of the Dniester and the campaign to invent a “Moldavian language” in the MASSR, but he did not pinpoint the exact moment when the Soviets embarked on this project.⁴ Argentina Gribincea, Mihai Gribincea and Ion Şişcanu also follow the actions of the MASSR

during its first years of existence end the endeavors to impose a “Moldavian language,” but still do not search for the origins of this political project.⁵ Charles King also devoted a chapter to the efforts made by the self-titled linguists of the MASSR in developing a “Moldavian language” separate from Romanian—efforts so thorough that the result was virtually incomprehensible to any speaker of any Romanian language variant—and analyzed the Soviet unsuccessful policies in imposing the new language, without trying to reveal the mechanisms behind the decision to start the development of the “Moldavian language.”⁶

Gheorghe Cojocaru published a comprehensive collection of documents regarding the birth of the MASSR along with a study focused on the Soviet political objectives regarding Romania, the linguistic policy being only touched upon when deemed relevant.⁷ Using the documents published by Gheorghe Cojocaru it is possible to outline the process that led to the decision to create a separate “Moldavian language.”

The Beginnings of a Moldavian Republic

THE ORIGINS of the Moldavian Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic (MASSR) on the left bank of the Dniester may be traced back to the Initiative Group to Form the Moldavian Republic, composed of Grigory Kotovsky, Robert Eideman, Dubogo, Osadchenko, Ion Dic Diicescu, Popovici, Alter Zalic, Alexandru Nicolau, Al. Bădulescu, Pavel Tkachenko and Solomon Tinkelman.⁸ It was a heterogeneous alliance: Kotovsky, Eideman, Dubogo and Osadchenko were members of the Soviet military, commanders of large units in Ukraine; Ion Dic Diicescu, Alexandru Nicolau, Alter Zalic, and Popovici were Romanian socialists, supporters since 1917–1918 of the Bolshevik revolution, active in the Odessa group of Christian Rakovsky, then high level members of the Comintern; Solomon Tinkelman was a Bolshevik activist from Kishinev; the nom de guerre Al. Bădulescu belonged to Ghiță Moscu, a former socialist from Iași; the Ukrainian Pavel Tkachenko was the single member of this group with origins on the left bank of the Dniester. The founding of a Moldavian republic on the left bank of the Dniester reveals itself, through the membership of its initiative group, as a common project of the Soviet military in Ukraine and the Cominternists of Romanian origin who supported Christian Rakovsky (a Bulgarian socialist raised in Romania, with a personal objective of founding a Balkan Communist Federation, aiming for a line connecting Soviet Russia with the region south of the Danube). On another level, this initiative group illustrates the conflict between the Cominternists of Romanian origin and the communists in Bessarabia; the former, having high level positions in Moscow, wanted to

provoke a Bolshevik revolution in Romania via Bessarabia, but saw the province between the Prut and the Dniester as part of a communist Romania; the latter, Bolsheviks of Ukrainian origin, had a different objective: a Bessarabian province separated from Romania, autonomous or part of Soviet Ukraine.⁹

The progress of the new soviet republic lacked momentum after the initial push. In spite of highly placed figures such as Mikhail Frunze and Semion Budionyi backing the foundation of the Moldavian republic, the Politburo of the Communist Party in Ukraine—CP(b)U—did not hurry to follow the Memorandum of 4 February 1924. During the meeting of 7 March, the communist leadership of Ukraine underlined its will to create an autonomous region and not a new republic on the left bank of the Dniester, and on 18 April the decision was indefinitely postponed under the pretext that there was no reliable ethnographic and territorial data.¹⁰ About the same time, the CP(b)U decided on 6 March to establish a Moldavian Section under the wing of the Odessa CP(b)U—this Moldavian Section being the center of control for the future Moldavian Republic.

A Struggle for Power

THE CONFLICT between the “Romanian” and the “Bessarabian” Bolsheviks had its roots in 1921, when the “Romanians” managed to take over the leadership, during the Third Congress of the Comintern in July 1921, with the objective of uniting Bessarabian and Romanian émigrés in their common party work on the Bessarabian direction. Under the initiative of Ion Dic Diicescu, the Bolsheviks with origins in Romania asserted their dominance, the Central Bureau of the Communist Party from Romania being formed of émigrés with origins in Romania. This alienated the Bolsheviks coming from Bessarabia, creating a division of labor: the “Romanians” stayed in Moscow, while the “Bessarabians” returned either to the southeastern regions of the Ukrainian SSR to continue their work in the local party committees, or to the Bessarabian underground.¹¹

The abovementioned conflict and resentment from the “Bessarabian” Bolsheviks came to light in the eve of the formation of the MASSR. On 1 July 1924 a group of Bolsheviks from Bessarabia asked the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Russia to support the idea of a Bessarabian Section separated from the Communist Party of Romania, following the model of the Moldavian Section in Odessa—a request that illustrated the tendency to escape the influence of the “Romanian” Bolsheviks.¹² The same request was made shortly after, during the 7th Conference of the Balkan Communist Federation, under the

claim that the Bolsheviks from Romania did not understand the real problems in Bessarabia.¹³

The project for the MASSR gained traction again on 29 July when, after the intercession of Mikhail Frunze with Joseph Stalin, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Russia asked the Communist Party of Ukraine to give the necessary directives for the formation of the MASSR.¹⁴ Two weeks later, the Secretary General of the Communist Party of Ukraine, Grigory Petrovsky, entrusted Abraham Grinshtein with the formation of the MASSR, asking the Moldavian Section in Odessa to provide the necessary support.¹⁵ On 19 August 1924 the Moldavian Section of the Communist Party of Ukraine in Odessa formed a Commission for the Formation of the MASSR, its main members being Abraham Grinshtein, Joseph Badeev, Grigorii Saryi, Ivan Krivorukov, and Pavel Chior.¹⁶ During this meeting the Moldavian Section in Odessa rejected a report from Ion Dic Diicescu asking for a debate on the membership in the Commission for the Formation of the MASSR, saying that such a debate would endanger the project by putting it under public scrutiny.

Ion Dic Diicescu was enraged by the fact that the initiators of the MASSR idea had been overlooked and the project was being run by “Bessarabian” Bolsheviks under the protection of the Communist Party of Ukraine. The events of 1921, when the “Romanian” Bolsheviks asserted their dominance over those coming from Bessarabia had just backfired; the “Bessarabians,” enjoying the local support of the Communist Party of Ukraine, managed to take over the whole operation. At the same time, the Ukrainian Bolsheviks were reluctant to offer autonomy to a frontier region neighboring a capitalist state, Romania. The “Romanian” Bolsheviks enjoyed support from Moscow—but not to the extent they wished, as Moscow was more than happy to let the Ukrainian Bolsheviks deal with local issues.

Still, during August of 1924 the balance of power was unpredictable and Ion Dic Diicescu did his best to regain control over what he saw as his project. On 22 August 1924 the Odessa Section of the Communist Party of Ukraine complained to the Secretary General Grigory Petrovsky about Ion Dic Diicescu, who tried to change the membership of the Commission for the Formation of the MASSR, accusing him of breaching the secrecy of party matters.¹⁷

The Argument for a “Moldavian Language”

THIS IS the moment when the “Moldavian language” issue emerged, a false problem that would endure for almost a century, until our days. The minutes of the Commission for the Formation of the MASSR from 22 August 1924 record a dispute between Grigorii Saryi, on one side, and

Abraham Grinshtein and Joseph Badeev, on the other.¹⁸ Staryi thought that the variant of the Romanian language understood by the population on the left bank of the Dniester lacked any political vocabulary, rendering mute all attempts at communist propaganda. Therefore, he considered that the best course was to use the established political vocabulary of the Romanian language, as being close to the local speech, recommending at the same time the use of the Latin alphabet for the future publications. Badeev and Grinshtein opposed this course of action, maintaining that the locals felt close to the Russian culture and language, rejecting the idea of using Romanian words in Soviet propaganda and arguing in favor of the Cyrillic alphabet.

Staryi detailed his arguments in a report, stating that the language issue must be addressed directly, since it was fundamental for the political activity in the region.¹⁹ Declining his philological and linguistic competences, Staryi stated the problem (is there a Moldavian language different from the Romanian language?) and then approached it from a practical point of view, affirming that the language spoken east of the Carpathians up to and across the river Dniester is mutually understood, being basically the same. This popular language lacked any political vocabulary, hindering any communist propaganda in the region. Staryi argued in favor of the Latin alphabet, saying that in Bessarabia this was the official norm, and given the perspective of annexing this province and for the future propaganda, the best solution would be to use the same script in MASSR schools. Staryi considered that it would have been impossible to invent a new “Moldavian language” separated from the Romanian language, the only solution being to follow the steps of the linguistic evolution from Romania.

The reply to Staryi’s report was signed by Joseph Badeev, who stated that the “Moldavian language” is entirely different from Romanian, sharing only a common Latin origin—and while the “Moldavian language” fell under the influence of Russian for neologisms, the Romanian language adopted many French words, the two idioms being mutually incomprehensible. Regarding the future official alphabet, Badeev expressed his belief that the population on the left bank of the Dniester was fearful of the Latin letters and would reject them.²⁰

The Commission for the Formation of the MASSR carried on its activity, Staryi insisting on the use of the Romanian language, especially since he was the editor of the newspaper *Plugarul Roș* (The Red Plowman) addressed to the population of the left bank of the Dniester. On 22 September 1924 Ion Dic Diicescu mobilized some members of the Communist Party of Romania (A. Nicolau, Al. Bădulescu, T. Chioran) to support a new intervention to the Central Committees of the Communist Parties of Ukraine and Russia, asking to be accepted in the organization of the MASSR and protesting the idea of a “Moldavian language” using a Cyrillic alphabet. Unfortunately for them, Moscow endorsed on 25 Sep-

tember the decisions made by the Communist Party of Ukraine.²¹ On 11 October 1924 the Council of People's Commissars of Ukraine decided the formation of the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic on the left bank of the Dniester.²² On 15 October 1924 the Communist Party of Ukraine entrusted Staryi with the leadership of the new republic, Badeev and Krivorukov being his seconds, alongside several others (Pavel Chior was recalled from his tenure as a military political commissar in order to be part of the attempt to impose a "Moldavian language")—no member of the Romanian group being allowed to be part of the leading structures of the MASSR.²³ On 28 October A. Nicolau proposed a long list of comrades from Romania that could have been part of the leadership of the MASSR—too late, the decision was made and the Communist Party of Ukraine did not want any Romanian émigré to be in charge of things at the border with Romania.²⁴

The decision to announce the formation of the MASSR on 11 October 1924 might have been precipitated by a statement of Vintilă Brătianu, Romanian finance minister at the time and brother of the Romanian Prime Minister Ion I. C. Brătianu. On 7 October 1924 *Plugarul Roș* published an article signed by Staryi which criticized a statement attributed to Vintilă Brătianu who said that

*The Romanian Government is glad that the Soviet Government is not hiding the fact that on the left bank of the Dniester there are several hundreds of thousands of Moldavians, and for these Moldavians the Soviet Government is forming a Moldavian Republic, in other words a Romanian Republic.*²⁵

For the Ukrainian Bolsheviks, already uneasy with the idea of Moldavian autonomy on the borders with Romania, this statement might have been the confirmation of their fears that the formation of a republic using the Romanian language would open the future possibility of union of the said republic with Romania.

Staryi's opposition to the Cyrillic alphabet faded in the weeks following the official formation of the MASSR.²⁶ The nomination of members of the Communist Party of Romania to the leadership of the MASSR reached Balta, the capital of the new republic, on 2 December 1924, and Joseph Badeev answered by saying that the Romanian émigrés were trying to destabilize the MASSR.²⁷ The Politburo of the Communist Party of Ukraine lent a helping hand on 15 December 1924, asking the Communist Party of Russia to abolish the Romanian Initiative Group that kept on trying to meddle in the affairs of the MASSR.²⁸ On 20 December the Moldavian Section of the Communist Party of Ukraine adopted a resolution that established the "Moldavian language" as the official language of the MASSR.²⁹

The Last Line of Resistance

ION DIC Diicescu fired a broadside on 8 January 1925, printing a brochure addressed to all leaders of the Soviet Union: Kamenev, Zinoviev, Kalinin, Trotsky, Bukharin, Stalin, etc. Ion Dic Diicescu harshly criticized the methods employed in establishing the MASSR and launched the severe accusation of Russification. According to Dic Diicescu, the theory that promoted the idea that Moldavians were a different nation from Romanians was lacking any scientific arguments. In regard to the language to be used in the MASSR, he defined the problem very much like Staryi: the idiom spoken by the population on the left bank of Dniester lacked the modern vocabulary, which opened two ways of action—to introduce Russian words adapted to the local idiom, or to make use of the modern vocabulary developed by the Romanian language. Dic Diicescu argued in favor of the latter and criticized the language used by the local newspaper *Plugarul Roș*: the new “Moldavian language” was considered incomprehensible for the locals.³⁰

The angry reaction of Dic Diicescu changed nothing. On 21 January 1925 the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Russia approved the proposal from the Communist Party of Ukraine to disband the Initiative Group for the MASSR from the Communist Party of Romania and to block all interferences from the Romanian group in the affairs of the MASSR.³¹ The fate of the official language of the MASSR was sealed by the Politburo of the Communist Party of Ukraine: on 13 February 1925 it decided that the “Moldavian language” would be used, along with the Cyrillic alphabet.³²

The convoluted story of the “Moldavian language” in the Soviet Union was far from over. The process of “Moldovenization” would be changed into “Romanization” after just a few years, only to be reversed back to “Moldovenization.” The attempt to create a “Moldavian language” separate from Romanian would suffer ups and downs along the entire history of the Soviet Union—after the death of Stalin only a handful of Soviet linguists that totally disregarded their scientific probity would dare to say that the “Moldavian language” is different from Romanian.³³ The final compromise was to use the Romanian language with the Cyrillic alphabet, without trying to invent a different language, something that changed in 1989 when the Latin alphabet was reinstated.

A Political Decision and Its Consequences

THE INVENTION of the “Moldavian language” was a political decision, the result of the confrontation between the Bolsheviks with origins in Romania and those with origins in Bessarabia. In this balance of power the “Romanians” thought at first they had the upper hand due to their connections with Moscow. On the other hand, the “Bessarabians” preferred the local politics under the protection of Communist Party of Ukraine. At the crucial point of confrontation, Moscow chose to let the Ukrainians deal with the local problems, abandoning the “Romanians” and supporting the decisions made by the Communist Party of Ukraine. Why did the “Bessarabians” choose to promote the idea of a “Moldavian language” distinct from Romanian? The political explanation is that they thus managed to escape the influence and dominance of the “Romanian” Bolsheviks, something they had sought since 1921 (a parallel result of the confrontations around the MASSR was the separation of Romanian émigrés from all matters concerning Bessarabia and the creation of a separate Moldavian Communist Party). At the same time there is a practical explanation: most of the Bessarabian leaders of the MASSR were fluent in Russian and did not speak even the local rural idiom they called “Moldavian language,” an accusation frequently used by Dic Diicescu in his complaints. Those able to speak this “Moldavian language” were not familiar with the modern Romanian vocabulary and felt intimidated and patronized by the “Romanian” Bolsheviks, and thus chose to break with them. The only rational voice, that of Staryi, was covered by the political interplay, and even he accepted quite hastily the concept of “Moldavian language” when the final decision was made. The main result was a strange and exotic attempt to create a new language, an entirely failed experiment with a separate history.³⁴

The fate of the founders of the MASSR and main supporters of the “Moldavian language” is worth examining, since this decision would have dire consequences for them. Grigorii Staryi (real name Borisov, an ethnic Russian born in 1880 in Bozieni, Bessarabia) was one of the leaders of the Bolshevik rebellion in Bender in 1919. He was sentenced to death in absentia by a Romanian court after the rebellion was suppressed. Grigorii Staryi was the uncontested leader of the MASSR from 1924 to 1937, with a short interruption between 1928 and 1932. In May 1937 Staryi was arrested by the NKVD in the Great Purge. Some of his former comrades in the MASSR who were detained by the NKVD (Ivan Krivorukov and Pavel Chior) confessed under torture that Staryi was the leader of a spying ring working for Romanian intelligence and that he had recruited them. After 10 days of questioning (and most probably torture) Grigorii Staryi confessed

to all accusations, saying that he had been an agent of Romanian intelligence since 1918 and carried out a secret anti-revolutionary mission against Soviet Union. The accusations and the confessions were equally ridiculous, Staryi being nothing else but a true soldier of the Soviet Revolution—he tried to bargain his own life for the life of his wife and child by admitting his guilt and asking for the most severe punishment, something that many true Bolsheviks did when confronted with the NKVD. At the same time Staryi provided his captors with a long list of names of his presumed co-workers in the fantastic ring of Romanian spies—most probably a list of people he hoped would share his fate. It is worth noting that among the accusations against Staryi was that he had opposed the creation of “Moldavian language” and supported the use of the Latin alphabet in the MASSR. Staryi was executed on 11 October 1937.³⁵

Mirroring the fate of Grigorii Staryi is that of Pavel Chior, another founder of the MASSR and the leading character in the process of creating a “Moldavian language.” He tried hard to build a “Moldavian language” by grafting Russian words on the rural idiom spoken on the left bank of the Dniester, but to no avail.³⁶ Paradoxically, while Staryi was accused of opposing the creation of a “Moldavian language,” Pavel Chior was accused by the NKVD in 1937 that he had tried to create a new “Moldavian language” distinct from Romanian!³⁷ The conflicting accusations brought against Staryi and Chior at the same time were not unusual at the time of the Stalinist Great Purge (Pavel Chior died in prison in 1943). Another founding father of the MASSR, Ivan Krivorukov, was also executed in 1937 under the accusation of spying for the Romanian intelligence services, which had allegedly recruited him in 1918—actually, in 1918 Krivorukov was a member of the Parliament in Chişinău and voted against the union of Bessarabia with Romania. Last but not the least is Abraham Grinshtein. He was also accused of being a Romanian spy in 1937 and executed—while actually in 1921 Abraham Grinshtein was the coordinator of the terrorist attack carried by Max Goldstein against the Romanian Senate.³⁸

The Soviet project of creating a “Moldavian language” separate from Romanian was an utter failure. After the death of Stalin a tacit compromise was reached in Chişinău: the official name of the language remained “Moldavian,” it used the Cyrillic alphabet but there were no further attempts at creating a new language—it was practically the Romanian language written in Cyrillic.³⁹



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Abstract

The Invention of the “Moldavian Language” in 1924 As a Political Weapon in the Conflict between Romanian and Ukrainian Bolsheviks at the Beginnings of the Soviet Union

The birth certificate of the Moldavian language as a Soviet political project aimed at creating a Moldavian ethnic identity opposed to that of the Romanians may be traced back to the origins of the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. The confrontation between the Bolsheviks of Romanian origin and the Bolsheviks from Bessarabia supported by the Communist Party of Ukraine generated the idea of a Moldavian language separated from Romanian.

Keywords

Bessarabia, Moldavian language, Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, Republic of Moldova, Soviet Union, Romania

An Unpublished Demographic Survey Regarding the Aromanian Communities in Greece during the Second World War

EMANUIL INEOAN

“The Romanians still have many things to do in the Balkan Peninsula. But first of all they should count themselves...”

(Antonio Baldacci)

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WITHIN THE manuscript section of the Romanian Academy Library, there is a document bearing a challenging title for the researcher interested in the Balkan Romanity: “Some Statistical Data on the Number of the Macedo-Romanian/Aromanian Population of Greece (Macedonia, Epirus and Thessaly).”²¹ The manuscript was donated in 1963 by the author’s wife, Irina Nicolescu, accompanied by the following text:

The undersigned, Nicolescu Irina, wife of the late professor and geologist Nicolescu Constantin, hereby donate to the Academy of the Popular Republic

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of Romania my husband's work, a manuscript on the in-situ preparation of statistics concerning the Macedonian Romanians from the right bank of the Danube, who are established and currently live in Greece. I believe I am making a contribution to the Academy through this donation, knowing that my husband visited the communes of the Macedonian Romanians, in order to establish their precise number. Yours faithfully, Irina C. Nicolescu.

It is not known whether the professor and geologist Constantin Nicolescu was involved in researching the history of the Balkan Romanians or whether he published something on this topic or not, including the text donated to the Academy. Nevertheless, the material covered by this study is a complex and complete radiography of the Aromanian communities, unfairly forgotten.

The Number and the Extent of the Aromanians

AT THE beginning of the 20th century, a fine connoisseur of Balkan matters, Antonio Baldacci, made the following assertion: “The Romanians still have many things to do in the Balkan Peninsula. But first of all they should count themselves...”²²

The matter related to the number and the extent of the Aromanians has always been a constant topic of analysis and it has been subject to blistering challenges in a tense Balkan world, where each state wanted to expand its sphere of influence. A quantitative estimate of the Aromanian number in the past and present is a difficult endeavor, given that the on-site censuses have been strongly infused with Balkan nationalist fervor, showing truncated demographic realities, when they were not making up certain baseless ethnic realities. Each of the peoples living in this part of Europe was pursuing, at the turn of the 19th century, the creation of nation-states, as a first stage in carrying out certain megalomaniacal expansion plans based, not once, on imperial chimeras that belonged to the medieval past (the Byzantine Empire, the Bulgarian empire, the empire of Stefan Dušan). Having such goals, it is not surprising that demographic statistics served as both argument and instrument for achieving certain political aspirations, more or less justified. Hermann Wendel, a German MP involved in the Balkan disputes of the time, believed that various statistics were used as weapons, just as a Mauser gun or a pipe bomb of the brigands. In his opinion, this kind of “scientific maps” developed by the various parties interested in the area belongs to the category of “literary propaganda.”²³

Under such circumstances, the issue of the statistical situation of the Aromanian element in the Balkan Peninsula remains, as we mentioned above, ex-

tremely difficult to approach. On the other hand, because of the displacement specific to the lifestyle of some Aromanians, it becomes very difficult not only to conduct any kind of statistical evaluation, but even to outline a general cartographic representation of their distribution. It not easy to convince the most loyal representatives of Balkan transhumance to become a part of the demographic accounting, since they often played the part of statistical marionettes, ideal for the national demands.⁴

For a long time, within the Ottoman Empire, the official recording of the populations was done exclusively based on the religious criterion, respectively on the membership in a community officially recognized by the sultan. Under such circumstances, in the Ottoman state, the Aromanians appeared to be Orthodox, governed by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. With the birth and amplification of the Greek national movement, at one point the entire Orthodox mass was mistaken for the Greeks, disregarding the distinct ethnicity of certain Orthodox populations, such as the Aromanians, Bulgarians, Serbs etc. In what concerns the number of Aromanians across the Danube, some mentions were made by a number of foreign travelers, diplomats, soldiers, publicists, and others. An English traveler, Sir Arthur J. Evans, trying to show the error made by several scholars in their works, where the Orthodox Christian were all deemed to be Greek, stated that:

There are Greeks, including Aromanians, more or less Greek-naturalized. The truth is that a great number of those who are considered to be Greeks are, actually, Aromanians, the Hellenism has found a fertile ground for its propaganda among the representatives of this neo-Latin race...⁵

In spite of these aspects that were facilitating, to some extent, the corruption of the demographic process, in 1856 the Greek writer Rizos Rangabe, unreservedly considering the Aromanians to be good Hellenes,⁶ nevertheless acknowledged their individuality: “The Aromanians who live today in Greece, Thessaly, Epirus and Macedonia amount to 600,000. They are well-built and rugged people, with dark or brown hair and intelligent physiognomy.”⁷ Émile Poujade believed that at least 800,000 Aromanians lived in the Ottoman Empire in 1859, a figure that was also supported in 1874 by Émile Picot, another French diplomat.⁸

Most of the time, however, the Greeks questioned the existence of Aromanian ethnics on the Ottoman territories, and other times, they estimated the number of the “Hellenes-Walachians” to be 12,000, which was tens of times less than what most of the other demographic estimates indicated.⁹ In another Greek statistics prepared by Cleanthes Nicolaidis and published in Berlin in 1899, based on the Greek Consulate’s reports from Ottoman Macedonia, the Vlachs were com-

pletely missing, being probably included under the “Greek” heading or under the heading entitled “Others with Greek feelings.”¹⁰ Ignoring the Romanic element in the Greek historical writing has been a practice frequently used to this day.¹¹ A monumental work, such as the one signed by Apostolos E. Vakalopoulos, *Modern Greek History 1204–1985* (1987), completely disregards the presence of the Aromanian community in the historical destiny of this country.

Gustav Weigand established, for the Aromanians in the entire Balkan area, a figure of 149,520 in 1895, when he personally visited two thirds of the Aromanian settlements.¹² The figures indicated by the German researcher were questioned by his own former student, Sextil Pușcariu, who mentioned that Weigand hadn’t taken into consideration the Grecomans (the Aromanians with Greek feelings) in those statistics, not considering them Aromanians, which led to the small numbers featured in the statistics of the Leipzig professor.¹³

In an 1896 report sent to Vienna by the Austrian Consul in Monastir, the number of Wallachians in European Turkey was estimated to be 771,900, plus approximately 120,000 in Thessaly, 100,000 in Greece proper, and 100,000 in Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia, for a total of 1,037,900 Wallachians.¹⁴

A. J. B. Wace and M. S. Thompson, two British ethnographers, estimated that the number of the Balkan Vlachs was over 500,000 in the first part of the 20th century.¹⁵ Alexandre Rubin believed that the Aromanians represented the seventh part of the entire population of European Turkey and a quarter of the number of inhabitants of Epirus, Macedonia and Albania, for a total of 771,900 souls at the end of the first decade of the 20th century.¹⁶

Their number in the second decade of the 20th century was estimated by Jovan Cvijić to an infinitesimal 150–160,000 individuals for the entire Balkan Peninsula.¹⁷

The decrease in the number of Aromanians in Greece at the beginning of the 20th century¹⁸ was also caused by the strong exodus to the USA, the Aromanian diaspora there being well represented even today.

Alexandru Lahovary, the Romanian minister plenipotentiary in Constantinople, estimated in 1903 that there were 1,000,000 Aromanians in the entire Ottoman Empire, according to the data taken from the Ottoman Ministry of the Interior.¹⁹ In 1935, Mihail Blenche, first-secretary of the delegation, drafted a report to be used internally by the diplomats within the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of Romania, interested in supporting the idea of colonization as the only valid one in the given context. Claiming to draw on certain on-site reliable information, he was surprisingly coming to relatively small numbers. For Albania, a figure of 40,000 people, at maximum, was suggested, although they said it was an approximate number.²⁰ The official Albanian statistics provided, in 1930, a figure of approximately 11,000 Aromanians, while a Greek statistics of 1928

suggested that there were 19,700 Aromanians living on the territory of the Albanian state. On 27 March 1931, the Romanian ambassador in Tirana expressed his belief that the number of Aromanians in Albania was 40,000.²¹

As for Yugoslavia, the author challenged the official Serbian statistics of 1921, which provided a figure of 229,000 Romanians for the entire Yugoslavia, of which only 10,550 lived in Macedonia. He also disagreed with the “Romanian exaggeration” of more than 600,000 Aromanians, which circulated at that time, suggesting a number of 300,000 for the neighboring kingdom, of which 16,000 for Serbian Macedonia.²² He also believed that the official Greek census of 1928, which lumped together both the Aromanians and the Romanians for a total number of 19,073,²³ was a bit of an overestimation, because the basis for the calculation should have been, according to the Romanian official, the 12,000 Aromanians registered in the Romanian schools and churches. Nevertheless, the figure suggested by Blenche for Greece was about 60,000, only those who “had Romanian feelings” being included in such records.²⁴

Although this sub-chapter appears to be a monotonous report that compiles a chronological numerical inventory of the Aromanian community, we found it to be of no less importance when it comes to the difficulty of operating using quantitative estimation instruments in the Macedonian-Romanian matter, which has constantly been subject to a war of numbers, fluctuating depending on the observer’s interest. In this context, Professor Constantin Nicolescu’s study is a really valuable one for the research targeting the Aromanian communities in the Balkans.

Professor Nicolescu’s Research or “Truth has no Homeland”

CONSTANTIN NICOLESCU was a full professor at the Romanian commercial high school in Thessaloniki during the interwar period. This was an elite institution, financed by the Romanian state, which was interested in creating an Aromanian elite and training it precisely in the field in which they excelled, the commercial one.

He was born in Prilep, today in North Macedonia, on 25 November 1896. At the end of 1946 he was ordered by the Greek authorities to leave his job, as he was considered for expulsion, along with other teachers of the Romanian high school.²⁵ At that time the relations between Romania and Greece were rather tense, the authorities in Athens being increasingly disturbed by the presence of cultural institutions aimed at preserving the identity of the Aromanians.

Professor Nicolescu's manuscript was drawn up in Salonika, in 1944, in the midst of the world war. In the very first lines, he confesses that he has decided to "show data and figures, personally collected in this field, for several years, in situ" about the Aromanian population, convinced that, although we know "the more or less biased spirit of the Balkan peoples when it comes to national matters," and

it could easily create a state of suspicion and it could even stir, in the currently troubled and dangerous situation, the susceptibilities of national pride and that feeling specific to the inhabitants of the Balkan countries, that of chauvinism, not to say national fanaticism, so harmful to the objective scientific spirit, truth has no homeland.

Professor Nicolescu's motivation is a scientific one, but it was doubled by one related to the Romanian national interest, that of

bringing to the light of reality in terms of numbers this group or branch of our compatriots in Greece, known as Aromanians or Macedo-Romanians, in general, who have been separated for centuries from the Carpathian brethren on the left bank of the Danube, and they have lived for centuries in this large and important sector of the Balkan Peninsula.

Although he lists the valuable contributions made to the study of the Aromanians by George Murnu, Theodor Capidan, Valeriu Papacostea, or Tache Papahagi, Professor Nicolescu states that "the problem of the number of this population has not yet been solved." For the Greeks, Bulgarians, and Serbs, argued Professor Nicolescu, the issue of the quantitative appreciation of the ethnic groups in the Balkans is of strategic importance, both for knowing the "consanguine ones" and for determining or measuring the extent of the "living forces of the ethnic community as a nation, forces based on the number of compatriots" and to "assert, each in the sense of his strivings and aspirations, the right to exist and to political dominance."

Professor Nicolescu recalls in this regard the demographic research undertaken by Cvijić in Macedonia, whose political propaganda purpose was seen during the Balkan wars. Serbia's territorial aspirations were also supported at the peace conferences by the allegedly scientific data provided by the Serbian scholar.

From this general framework, Professor Nicolescu moves to the subject of his research, the Aromanians, presenting the way in which the number of this community had been reflected in historiography. However, he is skeptical in re-

gard to the manner in which the researchers, Romanian or foreign, had treated this topic: “But are even the Romanian scholars working at the Romanian cultural institutions in Macedonia and Epirus sufficiently trained in this regard? In order to be fair and objective, we should honestly say they are not.”

The critical voice of the teacher continues:

To remain, though, in the sphere of imprecision, not to say in that of the unknown, or to give a random number as a rule, more or less exaggerated just to satisfy, explicitly—our national pride, would mean to deceive ourselves and to be culpable of unforgivable disinterestedness and negligence.

After referencing a series of medieval testimonies regarding the Aromanians, Professor Nicolescu identifies several factors that contributed over the centuries to the denationalization of this community:

- The irregular geophysical structure of the territory occupied by the Aromanians, which forces them to practice transhumance, having thus a great mobility. Descending to the lowlands, the Aromanians would come into contact with the Greeks and the Slavic peoples there, “which leads, inherently, more or less intensely, to the slow but inevitable process of denationalization.”

- Linguistic adaptability: “The Aromanians’ exceptional skill in acquiring, in a short time, any foreign language, mainly the ones spoken in the Balkans.”

- Mixed marriages: “The ties resulting from the marriages between Aromanians and the other peoples and especially the Greeks, which were relatively more frequent in the urban settlements, manifest in the past, as well as in the present time.”

- The frequent contact of the Aromanian population, from the urban or rural settlements, with the allogeneous fellow denizens.

- “An important factor, of biological nature, is the specific faculty of fast adaptation of the Aromanians to any human, indigenous or allogeneous environment.”

- The school and the church “have caused over so many centuries the loss, through denationalization, of a significant part of the Aromanian population.”

Such an inventory of factors is generally acknowledged by all the researchers of the Aromanian assimilation process, the merit of Professor Nicolescu being that of having empirically verified these situations, studying the phenomenon in situ and not only from the available literature.

Following the presentation of such data, Professor Nicolescu compiles an inventory of the Aromanian numerical statistics produced until 1940. He nevertheless bears in mind the critical dimension of these endeavors:

The abovementioned authors confine themselves to information that cannot be considered actual statistics, since none of them provides an accurate counting of the Aromanian population by well-defined locality or region, but rather by province or country, in a more or less general manner.

Professor Nicolescu subsequently dedicates a broader space to the analysis of the way in which the Hellene researchers, the major challengers of the issue, estimated the Aromanian percentage, insisting on P. Aravantinos's work, who estimated the number of this community's members at around 140,000.

As to the Romanian historiographical space, the author notes that we have "few statistics and, at the same time, they are inconsistent, with relatively big differences, figure-wise." He proves this assertion by presenting three researches, that of Dimitrie Bolintineanu, *Travels to the Romanians in Macedonia and Mount Athos* (1863), where the number of the Aromanians is estimated at 1 million, then the study of Gheorghe I. Brătianu, which appeared in 1938, "The Romanian Minorities," with an estimated number of 100,000 Aromanians in Greece, and finally the research of Theodor Capidan from 1942, *The Macedo-Romanians: Ethnography, History, Language*, where the number of the Aromanians is estimated to be 300–350,000. Such a broad range of estimates, from 1 million souls to a few hundred thousands, lead to the author's contention that systematic researches are still needed on this subject matter, which has not yet been elucidated, from a numerical point of view, not even within what should have been the most interested supporter of the matter, namely the Romanian historiography.

The Investigation Method and the Results Obtained

MOTIVATED BY these gaps in the research regarding the number of the Aromanians, Professor Nicolescu conducted his own field research as early as 1914 when, commissioned by the Romanian Geological Institute—led at that time by Ludovic Mrazek—he was sent to investigate, from a geological point of view, the Pindos chain in the Epirus area. On that occasion, he remained there for approximately 10 months, and subsequently, after the First World War ended, he continued his research work until the beginning of the Italo-Greek war. During this long period of time, of over two decades, Professor Nicolescu confesses that he has

wandered far and wide, to the smallest places, as well as across the entire Pindos mountain chain, visiting and researching locality by locality, region by region, then Aetolia and Acarnania, western Peloponnese, western and central Macedonia,

southern Albania, and finally the entire western area of Greece—the Adriatic-Ionian side, until reaching its most southern end, the Kalamata.

The method used by Professor Nicolescu in his research regarding the Aromanians is described as follows:

During these wanderings, we thought it would be of great help to collect, from reliable sources and after performing a rigorous check, data on situation of the Aromanian population, first of all number-wise, the cultural situation, occupations etc. In order to get the most accurate information, we have used, during our investigations dedicated to this purpose, the most suitable, direct and safe path: the contact with the local, authorized bodies, which were in the best position to know the situation from this point of view, namely the mayor of the commune, the schoolteacher, the priest and any other reliable inhabitant.

Checking the data in the end—the check has been conducted, most of the times, in situ and on more than one occasion, since I have visited most of the communes several times, in shorter or longer timeframes, depending on our possibilities—we believe to have reached a point where we can establish a numerical estimate, which—in our humble opinion—if not perfectly accurate, nevertheless lacks any exaggeration, which would in fact render it useless, corresponding, as much as possible, to the actual state of things and, consequently, being able to provide us with a number of the Aromanian element in each commune as close to the truth as possible.

Professor Nicolescu's demographical investigation,²⁶ conducted between 1914 and 1940, covered three large historical regions of Greece: Greek Macedonia, Epirus (the lands that remained with Greece), and Thessaly. For these regions, we have the following results.

I. Greek Macedonia, consisting of 8 counties with a territory of 34,900 sq.m. and 1,410,000 inhabitants, of whom, almost half, approximately 650,000, are foreigners, Pontic Greek refugees, settled in approximately 950 village-colonies, as a consequence of the population exchange between Turkey and Greece, in 1922. The number of Aromanians in each of the 8 counties of Macedonia is:

- 1. County: Kozani—22,500.*
- 2. Florina: 23,400.*
- 3. Vodena: 12,330.*
- 4. Salonika and Chalkidiki: 87,000.*
- 5. Serres, Drama, and Kavala: 50,000.*

The overall number of the Aromanian element in Greek Macedonia amounts the total figure of 195,240 Aromanian inhabitants in approximately 100 urban

and rural communes, in the highlands and the lowlands, representing approximately 15% of the entire population of the province.

II. *Greek Epirus (Southern Epirus) in the four counties: Ioannina, Thesprotia, Preveza, and Arta, with a territory of 9,351 sq.m., and an overall population of 310,000 persons. The number of sedentary Aromanians who have settled in the 42 urban and rural localities together with the nomadic Farseroti stands at 101,800 souls.*

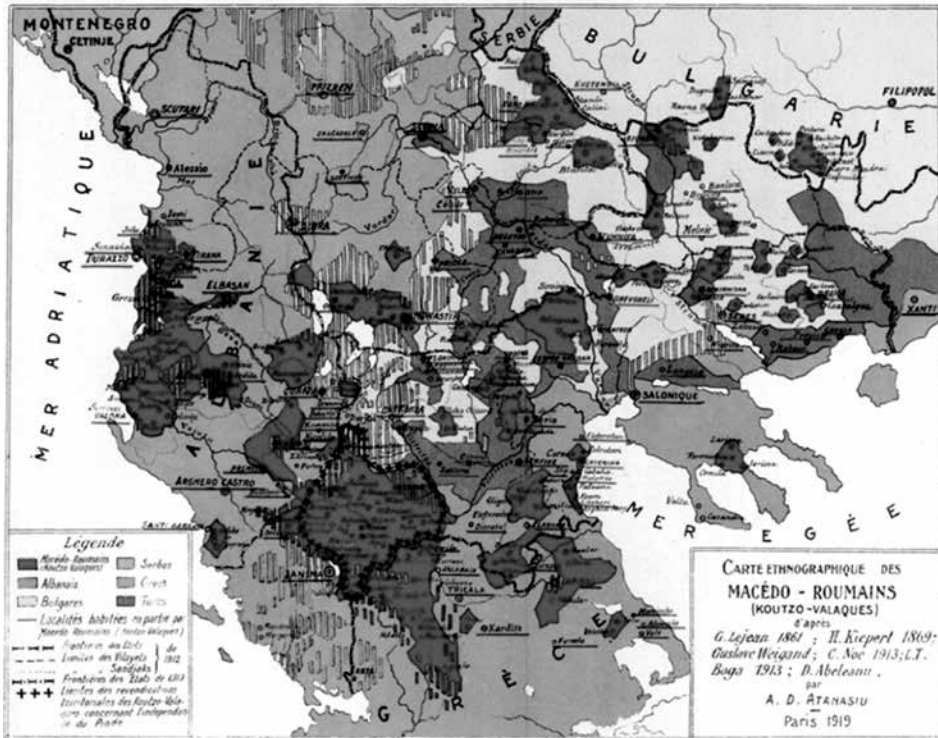
III. *Thessaly: in this region, the transhumant Aromanians together with the stable ones settled in approximately 85 urban or rural localities, to whom approximately 15,000 Farseroti Aromanians are added. The overall Aromanian population of Thessaly reaches 103,900 people.*

The author of the research on the number of Aromanians declares that “based on the data I have personally collected, for years and years—data, most of it, completed and rigorously checked, in situ” the numerical situation of the Aromanian element in Greece, in the three provinces, amounts a total number of 400,940 souls. This number includes, as Professor Nicolescu himself notes:

*together with the Aromanians aware of their Romanian ethnicity, almost all literate in Romanian, the ones called **Rumanovlachs** (Románovlahi) by the Greeks, in the Aromanian category, called Grecomans²⁷ or, according to the name given by the Greeks, Helleno-Vlachs, namely the Greco-Vlachs, who, due to a complex of spiritual factors (Greek schools and church) and due to political-economic factors, are also attached to the Hellenic culture...*

Throughout the extensive demographical research carried out, Professor Nicolescu also identifies and describes a series of bio-psychical traits of the Aromanians; together with their numerical importance, the listing of such traits proves his deep knowledge of the Aromanian community in Greece. Among the most relevant traits, we find:

the liveliness of their spirit, the bright intelligence, the outstanding dynamism, which always gives them a spirit of initiative, audacity, bravery, the impetus and skill for constructive action, in all fields, the entrepreneurship and tradecraft par excellence, then the physical strength and the worthy hard work, the atavistic vitality, proven over the centuries, the sobriety, the economic mindset and the orientation towards a good and fair use of the powers and the material and spiritual goods, the good behavior and dignity and nobility in their actions, as well as that wonderful adaptability, natural and fast, to any human environment, due to which they find their way around easily and overcome anything, anytime and anywhere, in the



The ethnographical map of the Macedo-Roumanians

SOURCE: Library of the Romanian Academy, Cluj-Napoca, George Murnu coll.

tough struggle for existence. These rare traits essentially synthesize the Aromanians' bio-psychical profile, turning them into an elite ethnic element. This precious element has distinguished itself as such, always and in all Balkan countries, a fact that is difficult to weigh, from an axiological point of view, and account should be taken of such a fact, to a fair extent, whenever their worth is being discussed.

Final Remarks

ALTHOUGH PROFESSOR Nicolescu was a researcher little known for his concerns about the Aromanians, his manuscript represents, due to the quantitative data it provides, a singular investigation into the complicated problem of the number of Aromanians. We also take into account the fact that many of the references of specialists related to the number of Aromanians in the Balkans are mainly estimates, as they were more or less interested in mini-

mizing or, on the contrary, exaggerating the number of the Aromanians. We consider that Professor Nicolescu's research, with its very direct investigation of the numerous settlements inhabited by Aromanians, is very well documented over a period of more than 20 years, which allowed him to have an image as close to reality as possible. We can also see that three reputable specialists in Balkan issues proposed figures which practically indirectly confirm the results of Professor Nicolescu's investigation. In a paper published in 1948, the former Greek foreign minister estimated the number of Aromanians in the Greek state at 150,000–200,000, although he considered that there were still many Aromanians who no longer used their mother tongue.²⁸ Historian Max Demeter Peyfuss considered the number of Aromanians in Southeast Europe to be around 400,000 in 1970, but he admitted that in the past their numbers must have been much higher.²⁹ We must have mentioned that after 1951 Greece no longer recorded in the official censuses of its population the various ethnic groups and minority languages as research parameters, the position of these groups in society remaining invisible.³⁰ In Demirtaş Coşkun's study published in 2001 at the Institute for Eurasian Strategic Studies in Ankara, he estimated that the current number of Aromanians was between 400,000 and 500,000.³¹ Of course, the assimilation processes have continued to greatly reduce the number of Aromanians, alongside the declining natural growth, a process also amplified by the massive depopulation of rural areas and by the increased urbanization experienced by many members of the Aromanian community.

□

Notes

1. The manuscript has the quota A 1689 and can be found in the Manuscripts Section at the Bucharest Library of the Romanian Academy and will soon be published in full.
2. Antonio Baldacci, *L'elemento latino nell'equilibrio balcanico* (Rome, 1905), 12.
3. Hermann Wendel, "The Bulgarians and the Macedonian Question," in *Macedonia and the Macedonians* (Rome, 1918), 7.
4. Tache Papahagi, *Aromânii: Grai, folklor, etnografie: Cu o introducere istorică: Curs universitar litografiat* (Bucharest, 1932), 202.
5. Arthur J. Evans, "Who the Macedonians Are," *London Times*, 30 Sept. 1903, quoted by Vasile Tega, *Aromânii văzuți de călători englezi (până la 1900)*, edited with an afterword by Hristu Căndroveanu (Bucharest, 1998), 116.
6. The propaganda campaigns of the Romanians, the Bulgarians, and the Serbians over northern Greece hadn't started yet.
7. Rizos Rangabe, in the *Pandora* literary journal (Athens, 1856), quoted by Tega, 92.

8. Gheorghe Zbucea, "Despre destinul istoric al românilor din dreapta Dunării în secolul XX," *Scara: Revistă de oceanografie ortodoxă* (Bucharest) 5, 6 (2001): 163.
9. Gheorghe Zbucea, *Relațiile României cu Sud-Estul european la începutul secolului al XX-lea (1900–1912)* (Bucharest, 1999), 88.
10. *Ibid.*, 171. To be noted are the formulations of certain Greek statistics, which didn't even consider the existence, on the claimed territory, of certain populations lacking "Greek feelings."
11. The Aromanian community in the Balkans has almost always been included among the ethnicities whose Motherlands had interests in the area (this is particularly the case of the Greeks, willing to statistically add this population). The purpose of this game was to justify certain annexation claims, without which, in case of territorial divisions, Greece would have been set aside.
12. Gustav Weigand, *Die Aromunen: Ethnographisch-philologisch-historische Untersuchungen über das Volk der sogenannten Makedo-Romanen oder Zinzaren*, vol. 1, *Land und Leute* (Leipzig, 1895), 294.
13. Sextil Pușcariu, *Călare pe două veacuri: Amintiri din tinerețe 1895–1905* (Bucharest, 1968), 34.
14. Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Vienna, coll. Konstantinopol, file 496, no page numbers.
15. A. J. B. Wace and M. S. Thompson, *The Nomads of the Balkans: An Account of Life and Customs Among the Vlachs of Northern Pindus* (London, 1914), 92, quoted by T. J. Winniffrith, *The Vlachs: The History of Balkan People* (London, 1987), 20.
16. Alexandre Rubin, *Les Roumains de Macédoine* (Bucharest, 1913), 98.
17. Jovan Cvijić, *La Péninsule balkanique: Géographie humaine* (Paris, 1918), 163 sqq.
18. The decrease in the number of Aromanians in Greece occurred concomitantly with that of the Greeks, both communities being attracted by the American mirage. Therefore, between 1899 and 1912, almost 200,000 people emigrated from Greece, the peak being recorded in 1910, when 39,135 left, according to the official numbers that circulated at that time. Apostolos E. Vakalopoulos, *Istoria Greciei moderne (1204–1985)*, translation, notes and foreword by Dumitru N. Nicolae, afterword by Nicolae Șerban Tanașoca (Bucharest, 2004), 392.
19. Alexandru Em. Lahovary, *Amintiri diplomatice: Constantinopol (1902–1906). Viena (1906–1908)*, edited by Adrian Stănescu and Laurențiu Vlad, introduction, selection of documents, notes, commentaries and index by Laurențiu Vlad (Iași, 2019), 28.
20. Mihail A. Blenche, *România de peste hotare* (Bucharest, 1935), 16.
21. Vasile Florin Mirghesiu, *Diplomația în Balcani, Statele Baltice și Benelux* (Bucharest, 2001), 20.
22. *Ibid.*, 16.
23. The evidence of the grossly rigged statistics is represented by the tens of thousands of Aromanians who emigrated from Greece to Dobruja starting with the year 1925 because of the persecution against them, precisely on the ground that they were called "Romanianting," meaning they were considered themselves Romanians.
24. Blenche, 42.
25. Adina Berciu-Drăghicescu and Maria Petre, *Școli și biserici românești din Peninsula Balcanică: Documente (1918–1953)*, vol. 2 (Bucharest, 2006), 629, document no. 327.

26. Currently, our research on the abovementioned demographical study, but also on other related documents has not yet identified to what extent the author took into consideration the number of approximately 25,000–30,000 Aromanian emigrants in Romania during the interwar period—Emil Țîrcomnicu, “The Aromanians in Contemporary Romania,” *Revista Română de Sociologie* (Bucharest), new ser., 22, 1–2 (2011): 157—, a part of whom were coming from the regions of Greece researched by Nicolescu, alongside with those coming from Albania, Yugoslavia or Bulgaria. We do not know how many of these Aromanians were deducted from the final figure provided by the author at the end of his study.
27. The so-called Grecomans or the renegades were the Aromanians who were hostile to the cultural effort made by Bucharest in the south of the Danube, who made a pact with the Hellenic propaganda for various reasons: mainly, the reasons related to the long Hellenization process regarding the Aromanians, which had fostered among them a Hellenophile mentality, imprinted not only through school, confession or economic interests, but also through other corrective means, increasingly violent, as the Romanian state supported more and more schools and churches on the Balkan territory. Practically, the cultural effort of the Kingdom of Romania was initiated upon the request of certain Aromanians who had reached decision-making positions within the Romanian state. In fact, the so-called “Romanian propaganda” offered the Romanians methods for resisting the more and more intense linguistic assimilation process and finally the ethnic assimilation of the Aromanians, providing an identity survival alternative in front of the Hellenizing steamroller. This entire cultural contribution, implemented through the expansion of the school and church network after 1864, provided the Aromanian community with the necessary instruments for creating its own dialectal literature and, not least, for forming a non-Hellenized elite. In the absence of such cultural support, we can easily imagine the subsequent evolution of the Aromanian community, taking as a comparative reference the situation of the numerous old Albanian element in Greece, which is today completely Hellenized. During the communist regime, for almost half a century, when the Romanian state showed no more interest in the Aromanians living in the Balkans, all forms of protection related to the Aromanian identity in Greece disappeared. The effects recorded in the censuses for this group (in fact, the Aromanians completely disappeared from the official records of the Greek state) are illustrative for what the absence of a state intervention in their favor meant. Today, we are witnessing the dissolution of a community, which, lacking the proper preservation frameworks, lives its epilogue.
28. E. Averoff, *I politiki pnevma ton koutsovlahikon sitimatos* (Athens, 1948), 20.
29. Max Demeter Peyfuss, *Chestiunea aromânească: Evoluția de la origini până la Pacea de la București (1913) și poziția Austro-Ungariei*, translated by Nicolae Șerban Tanașoca (Bucharest, 1994), 13.
30. Riki Van Boeschoten, “When Difference Matters: Sociopolitical Dimensions of Ethnicity in the District of Florina,” in *Macedonia: The Politics of Identity and Difference*, edited by Jane K. Cowan (London, 2000), 31.
31. Birgül Demirtaş-Coşkun, *The Vlachs: A Forgotten Minority in the Balkans* (London-Portland, 2001), 2.

Abstract**An Unpublished Demographic Survey Regarding the Aromanian Communities in Greece during the Second World War**

Our study aims to bring to the attention of researchers interested in the history of the Balkans in general and that of the Aromanian communities in particular a demographic investigation completed in the years of the Second World War by Professor Constantin Nicolescu. Although a researcher little known for his concerns about the Aromanians, his manuscript represents, due to the proposed quantitative data, a unique investigation into the complicated issue of the number of Aromanians.

Keywords

Aromanians, Balkans, demography, World War II, historiography, Constantin Nicolescu

Timok Valley, Sociological and Historical Aspects The State of the Vitality of the Romanian Community in Eastern Serbia

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The Romanian community in the Timok Valley possesses a low stock of social vitality in the context of an adverse geopolitical and institutional framework.

Methodology

THIS STUDY comparatively analyzes the state of the Romanian community in eastern Serbia before and after 1944. We will analyze the topic with the help of concepts such as vitality (N. Iorga), social will and cultural personality (D. Gusti), and symbolic infrastructure (O. Bulumac). All these concepts will be subordinated to the idea of manifestation and geopolitical action of the Romanian state.

The premise from which we start is that, after 1944, the vitality of the Romanians in the Timok Valley is on a downward trend, and after the 2000s the weakening of the community has accelerated. To test the hypothesis, the material will be structured in two sections. The first focuses on identifying the socio-historical and cultural context since the emergence of the Romanian community in the Timok Valley until the establishment of the communist regime, synthetically, using docu-

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mentary sources such as censuses, studies in history, sociology and ethnography, specialist articles and cartographic materials.

The second section will present the current state of the community (between 2000 and 2021), being a survey of the current problems faced by Romanians, based on a secondary analysis of the press on the Romanians from the Timok Valley. Thus, of interest was the news portal of the Romanians in this area (TimocPress) and the press agency affiliated to the Foundation for Romanians Everywhere (Romanian Global News), useful to highlight the substantial reality¹ of the Romanians in Timok. By substantial reality we mean the local reality, seen from an emic perspective, namely from the perspective of the researched subject. Apart from the books and press articles, the research also draws on information obtained in the field from exploratory research work that is still ongoing, scheduled for the years 2020–2021.²

These two parts are linked by a section that highlights the fracture³ generated by the instauration of the communist regime in Romania after 23 August 1944.

Theoretical Aspects

TO DESCRIBE the problems faced by the Romanian community in Serbia, we will use the following concepts: vitality, social will, cultural personality, symbolic infrastructure, school, and geopolitics (sociography). The connection between these concepts and the social reality in the area of interest is as follows: although the vitality of the Romanians is waning because of the actions of the Serbian state and the inaction of the Romanian state, this vitality manages to exist due to the Romanian priests, who manifest themselves and act as cultural personalities managing to create a symbolic infrastructure that strengthens the vitality of the Romanian community in eastern Serbia. Also, through their actions and efforts, despite the obstacles posed by the Serbian authorities, they managed to make up for the lack of Romanian institutional support by creating a central institution, both symbolically and spiritually, for the whole Romanian community in the Timok Valley: the first Romanian church on Serbian territory (after approximately 200 years) where the liturgy is celebrated in the mother tongue, namely, the monastery at Mălăinița (Malajnica).

We see this success through the lens of social vitality, a concept developed by the historian N. Iorga, by which we understand the “ability of the members of a people to show cohesion towards the achievement of a landmark goal, both culturally and economic.”⁴ Besides, the scientist shows that “true vitality is not when a man possessed of great qualities, a Genghis Khan of that time, or a similar leader now, engenders it, but when it emerges by itself, from the mass of

the people.”²⁵ However, when the vitality disappears, there is a danger signaled by the historian: the risk of dissolution of the state itself—“the vitality of the country weakened as the secular tradition was abandoned, at the same time as the contact between the ruler and those who formed the nation, all those who formed the nation.”²⁶ Not every tension that manifests itself, from the bottom up, can be considered “vitality,” but only that kind of tension that meets two basic conditions: “to be a permanent vitality in any circumstance, and to operate at an exceptional level.”²⁷ Without vitality a state cannot exist, and our analysis will be directed toward researching how the Romanian vitality in the Timok Valley is managed.

In what follows we will also operate with the concept of social will as developed by Dimitrie Gusti, the founder of the Romanian school of sociology (Bucharest Sociological School). According to him, the individual cannot only be perceived as an individual entity. It can be understood only as social unity and the “essence” of social unity is the social will. By social will we mean the “primordial element of social unity.”²⁸ In other words, social will is “the element that gives unity to individuals and it is also the binder and expression of their social action . . . (a dynamic complex of values, goals, and means, the attitudinal basis of social action, the foundation and expression of socialization).”²⁹ In fact,

*the main engine of society is the social will, and it must be strengthened by politicians and intellectuals, through what he calls the science of the nation, pedagogy, and the sociology of the nation. The individual is understood in this process as a personality, the contribution of each of us to the advancement of society consisting of the development of the personality following the highest values.*¹⁰

Therefore, this will is like an “engine of consciousness” and it represents its “coronation.”¹¹ Individual acts related to the social will reflect this social consciousness, which is responsible for setting the goals according to which we direct our actions. From this viewpoint, the vitality of the Romanian community in eastern Serbia is a continuous manifestation of will.

The ability to manifest your social will follows the highest values characterizing what D. Gusti calls the cultural personality. Here, the cultural personality of the Romanian community in eastern Serbia is mainly represented by priests, who managed to coagulate around them the community members. The cultural personality consists of fundamental affections and the endurance of the will. According to Gusti, the cultural personality aims at the good of the community. The next level is that of choosing the right means,¹² because the cultural personality can fight for the highest values while making the difference between goals and means. Therefore, personality is “the functional expression of social

will.”¹³ We speak of cultural personalities when individuals seek “the maximum development of the personality by way of the highest values.”¹⁴ From the Gussian perspective, the highest values are society, nation, and humanity. Thus, in the area we have selected for our analysis, we can talk about Romanian priests as cultural personalities because they channel their energy toward actions aimed at preserving the identity of the Romanians in Timok. In their actions, they reshape the social reality through the will they show, contributing to the protection of the vitality of the Romanian community.

Romanian priests are the key to the endurance of the Romanian community in Timok because they managed to create a functional symbolic infrastructure. By this last concept we mean “the set of symbols recognized and legitimate for a community, regardless of its proportions, as well as the relationships between them.”¹⁵ In other words, the symbolic infrastructure is that instrument of society responsible for the connection between “the internal space of a social unit and the external environment.”¹⁶

In the following section, we will try to move from the level of tensions and fundamental energies of any community (social will and vitality) and the elements that convey these energies (cultural personality and symbolic infrastructure) to the institution that makes possible the creation of these energies and bestows meaning on their manifestation, namely, the school. We consider it fundamental that the school must take the first place in the concerns of each nation. The role of the school is multiple, manifest at the micro and individual level, as well as at the national level. Regarding the micro-level, the school is the only institution that bonds the individual to the place where they manifest themselves, both concretely, as a community, and at the spiritual level as a nation.¹⁷ The school is the only institution through which flows the strength of an entire nation.¹⁸ At the macro-level, it must be understood that the intrinsic role of a nation is to promote and strengthen its own culture¹⁹ through the continuous action of education, preservation, and development, to increase, multiply and materialize the latent potential of the whole nation.²⁰ The major danger that can arise if the school is not oriented in the national direction (in support of the nation) is that education can become an agent of dissolution, namely, the national essence (including vitality) can be lost by uprooting and separating individuals, both from the physical place where they manifest themselves, as well as from the soul framework with which they identify, the nation.²¹

In order to highlight what is significant both in the Romanian community in the Timok Valley and in Romania, the data and information will be analyzed from a geopolitical perspective (*A. Golopenția*) because the existence of a community is ensured only through political organization, and the states, which provide the right ground for the manifestation of political desires, give free rein

to the creative power of communities, helping fulfill their mission and sustaining them.²² By geopolitical knowledge we mean the permanent knowledge of the current situation.²³ In other words, geopolitics is a science that deals with the permanent study of events pertaining to geographical dynamics.²⁴ Not only is it a permanent concern to study the arrangement of social structures²⁵ in space, but it is an “integral” concern because it requires the subject to be analyzed in its entirety: by area, population, economy and economic potential, mood, communities or diversity of interests, political or historical.²⁶

Applied to the topic of discussion, it should be mentioned that geopolitics abroad concerns the feeling of dignity of the Romanian state²⁷ and ensures the people’s connection with the Romanian nation.²⁸ The Romanian perspective can be communicated outside the borders only geopolitically²⁹ and, from the analysis of demographic data, we can notice not only the way in which the Romanian community in the Timok Valley has evolved and the manner in which the majority population relates to them.³⁰ Summarizing the above ideas, we can say that geopolitics can be a method for approaching reality by “knowing the state of affairs of neighbors based on geographic data.”³¹

Socio-Historical Context: Spatial and Demographic Delimitations

THE ROMANIAN community in Serbia is divided into two main areas: Vojvodina and the Timok Valley. Romanians in the two areas benefit from different socio-cultural and political contexts because of the distinction that the Serbian state makes between Romanians by introducing the Vlach glonym, leaving the impression that Romanians are different from Vlachs. Thus, the Belgrade authorities use the former designation (Romanian) for the inhabitants of Romanian origin in Vojvodina, and the latter (Vlachs) for the inhabitants of the rest of the territory, especially those in eastern Serbia, in the Timok Valley.³² In this material we will refer to the Romanians from the Timok Valley, located in eastern Serbia, in the area bounded by the Timok, Morava, and Danube rivers.³³

Currently, from the viewpoint of the Belgrade authorities, the Timok Valley comprises only the area between the Timok River Valley and the adjacent mountain areas. This region includes Zaječar County, which includes the communes of Zaječar, Knjaževac, Sokobanja, and Boljevac (in this county, 20 of the 39 villages are 100% Romanian), and Bor County (consisting of the communes of Bor, Majdanpek, Kladovo, and Negotin, where 11 of the 12 villages are 100% Romanian, and the city is mixed). The population of this region is

244,959 inhabitants, of which, unofficially, more than 60% are Romanian (according to linguists, association leaders). However, from an official perspective, only 35,330 Romanians (and Vlachs) are registered as such.³⁴

However, from the perspective of the institutions in Bucharest, Timok (the extended area of eastern Serbia) includes the region of Homolje and Morava and has a population of 712,050 inhabitants. Certain linguists and scientists, as well as the Romanian organizations in eastern Serbia, raise the number of Romanians to 300–400 thousand inhabitants. Estimates are based on 19th century Serbian censuses that recorded more than 150,000 Romanians (10% of Serbia's population), being the absolute majority in eastern Serbia.³⁵

The Origin of the Romanians in Eastern Serbia

DESPITE THE current separation, orchestrated by the Serbian state and unsanctioned by the Romanian state, the populations of these areas are interconnected both linguistically, because they speak the same language, from a religious viewpoint (they are mostly Christian-Orthodox), and from a cultural point of view (we refer here to folklore, customs, and traditions).³⁶

The first attestations of the Romanians in the area we are analyzing date from Antiquity. In the first millennium BC this region was inhabited by Thracians called Triballi, hence the name Triballia. Between 60 and 44 BC this territory was part of the state led by Burebista. In the year 29 BC this area was conquered by the Romans, who included it in the province of Moesia. After the withdrawal of the Roman administration from the territories north of the Danube in 271, most of the region was included in the new provinces of Dacia Ripensis and Dacia Mediterranea.³⁷ The proof of this is the “legacy” of the name of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese, which is Dacia Ripensis (with the headquarters in Mălăinița/Negotin commune, it is the only church institution in eastern Serbia where Orthodox services are held in Romanian). In the 5th and 6th centuries, the region under discussion was the target of important waves of migration, among which we mention the Huns, Gepids, Ostrogoths, Avars, and others.³⁸

The Serbs came to this area only in the seventh century. In the ninth century, the first Romanian voivodes who came from what is today eastern Serbia crossed the Danube to establish state formations in north of the river. Simultaneously with this action of the Romanians, the Serbs laid the foundations of their kingdom in the west. Another proof of the existence of the Romanians on this territory since the beginning is given by the existence of a proper principality of the Romanians in the 10th–11th centuries. Moreover, in the twelfth cen-

ture, the Romanians founded a country that lasted for almost a century, known in historiography as the empire of the Asen dynasty, which also included the Bulgarian population. It must be said that in the 13th century the number of Romanians in eastern Serbia had increased so much that Serbian princes passed a law prohibiting the marriages of Serbs to Romanian women, as there was a risk that they (Serbs) would disappear as a nation.³⁹ The same information regarding the “power” of Romanian women to “Romanianize” Serbs can be found in Anton Golopenția, who stated that “this love of the Romanian woman for her language, for her people, for her ancestral customs, gave birth to the popular saying throughout Serbia: a Romanian woman can Romanianize an entire village!”⁴⁰

In the 14th century, the Serbian polity disappeared from the map after the conquest by the Ottoman Empire. In the 16th century, because the Romanians from present-day eastern Serbia revolted against the Pasha of Vidin, the Ottomans were forced to accept a reorganization that was directed by Romanian princes. The area remained under the leadership of Romanian princes for almost 300 years, between 1565 and 1833, bearing the name of Margina Autonomous Province, with the capital at Negotin. After that, this province was renamed Krajinina by the Serbs and was included into Serbia. This is the moment that triggered an extensive process of denationalization of the Romanians, as “all the rights of Romanians have been suppressed, the situation continuing until now.”⁴¹

What we want to specify through this historical excursion is the fact that the Romanians from this area (the eastern part of today’s Serbia) have been there since the formation of the Romanians. In other words, the community of the Romanians from Timok is part of the kernel of the Romanian people.⁴²

Serbian Nationalism and the Weakening of the Romanian Community

THE ROMANIAN identity in the area endured without major difficulties until the emergence of the Serbian national state (1817), when the denationalization policies began, and were perfected until 1830. The turning point in the relation between the Serbian authorities and the Romanian communities was 1833, when the Serbian authorities forbade the introduction of Romanian books and publications, the cultural activities of the Romanians, and historical monuments and documents attesting their existence south of the Danube were destroyed. Also, in that year, the Romanian language was banned in churches and schools and the locals were forced to be baptized with Serbian names.⁴³ From the prohibitions on baptisms (adding the suffixes -ić, -ović

or -ević to the name of the Romanians was a mandatory condition for being baptized) things escalated to falsifying censuses, defending impossible theses (according to which the Vlachs are Romanized Slavs, etc.), and even the replacement of Romanian teachers with ethnic Serbs.⁴⁴ Another direction of denationalization was aimed, according to the Romanian bishop of Serbia, His Eminence Daniil, at the abolition/demolition of Romanian churches, after the establishment of the Serbian administration.⁴⁵

From 1948 to 1955, the Romanians or Vlachs disappeared from official statistics, because of strained Yugoslav-Romanian relations, due to the “Balkan Federation” project started by Josip Broz Tito. This project of the Yugoslav leader to create a Balkan federation to include Albania and Bulgaria, but under the leadership of Yugoslavia, led to a rupture between Stalin and Tito, which worsened relations between Yugoslavia and the Romanian leader, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej.⁴⁶

The Contribution of Romanians to the Creation of the Modern Serbian National State

THE IDEA we highlight here is that the Romanians helped create the modern Serbian state and, after that moment, the Serbs began to introduce denationalization policies against the historical communities. According to C. Papanace, in history there are also people who

*have the curious purpose of not realizing themselves fully, giving their energies to the surrounding peoples. Thus, the Vlachs in the Balkans decisively contributed to the Bulgarian state formula in the Early Middle Ages and to the emergence of the modern Greek state in the times closer to us. . . . Other nations that benefited greatly from the tireless energies of the Macedo-Romanians were the Albanians, Serbs, Hungarians, and even Austrians.*⁴⁷

Artificial Distinction between Vlachs and Romanians

THE END of the ninth century and the beginning of the tenth century mark the end of the Romanian ethnogenesis and the appearance of the ethnic name of Vlach in medieval European sources, which attests the Romanians’ Roman origin.⁴⁸ Therefore, the term Vlach is the total synonym of Romanian, it is the name given by other nations to Romanians. Paul Iorgovici stated

in this sense that “the Slavs first called the Romanians Ulachs, who after their language-signed Italian, hence the name of the Wallachian Romanians, that is, what other nations call them, only the Romanians keep their name as such.”⁴⁹

In Byzantine and Slavic sources, the inhabitants of this area are known as Vlachs or Wallachians.⁵⁰ The Serbian authorities use this name to designate the Romanian community. Although the two terms, respectively Romanian and Vlach, designate the same community, according to the Romanian legislation in force,⁵¹ the Belgrade authorities contribute to the creation of confusion between concepts such as ethnicity and nationality. Thus, over time, this linguistic artifice has led to the denial of the real identity of the Vlachs, who are currently not considered Romanians by the Serbian state, and created a policy also adopted in other states concerning the historical communities of Romanians (ex.: Aromanians in Greece, Moldovans in the Republic of Moldova, etc.). The approach of the Serbian state is all the more obvious as the term Vlach refers to all people who are Romance speakers.⁵²

The Vlach ethnonym shows how “the consciousness of other European linguistic communities, in an older epoch, reflected the idea of the Romanians’ identity and their place, together with their language, in the family of Romance languages and peoples.”⁵³ Over time, secondary meanings have been added to the basic ethnic meaning of the term “Vlach.” Of these meanings, the best known is that of shepherd. An important mention should be made here: the idea of shepherd should not be associated, as some historians have erroneously done, with the idea of nomad. The term associated with Vlach, that of shepherd, does not reflect a nomadic identity, but rather a fundamental feature of Romanian pastoral life, namely, transhumance.⁵⁴ The same idea is supported by the geographer George Vâlsan, who states that “in the Balkan Peninsula, today Vlach means shepherd. So if there was a nation that could enjoy the benefits offered by the Iron Gates massif, this nation could only be the Romanian one.”⁵⁵

The discussion on the equivalence between Vlach and Romanian can be easily clarified by an ethnolinguistic argument. According to researcher Vlad Cubreacov,

*ethnonyms are of several kinds: 1) endonyms (names given by the representatives of an ethnic group themselves), 2) exonyms (names given by representatives of other ethnic groups in their languages), 3) infranymys (local or regional names assigned according to narrow criteria), 4) ultranymys (names assigned according to broad criteria) and 5) scientific and historical names.*⁵⁶

From this perspective, the Romanians from Timok and the Vlachs from eastern Serbia are the same community, the Romanian one. They call themselves Romanians, while the others call them Vlachs. This case is a classic example, similar to the Romanian-Moldovan artificial linguistic duality (two polytonyms, one ethnonym).⁵⁷ The president of the Romanian Academy, Acad. Ioan-Aurel Pop, also claims “that the name of Vlach (with all varieties) was given to Romanians by foreigners: Valeos, Valascos, Olach, Volochs.”⁵⁸

The Communist Fracture of 1944

IN XENOPOL’S view, “History deals with all things that become what they are over time. It has connections with all phenomena in the Universe, with those of a material nature, as well as with those of an intellectual nature.”⁵⁹ From this perspective, the object of social history is time as becoming.⁶⁰ The period of the communist regime meant a fracture in the becoming of Romania, where by becoming we mean everything that can be (a sum of possibilities), but it is as yet unachieved.⁶¹ What we want to highlight is the fact that this fracture was experienced both within the borders of Romania and abroad, referring here to the historical communities, including the Romanians in Serbia.

Communism, established by “occupying southeastern Europe, with the exception of Greece, led to the acceleration of the process of ethnic assimilation of the Aromanians.”⁶² A relevant moment in this respect is the appointment in 1947 of Ana Pauker as foreign minister. She held that position from 1947 to 1952. Following the lines of action imposed by Moscow, Ana Pauker, through the measures adopted, namely, cutting funding for all educational and religious institutions outside Romania in the Balkans and closing the borders, did nothing but deepen this fracture. The closure of the schools in the Balkans—opened due to the concern of Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza but also of King Carol I for the Romanians in the area in question—occurred in 1948. The reason for adopting these measures was that the Aromanians who were trained in these schools “would threaten the security of the so-called modern socialist state.”⁶³ The consequences of these measures are still felt because even now the Aromanians from Greece, Bulgaria, Albania, or Serbia have no schools. Through these actions, the projection of Romania’s power abroad was canceled. From that moment on, the Romanian communities outside the borders, in the Balkans and not only, remained unrepresented, becoming fair game for the denationalization policies.

A Brief Radiography of Current Issues: A Sociological Analysis of the Vitality of Romanians in the Timok Valley

ALTHOUGH IN the Timok Valley there are today about 400,000 Romanians⁶⁴ who lack the most basic rights, in this area one can identify a strong cultural identity resistance directly proportional to the unconstitutional force of assimilation exerted by the Serbian authorities. The key element that offers the Romanian community the ability to continue, despite the various tactics of forced assimilation, is a surplus of vitality that comes from the individual level on the entire community.

The tragic situation consists of the fact that these excesses of vitality are found only among a few cultural personalities who assume a rare and difficult simultaneous task, namely the double mission to preserve and raise the level of the Romanian communities and to generate in the future the formation of new generations to continue this Romanian impulse of energy. This situation can be seen in the fact that the real islands of Romanian conscience emerged around these personalities and this can be considered the main problem of the Serbian authorities. Even though Romanian ethnics want nothing more than the rights they deserve and are guaranteed, paradoxically, by the constitution of the state on whose territory they are, the Serbian authorities, from the political, administrative, cultural, economic to the spiritual level, act openly, without diplomacy, abusively and not infrequently, without pity towards everything that is Romanian or could generate the feeling of belonging to the Romanian identity and culture.

As a direct consequence of the fact that these Romanian communities in eastern Serbia do not have mass media in the Romanian language, many of the abuses of the Serbian authorities remain unknown to decision-makers and to the public in Romania. For this reason, we chose to focus on an event of great importance for the entire Romanian community in eastern Serbia and for the geopolitical relations that Romania can develop from this moment of balance: the erection of the first church with the service in the Romanian language after about 200 years.⁶⁵ The importance of this historical moment is shown by the fact that the church in Mălainița became the first pillar of identity, of cultural and symbolic resistance, for the entire Romanian community in eastern Serbia.

Cultural Aspects

THE ROMANIAN language has been banned since 1833⁶⁶ and this aspect is still relevant.⁶⁷ The main factor through which the linguistic assimilation of Romanians is being pushed is the introduction in the public discourse of the glotonym “Vlach.” Because the Romanians in the Timok Valley have been deprived of the most important cultural and identity institutions for more than 200 years, the school and the church, respectively, they have become closed communities, isolated from the cities. In the short term, this attitude helped preserve the Romanian values and identity, but in the long term, in the absence of the appropriate institutions, these values were handed down to the younger generations only orally⁶⁸ and began to be lost. Against the background of this dilution of the national substance, it was possible to introduce with skill and generational consistency the glotonym “Vlach” as an element of manipulation and confusion among the Romanian ethnic groups.⁶⁹

The proof that the Serbian state is oriented against the ethnic Romanians emerges from the approach to the educational institution as a potential factor of national reawakening among the Romanians. Thus, the Serbian state intentionally sabotages all opportunities for ethnic Romanians to study in Romania, both from the perspective that they can learn about their true origin and given the possibility that they can make public the discriminatory situation (in a negative sense) of their native community. These actions are doubled by those of the Romanian state, which in the centenary year abolished the only institutions⁷⁰ that systematically cared for Romanians abroad. First, certain political vectors (frequently these individuals are Romanians ethnics), with support from the majority Serbian parties, create an unofficial scholarship infrastructure in Romania: then paradoxical situations occur, where instead of Romanian ethnics, ethnic Serbs arrive for studies in Romania.⁷¹ Although they declare themselves Romanians, in fact these students oppose the idea of Romanian identity, this being a clear case of ethnobusiness.⁷²

This dreadful situation must be taken into account by the Romanian authorities, because it represents a direct and explicit attack on the authority of the Romanian state. Second, the situation becomes more complicated when young students from Timok reach their universities in the mother country and are censored when they want to report the state of affairs in the Timok Valley. If the academic environment had upheld its scholarly values, it could have become one of the pillars of recovery and revitalization of the Romanian community in the Timok Valley.⁷³ Because even in these academic circles gestures deprived of any

national dignity are spreading, the feeling of injustice that young Romanians feel is intensified, completing the long list of injustices suffered overtime on the territory of Serbia (and more recently on the territory of Romania).

The effort of those who manage to study in Romania is considerable and shows a struggle for their own identity, given that in eastern Serbia, in 2021, there is no school with teaching in the native language. (The force of attraction of the Romanian language is exercised exclusively within the family, orally because no one knows how to write in Romanian anymore).⁷⁴

Political-Administrative Aspects

THE ROMANIANS in Timok know that the future of the Romanian community can be ensured and the Romanian identity can be preserved only through political organization. Thus, we can consider the tendency towards political organization not only “a bridgehead” in Romanian geopolitics outside the borders, but also a form of organizing the vitality of Romanians based on their historical rights, which gives them legitimacy. In this sense, one of the major current struggles of the Romanian Democratic Party of Serbia is to obtain the official recognition of a single⁷⁵ Romanian minority on the territory of Serbia, regardless of the area in which they are located.⁷⁶

Another problem of the political framework is represented by the Romanian pseudo-elites who do not possess a sense of dignity. The situation can be described by the fact that there are, within the other organizations and political parties, Romanian ethnics who at meetings with senior officials of the Romanian state present the situation on the ground as good,⁷⁷ even if it is alarming.

Another worrying episode in the recent history of the Serbian state was the fact that publicly, in the middle of the election campaign, a candidate for the presidency of the state, hoping to get more votes, said that if elected president, he would abolish all national minority organizations. This aspect shows that it has been publicly acknowledged that there is a movement in Serbia aimed at national minorities,⁷⁸ intending to reduce or even assimilate them. However, in a state that claims to want to join the European Union, these excesses show the state’s level of concern for minority issues: it tries to “eliminate” the problem, that is, to assimilate that minority; it ignores the problem and thus forces that minority to take its destiny into its own hands and launch a series of individual initiatives in which people decide, in particular, how they will ensure their existence in the future (either emigrate or assimilate); this indicates a fracture in the legitimacy of the Serbian state.

Major Differences between Vojvodina and the Timok Valley

ALTHOUGH THERE was an initiative to set up a National Council of all Romanians on the territory of Serbia, the Romanians in the Timok Valley showed some reservations in joining this council. The reason is the different treatment applied to a national minority within the same state: in the Vojvodina region, the Romanian communities have enjoyed a series of rights (although the recognition is incomplete), while in the Timok Valley the Romanians are deprived of any right provided in the Constitution of Serbia or in any other international regulations on national minorities. Instead, in Romania, the Serbian community benefits from all rights provided in the Romanian Constitution and in the international regulations to which Romania is a part. Although both regions are on the territory of Serbia and the same measures should be applied uniformly, this is not the case. A concrete example in clarifying the major differences between the two regions where Romanians live can be expressed by the wishes of Romanians: while in Vojvodina Romanians campaign for the opening of a theater in Vršac, in the Timok Valley they do not have even a single hour of Romanian language teaching in school.⁷⁹

Spiritual Aspects

THIS IS the level where the biggest clash of identity pressure vectors occurs, but also where we find actions of high morality and dignity. We must mention from the beginning that the priests have assumed in this territory, in addition to the evangelical mission, a geopolitical one, because through their actions they became cultural ambassadors and representatives of the Romanian state in Serbia, for the entire Romanian community. The eight priests who cater to a territory as large as Olt County in Romania represent true geopolitical vectors through which the Romanian identity and culture are transformed into elements that ensure the solidarity of the community.

The spiritual tragedy that the Romanians in the Timok Valley experienced for more than 200 years consists of the fact that religious services were held in the Serbian language, which made the Romanian ethnics stop attending the liturgy. Serious in this case is not only the fact that the people did not understand what was said during the service or in the sermon, but that in those moments, the Romanian community was forced to break the contact with the divinity.

This aspect meant a leap backwards in time for the entire Romanian community in the Timok Valley, because approximately 400,000 Romanians were basically forced to practice magical rituals (spells, incantations, etc.), in order to compensate for the spiritual needs provided by the church. In other words, the Romanian community has been “transported” back to the time before the Christianization of these lands by the Holy Apostles.

The year 2004 saw the “re-Christianization” of this area following the construction of a church (currently a monastery) in Mălăinița by Father Bojan Aleksandrović (Boian Alexandrovici). The courage, the effort, and the obstacles overcome in laying the foundations of this place, which became a truly spiritual and symbolic center of the Romanian community in the Timok Valley, can be considered elements of a living and ongoing example through which the truth is “revealed” to the people. Beyond the repeated death threats, we point out the following aspects that denote the effort made to build this axis of morality:

1. When he stated that he wanted to build a church in which to serve in his native language, the father was expelled from the Serbian Orthodox Church.⁸⁰

2. After the beginning of construction work on the church, the Serbian bishop attempted to bribe Father Bojan in order to stop the project. The object of the bribe was the chance to become once again a priest in any parish he wanted, anywhere in Serbia.⁸¹

3. Although the church building consisted at that time of several concrete pillars raised on a vacant lot and the services were held in the open,⁸² the Serbian priest put pressure on the mayor to issue an order to demolish the church and all properties owned by Father Bojan, including his house.

4. He was called to the police and psychologically tortured to cease the work on the church. The commissioner’s thinking, although it exceeds the limits of elementary logic, denotes the quality and the manner in which the Serbian state’s policy of assimilating the Romanians is being implemented.⁸³

5. Not only the priest was an element of secessionist propaganda, but also the teacher, who threatened the Romanian children who attended the service at the Romanian church that if they continue, the Romanians will put a bomb in the church and kill them.⁸⁴

6. The mayor of the city of Bor asked his party leader, the Serbian prime minister at the time, to send military units to the area, arguing that pro-Romanian ultranationalist actions (building the church in Mălăinița) would destabilize the region and create a new Kosovo-like episode. Moreover, these statements came at a sensitive time for Romania’s foreign diplomacy, because at the same time the situation of the Russian troops on the Dniester had escalated, the aim being to promote nationally and internationally the idea that Romanians are a destabilizing factor.⁸⁵

7. Less than a month after the church was consecrated, the anti-Romanian theocracy again manifested itself. The Serbian bishop requested the mayor's office to carry out the order to demolish the only church in which the liturgy was celebrated in Romanian. This action violates Article 12 of the Serbian Constitution on

*the inalienable right of the individual and the community to the expression, preservation, cultivation, and promotion of specific national, ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic heritage and their public expression as part of the traditions of national minorities and their members.*⁸⁶

If the activity of Serbian priests and of the bishop⁸⁷ seems firmly directed against this identity landmark, it should be mentioned that the Serbian priest, in Romanian communities, is a rare presence, because he does not officiate the liturgy and the only time he participates in community life is during funerals or other events for which he is paid.⁸⁸ This is the sense in which the solidarity of the people with Father Bojan should be understood, because they felt for the first time, after many generations, that the church belongs to the people.⁸⁹ Thus, this work achieved what the state institutions had failed to do, namely, the creation of a center of spiritual and symbolic solidarity. This action set a precedent for creating an entire functional network of three deaneries: Negotin (Dacia Ripensis), Bor and Lăpușna (Lapušnje), and Morava and Homolji.

Instead of Conclusions: Directions of Concrete Action for the Romanian State

BEYOND THE fact that Romania is an oasis of Latinity in the middle of a Slavic sea, and beyond the fact that Romanian vitality has overflowed over time, it should be considered by the competent authorities as a real privilege that offers legitimacy and the possibility of playing an important geostrategic role in the area inhabited by Romanians. In this sense, we want to highlight some directions of action that we consider relevant and urgent for the Romanian state.

1. The Romanian state, through diplomatic (by conditioning Serbia's accession to the EU) and/or economic pressures, must insist on the recognition of the Romanians from the Timok Valley as a national minority, on the one hand, and on the other, on the elimination of the Vlach/Romanian confusion (which becomes a source of stigma).

2. Starting a coherent and constant policy of supporting the Romanian communities abroad through bilateral agreements.

3. The involvement of the consulates and embassies in protecting and developing the Romanian communities.

4. The initiation of cultural activities (summer schools, camps, excursions, school competitions) for young people from the Romanian community in the Timok Valley, because they represent the future vectors of the projection of the Romanian identity.

5. The inclusion of mothers in various socio-cultural activities in order to help them reconnect with the mother country. This aspect is particularly important because mothers educate the future generations, while having the power to revitalize and re-Romanianize the Romanian community in eastern Serbia.

6. Official recognition on the territory of Serbia of the Romanian Orthodox Church and the actions taken by its members.

7. The reestablishment of the institutions that cared about the fate of the Romanian communities abroad.

In summary, the Romanian community in the Timok Valley possesses a low stock of social vitality in the context of an adverse geopolitical and institutional framework. This work focuses on the following hypotheses: after 1944, the vitality of Romanians in Timok has been on a downward trend, and after the 2000s the weakening of the community has occurred at an accelerated pace. Both hypotheses have been validated.

The vitality of the Romanian community in the Timok Valley is experiencing a general downward trend, despite the fact that has been a little growth in vitality achieved by the Romanian Orthodox priests who created a symbolic infrastructure. The core of this infrastructure is the Mălăinița Monastery, built by Father Bojan Aleksandrović, a cultural personality of the Romanian Timok community. The construction of the monastery was a historic moment. Compared to the period before the establishment of communist regime, the Romanians in Timok can attend liturgy in their native language. However, the eight priests (operating after 2004) are not enough for the 400,000 Romanians who live in Timok. In the absence of fundamental identity rights and support from the Romanian state, the vitality of the Romanian community remains in decline, possibly ending in its obliteration.

After the year 2000, the dissolution of the Romanian community has accelerated. The causes lie in the actions of the Romanian and Serbian states. The Romanian community in the Timok Valley has not had education in its native language since 1833. Their identity rights are not recognized by the Serbian state because of the Vlach/Romanian distinction encouraged by the same state. This process will continue despite the manifestation of vitality in the Romanian communities. A good example is the pressure exerted by the Serbian state when

Father Bojan Aleksandrović built the Mălăinița Monastery. Furthermore, the Romanian state only formally supports the community, despite that being its geopolitical duty. Step by step, the Romanian community will vanish if it continues to be ignored.



Notes

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19. *Ibid.*, 263.
20. *Ibid.*
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22. *Ibid.*, 343.

23. Ibid., 402–403.
24. Ibid., 392.
25. Ibid., 538.
26. Ibid., 412.
27. Ibid., 256.
28. Ibid., 412.
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30. Ibid., 543.
31. Ibid., 412.
32. Ovidiana Bulumac, “Comunitățile românești din Serbia: Considerații generale,” *Revista Etnosfera* (Bucharest), new ser., 4, 1 (2012): 18.
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47. Quoted in Radu Baltasiu and Ovidiana Bulumac, *Istoria socială: Actualitate și problematică* (Bucharest: Editura Universității din București, 2017), 210.

48. Doina Babeu, “Despre originea etnonimului *valah* (*vlah*),” *Philologia Banatica* (Timișoara), 1 (2010): 53–57.
49. Paul Iorgovici, *Observații de limbă românească*, critical edition, introduction, chronological table, notes and bibliography by Doina Bogdan-Dascălu and Crișu Dascălu, foreword by Ștefan Munteanu (Timișoara: Facla, 1979), 109.
50. Monica Budiș, *Comunitatea românească de pe Valea Timocului bulgăresc* (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 2001), 26.
51. “The State shall support the strengthening of links with the Romanians living abroad and shall act accordingly for the preservation, development and expression of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity, with the observance of the legislation of the State whose citizens they are.” The Constitution of Romania, Art. 7, “Romanians Living Abroad,” accessed 19 January 2021, <https://www.presidency.ro/en/the-constitution-of-romania>.
52. Annemarie Marinkovic Sorescu, “Cultura populară a românilor din Timoc—încercare de periodizare a cercetărilor etnologice,” *Philologica Jassyensia* 2, 1 (2006): 73.
53. Vasile Arvinte, “Termenii *român* și *vlah* în afirmarea comunității lingvistice,” *Limbă și literatură* (Bucharest), 2nd ser., 4 (1979): 333.
54. Babeu.
55. George Vâlsan, “Românii din Serbia,” *Buletinul Societății Regale Române de Geografie* (Bucharest) 56 (1937): 14.
56. Vlad Cubreacov, “Român, moldovean: Etonim, infranim, politonime,” *Cubreacov Blog*, 25 November 2019, <https://cubreacovblog.wordpress.com/2019/11/25/roman-moldovean-etnonim-infranim-politonime/>.
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59. A. D. Xenopol, *Teoria istoriei*, translated from French by Olga Zaicik, introduction by Al. Zub (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 1997), 27.
60. Baltasiu and Bulumac, *Istoria socială*, 87.
61. Baltasiu and Bulumac, *Fractured Modernities*.
62. Emilian M. Dobrescu, “Comunitățile de români din afara granițelor țării (1),” *Revista Română de Sociologie* 19, 3–4 (2008): 275.
63. Hristu Cândroveanu, “Cine sunt aromânii?” *Cer și pământ românesc*, accessed 19 January 2021, <https://cersipamantromanesc.wordpress.com/2013/04/15/cine-sunt-aromani/>.
64. *Istoria vie a comunităților românești*, 1: 313.
65. Ibid., 357.
66. Ibid., 380.
67. See note 2.
68. “We know Romanian only from what we learn at home from our parents and grandparents. It means that we can only speak, but not read or write in Romanian . . . we do not know many new words in Romanian” (*Istoria vie a comunităților românești*, 1: 329).

69. Ibid., 314.
70. Vlad Ovidiu, “Guvernul a desființat Ministerul Românilor de Pretutindeni și Institutul ‘Eudoxiu Hurmuzachi,’” *Monitorul de Oltenia* (Craiova), 6 November 2019, <https://monitoruldeoltenia.com/guvernul-a-desfiintat-ministerul-romanilor-de-pretutindeni-si-institutul-eudoxiu-hurmuzachi/>; Livia Ionescu, “De ce dispare DRAG din Organigrama ICR?” *Cotidianul* (Bucharest), 21 March 2018, <https://www.cotidianul.ro/de-ce-dispare-drag-din-organigrama-icr/>.
71. “Young Serbs use scholarships granted by the Romanian state to study in Romania, although there are cases when some of them constantly denigrate the Romanian culture and the Romanian identity in the Timok Valley. This happens by bribing Crăciunovici from the Democratic Movement of Romanians in Serbia with sums of money ranging between 200 and 1,000 euro per student” (*Istoria vie a comunităților românești*, 1: 347).
72. Nicu Stan, “Vești proaste pentru românii din Ungaria: Totul este cât se poate de clar,” *Play Tech*, 18 May 2020, <https://playtech.ro/stiri/vesti-proaste-pentru-romanii-din-ungaria-totul-este-cat-se-poate-de-clar-127269>.
73. “Blocking the initiatives of young people in Craiova—the confiscation of the headquarters of the Romanian north-east Serbia students association ‘Atanasie Popovici—Furnica’ for absurdly invoked reasons” (*Istoria vie a comunităților românești*, 1: 344).
74. Ibid., 331.
75. “The leaders of the Romanian organizations [from Timok and Vojvodina] express in the public sphere the desire of the Romanian communities to be recognized as a single minority, no matter where they live, no matter how they are called, Vlachs or Romanians” (ibid., 322).
76. “Romanian associations claim the constitutional right for the Romanian minority to be officially recognized” (ibid., 316).
77. “However, there are problems with the Romanian leaders, the so-called ‘Romanian leaders,’ who go to Bucharest and falsely present the situation here. I am sure that now most politicians there and the people who deal with our problem do not have all the correct information about our problem” (ibid., 331).
78. Ibid., 323.
79. Ibid., 331.
80. “Bishop Justin of Zaičar sent a priest who told me that he allowed me to be a priest wherever I wanted provided that we did not complete the Romanian church in Mălăinița . . . [After he refused the offer] . . . then they said that this was not possible and that they would not allow me to build the Romanian church. They expelled me from the clergy. I am no longer allowed to preach, take confessions, or perform the rites. The Serbian priests are no longer coming to me. The bishop has notified them, and when they pass by me they turn their heads in the opposite direction. They claim that I want to stir the people because I want to perform in my village the religious service in my native language” (ibid., 338).
81. Ibid.
82. “Bojan Aleksandrović, a young Romanian from Mălăinița, Negotin, is the Archdeacon of the Romanian Orthodox Church . . . he celebrates the liturgy outdoors . . .

a large number of Romanian believers attend the mass held by him . . . the altar is made of a few concrete vaults in the middle of a field in the predominantly Romanian village of Mălăinița” (ibid., 331).

83. “I grew up in the church and the monastery. However, when we heard that Bojan wanted to build a Romanian church in the Timok Valley and that it was not possible to build such a thing in Serbia, we also heard that the Serbian priests would not allow it. So, they [the Serbian priests] got involved, went to the town hall and said that they would not let that happen” (ibid., 337).
84. “In my village only two mentally retarded people have declared themselves Romanians and only sick people can make such statements because we use the Serbian alphabet, we are Serbs” (ibid., 368–369).
85. Ibid., 46.
86. Ibid., 372.
87. Ibid., 357.
88. “When he heard that I was to bless the water for Epiphany, in my village, at my fountain . . . he called: What did Bojan do? He entered my territory! He can’t do that. We shall gather a group of I don’t know how many people and when we catch him we will beat him up” (ibid., 340); “The propaganda of the Serbian priests is a big problem. They tell our people: you will not understand that, you are not Romanians, you are Vlachs” (ibid., 339).
89. Ibid., 363.

Abstract

Timok Valley, Sociological and Historical Aspects: The State of the Vitality of the Romanian Community in Eastern Serbia

This paper presents a socio-historical analysis of the Romanians from the Timok Valley, on the one hand, and on the other hand, proposes a radiography of the current problems faced by the Romanians in eastern Serbia. From the beginning, we delimit conceptually and methodologically the framework of this study, and later we establish which is the population we propose for analysis (with an emphasis on its origin) and the area under investigation. Then we identify the statistical dynamics recorded before and after 1944, until now, to highlight the evolution of the Romanians in the area of interest. Another objective of the material is to identify the key moments in history which had a strong influence on the relationship between the Romanians and the Serbian state. In the last part of the paper, we intend to present the current problems faced by the Romanians in the Timok Valley. Through this approach, we determine whether there can be a case of vitality and highlight the geopolitical manifestation of the Romanian community.

Keywords

Timok Valley, geopolitics, assimilation, vitality, social will, cultural personality, symbolic infrastructure

TRANSILVANICA

EVROPAE NATIONES

Allegories Painted in a House in Braşov in the Early Seventeenth Century

DANA JENEI

The paintings discovered and restored in the middle house on the former Short Row of Town Hall Square in Braşov represent the only known example of murals inspired by Hans von Aachen's QVATVOR EVROPAE NATIONES drawings engraved by Jan and Raphael Sadeler (c. 1594) in monumental European Mannerist art.

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IN RECENT decades, restoration work undertaken in the premodern houses of the cities of Transylvania has revealed that mural painting in Late Renaissance or International Mannerist style was a frequent component of their decoration.¹ Such phytomorphic and figural compositions are preserved inside the three houses situated at Town Hall Square no. 15–16 in Braşov (Kronstadt, Brassó), on its south side, between the Fish Market and the Black Church Court,² which formed the previously called Short Row (*Kurze Zeil am Ring*), Apple Market (*Apfelmarkt*) and, later, Fruit Row (*Obstzeile*).³

My present contribution refers to the paintings in the middle house no. 16,⁴ in the principal room on the ground floor, with a floral ensemble on the vaults and featuring panels with mythological figures only on the west wall, datable to the first decades of the seventeenth century. The murals were discovered in 1991 but restored only in 2013, by a team coordinated by Maria Dumbrăveican.



FIG. 1. The ensemble of the three houses on the former Short Row in Braşov, today no. 15–16 Town Hall Square, after restoration.

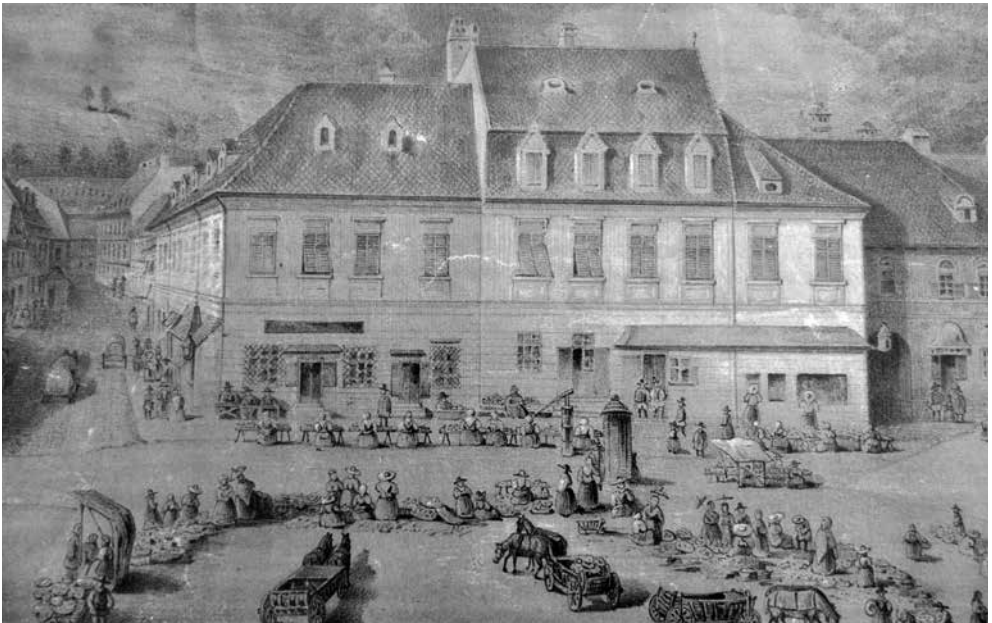


FIG. 2. The ensemble of the three houses in the nineteenth century, detail of the drawing by Edward Hullverding, 1848, today in the Museum of Urban Civilization in Braşov.

The house, like the others flanking it, saw successive phases of construction, in medieval times and during the Renaissance.⁵ The access to the principal room is from the passageway parallel to the house, through a vestibule originally formed by the first two bays of the five extant, and separated by a wall, later removed, although its imprint is still visible; the walls and vaults of the space preserve a later linear black, white and grey floral decoration, rudimentarily rendered. The entrance to the back room, with a much higher floor level and traces of decorative lines at the base of the vaults, is from the former vestibule as well.

IN THE principal room, facing the square, the phytomorphic decoration does not cover the vaults in a regular scheme, as in other examples of the so-called “Transylvanian Floral Renaissance”; here small flowers—buds and blooms with various efflorescences, short stems and linear stylized leaves—are painted on the white background, perpendicular to the edges of the cross-vaults. At the base of each vault segment, a single plant with a straight stem and a rich efflorescence in harmonious blue and brown tones is rendered, while in the centers of the vaults we see Italianate wreaths (now very degraded), and on the surfaces of the penetrations there are bouquets of fruits and flowers.

Two rectangular panels of equal size with figural paintings were uncovered on the west wall only, centered according to the tympana of the vaults. They survive in a fragmentary state with the lower part lost, and the color layer seriously degraded, due to the *Kalkmalerei* technique employed, the most widespread technique for murals at this period, according to the painter-restorer. Above them, grotesque masks hold garlands of flowers and fruits which hang down symmetrically.

Each of the panels represents a pair of mythological deities, a god who stands beside a seated goddess in front of a central tree displaying a coat of arms.

The better preserved image depicts Hermes and Athena who, in this age characterized by an interest in alchemy and the esoteric, combined to form the motif of *Hermathena*, as indicated in my original report. Hermes is represented in profile, dressed *all’antica*, but “modernized” in accordance with the fashion of the decades around 1600, with a winged hat over his curls, holding the caduceus in his right hand and supporting a sword on his left shoulder, while Athena wears armor and a feathered helmet.

The *Hermathena* motif first appeared as Gualtiero Scoto’s printer’s device, on the title-page of Pietro Bembo’s *Historiae Venetae libri XII* (1550/1551)⁶ and, subsequently, in emblem-books such as Achille Bocchi’s *Symbolicarvm quaestionvm de vniverso genere quas serio ludebat libri qvinqve* (1555, with engravings by Giulio Bonasone, after the drawings of Prospero Fontana and Parmigianino),⁷ and Girolamo Ruscelli’s *Imprese illustri* (1566, with plates ascribed to Giacomo Franco and Girolamo Porro).⁸ The motif was painted as a hybrid figure, literally



FIG. 3. *FRANCIA*, painting inside the principal room of the middle house in Braşov, first decades of the seventeenth century.

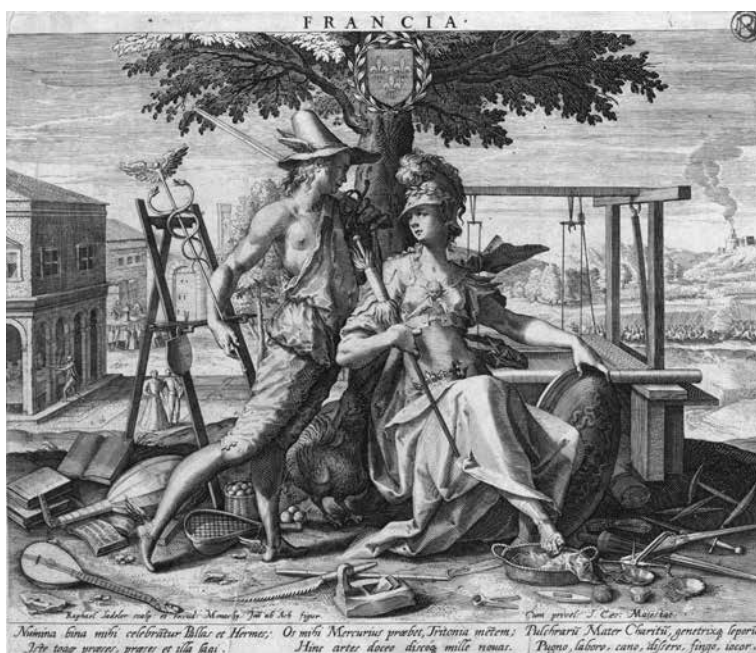


FIG. 4. *FRANCIA*, engraving after Hans von Aachen's drawings of the *QVATVOR EVROPAE NATIONES*, by Jan and Raphael Sadeler and dedicated to the cartographer Abraham Ortelius (c. 1594).
SOURCE: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_2013-7090-3.

expressing the fusion between *eloquenza* and *sapienza*, by Federico Zuccari in the Caprarola Palace (1566–1569), on the vault of the cabinet of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, known for his penchant for the esoteric sciences. Bartolomäus Spranger, court artist of the Emperor Rudolf II (1576–1612), painted a *Hermathena* inside the White Tower in Prague (c. 1585), while Aegidius Sadeler did an engraving (c. 1595) after a drawing by Hans von Aachen (1552–1615),⁹ the artist whose work is connected to the Braşov paintings. Von Aachen was the author of the drawings representing the allegories of the “Four European Nations” (c. 1594), engraved by Jan Sadeler (1550–1600) and Raphael Sadeler (1560/1561–1628/1632), and dedicated to the cartographer Abraham Ortelius (1527–1598), as the caption declares:

*Clariss: et Doctiss: viro Abrahamo Ortelio, Geographo
Regio, QVATVOR EVROPAE NATIONES. Joannes
et Raphael Sadelerij authores, obseruant: ergo dedic.*¹⁰

The production details given in the lower part within the images show the series to have been executed in Munich, while Jan Sadeler and Hans van Aachen were in the service of Duke William V of Bavaria.

IN THE specific context of the “Four Nations,” the representation of *Hermathena* in the engraving copied at Braşov has—exceptionally—a different connotation, as here it symbolizes France.¹¹ Identifying the graphic source enables us to piece together the lower part of the image which is lost at Braşov, but the paintings omitted the landscapes in the prints, as the format was changed from horizontal to vertical. Athena is seated with the royal crown of France on her lap, below the central tree which supports the royal crest with three lilies in a laurel crown, and she holds the Medusa shield—as befits the goddess of war—and a distaff, as patroness of the household, having also a loom behind her, weaving implements, woodworking tools and weapons at her feet; a battle scene is rendered in the background, to the left of the viewer. Hermes is presented as patron of arts and recreation, being surrounded by books, musical instruments and sheet-music, a painter’s easel, a tennis racket and balls, while that part of the background behind him features a banquet and a theatrical production. The engraving is lettered in the lower margin with six lines of verse in Latin, disposed in three columns:

*Numina bina mihi celebra[n]tur Pallas et Hermes,
Iste togæ præses, præses et illa sagi.
Os mihi Mercurius præbet Tritonia me[n]tem;
Hinc artes doceo discoq[ue] mille nouas.*

*Pulchraru[m] Mater Charitu[m], genetrrixq[ue], lepore[m],
Pugno, laboro, cano, dissero, fingo, iocor.*¹²

The Braşov painter was clearly not familiar with the true colors of the coat of arms of France and transposed them from the engraving with three stylized black lilies (instead of gold) on a background of red (instead of blue).

In addition, the painting was originally framed by *putti*, whose fragmentary figures are preserved on each side of the panel, indicating the extremely high quality of the original painting: small winged shoulders and hands holding a bunch of grapes, a vase and a shield, respectively. The upper part of the frame is adorned with a mask and hanging garlands, and recalls the decorations in emblem-books.¹³

The second panel painted on the west wall, similarly framed, was damaged by the interventions of the 1990s, but spectacularly recovered by restorers in 2013. As Von Aachen's motif from the suite shows, it depicts Spain, symbolized by Juno and Mars.¹⁴ Juno is seated beside a standing Mars, shown here as a helmeted knight in armor with a sash across his chest, in vogue around 1600, a drum by his foot, and a flag bearing a sheaf of arrows device in the crook of his arm. The lost details of the damaged painting are revealed by its graphic source: in the engraving, Juno wears the collar of the Order of the Golden Fleece, holds a pomegranate like an orb in her left hand, a scepter in the other, and the Imperial Spanish crown in her lap. Behind her is the peacock, her attribute, and at her feet there are exotic fruits, a treasure-chest and coin-purse, playing-cards, a *vihuela*, a globe showing *AMERICA*, *Peru*, *Brasil*, and the hypothetical continent *Terra Australis*, then instruments of navigation including a compass, an astrolabe and an anchor, as symbols of exploration, naval power and New World conquests. In the background, to the left, there are some soldiers playing cards and a lover who has brought along a guitarist to serenade his beloved, who leans out of the window of a house, while, to the right, an army and a fleet on the ocean are attacking a castle, already on fire. These elements were not represented in the painting, only the small heraldic shield above, which initially sported the coat-of-arms of Spain, and the central tree whose dark tonality is still visible in the background of the rather deteriorated mural. The engraving is again captioned with six lines of verse in Latin arranged in three columns:

*Regna tot una rego, quot caetera Numina ge[n]tes:
Et cum possideam plurima, plura peto.
Sed peto regna soli Coelestibus addere regnis,
Huc mihi Mars, huc ars, huc referu[n]tur opes.
Sydera me nigros duxere per equor ad Indos,
Quos ego nunc superis insero syderibus.*¹⁵

Given that the designs are from a suite of four images, and the original internal architecture of the Braşov painted room has a symmetrical configuration on both longitudinal sides, it is reasonable to suppose that Italy and Germany were once depicted on the east wall and were removed by later works.

Italy was evidently the first of the “Four Nations” in Hans von Aachen’s graphic series, as the inscription on a tablet in lower center shows, including the dedication to the cartographer Abraham Ortelius. The caption underneath the image reads:

*Me beat ingenium, pietas, ioca, suada, salesq[ue];
Et quicquid pulchri pulcher Apollo docet.
Singula dant reliquę mihi fert una o[m]nia tellus,
Arma, viros, palmas, emula tecta polo.
Orbis ego sum pulchra parens, oculusq[ue] Europae:
Una Venus cunctas contineo Veneres.*¹⁶

The allegorical scene shows a seated Venus with the crowns of the major Italian states on her lap, holding a cornucopia and an arrow; she offers an apple to Apollo, who stands with a laurel wreath on his head, a *viola da gamba*, and books in his hands. A variety of objects litter the foreground: in the lower left corner, a fragmentary Antique torso, a sculptor’s tools, an alchemical furnace, books, a croquet mallet and balls, a large ball and a *bracciale*; in the lower right corner, a money pouch, dice, theatrical and carnival masks, a dagger, a *cornetto* and a *ciaramella*, and more books. In the right background there are musicians, riders and ruins in the distance and, in the left background, soldiers in Roman armor marching through a triumphal archway with the Roman *SPQR* device on its entablature. Behind the central tree with the arms of the Vatican is what is perhaps intended as the Castel Sant Angelo, while on each side is depicted an obelisk from those discovered, re-constructed and re-positioned by Pope Sixtus V in the years immediately prior to the print, while Hans van Aachen was still in Italy.

The fourth and last plate of the series of engravings, which would have been featured at Braşov on the east wall, alongside Italy, represents Germany in the person of Ceres, with corn in her hair, scepter in hand, and the imperial crown on her lap, referring to the *Romano-Germanicum Imperium*, as does the double-headed eagle on the coat of arms which hangs from the central tree. A youthful Bacchus stands beside her to the right, a garland of vine-leaves on his head, offering her a covered cup and a spear wound around with vines. In the foreground, objects symbolizing German ingenuity in the mechanical arts are displayed: tools and weaponry, a copper-plate and two burin needles, a printing-press; a rebec and a flute in the center, armory, a gun, a cannon and a clock in the lower right corner. In the background we see an army on the march, while

peasants drink at a village tavern, against a rural landscape with mountains, lakes and timber-framed buildings. The caption in the lower margin again consists of six lines of Latin verse arranged in three columns:

*Hic Regina suas orbi Germania gazas
Mo[n]strat, et impertit quas Dea gignit opes:
Thesauros almae Cereris, fontesq[ue] Lyei,
fulme[n] in aere cavo, cuncta[que] arata typis.
Liber ei pater est, hinc viuere libera gaudet,
Arma coacta capit, pocula sponte rapit.¹⁷*

ON THE same west wall of the room in Braşov, above the niche which is all that remains of the walled-up former portico of the facade, is a portrait bust of a woman within an oval frame, painted between bunches of flowers and fruits, wearing a circular headdress on her long disheveled hair, an Antique garment draped over her right shoulder, and holding in her left hand a scepter which seems to terminate in a cross. In the context of the representation of the nations, this figure could hypothetically represent Europe, but more in the style of Crispijn de Passe the Elder's *Sibylla Europaea* (1601) than a *Europa* from a "Four Continents" series.

During the late Renaissance and Mannerist eras, allegory becomes almost the default mode of representing the world, in images and symbols adorning the frontispieces, title pages and cartouches of works of geography, cosmography, exploration and travel, designed by the most important artists of the age.¹⁸ On the title page of the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (1570), the first standardized world atlas created by Abraham Ortelius, the most important representative of Dutch Golden Age cartography, to whom Hans von Aachen's "Four Nations" series was dedicated, Europe is rendered for the first time as the queen of the "Four Parts of the World," wearing the crown, and holding the scepter and the orb which symbolize temporal power. The personification of Europe as an allegorical female embodying the continent, rather than as one of Zeus's mythological amours, is foreshadowed by the tradition of anthropomorphic cartography. As early as 1537 Johannes Putsch designed the map entitled *Europa prima pars terrae in forma virginis*, subsequently known as *Europa Regina*, which was first copied in the later editions of Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia* (1570),¹⁹ and it was perhaps the knowledge of this tradition that inspired the engraver of the *Theatrum's* title page to represent *Europa* as a fully human queen. Other similar personifications, illustrating "the civilizational ideal rooted in Classicism and Christianity, the two traditions defining pre-modern Europe,"²⁰ appear in such single-sheet

prints as Adriaen Collaert's (1586–1591),²¹ or such works as the allegory *DOMUS AUSTRIACAE* (c. 1580, also by Collaert, after Jan van der Straet),²² Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* (first illustrated edition, 1603),²³ *Les Estats, Empires, Royaumes et Principautes du Monde* (1625, Crispijn de Passe the Younger),²⁴ or Sir Thomas Herbert's *Some Yeares Travels into Divers Parts of Asia and Afrique* (1638).²⁵

The glorification of the power and culture of the European nations, “built on the geographic literature of humanism, within an encyclopedic-allegorical context”²⁶ and personified by women with standardized attributes, is illustrated by figures such as *Germania im Dienst des Kaisers*—an allegorical figure placed under Charles V's portrait engraved by Enea Vico (1550),²⁷ *Qyiqvnx Polonia*—a bas-relief by Bernardo Morando on the Old Lublin Gate in Zamość (1588), or *Italia turrita*, seated on a globe and holding a scepter and a cornucopia—in Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* (first illustrated edition, 1603).²⁸ Malcolm Jones has also brought to my attention William Hole's *Great Britaine* on the title page of *Poly-Olbion* (1612), and the same engraver's title page to *Coryat's Crudities* (1611), with the author's portrait surrounded by three women symbolizing France, Germany and Italy, the latter wearing the same courtesan's corset-dress as Venus wears in the “Four Nations” engravings, and displaying the famous horned hairstyle.²⁹

In this context, Hans von Aachen's designs of the *QVATVOR EVROPAE NATIONES*, each symbolized by two Classical gods, seem to be a rare, if not a unique theme in Central European Mannerist art. These “emblematical motifs” were reproduced on Peter Overadt's maps (1598), also embellished with portraits and verses:³⁰ *ITALIA TOTIVS EVROPAE BRACHIV[M]*, with the portrait of *CLEMENS VIII PAPA FLORENTINVS*; *GERMANIA TOTIVS EUROPAE REGNVM*—with *INVICTISSIMUS RUDOLPHUS II D. G. ROMAN IMPERATUR SEMPRES AVGUSTUS*; *GALLIA*—with *HENRICVVS IIII DEI GRATIAE FRANCLAE GALLIAE ET NAVARRE REX CHRISTI*; and *HISPANIA REGNVM*, with *PHILIPPVS D. G. HISPANIARVM. INDIARVM, NEAP. SICIL. HIEROSOL. ETC. REX CATHOLICVS*. The maps themselves were copied after Gerhardt Mercator (1554), with the exception of Spain, which reproduces Abraham Ortelius' *Regni Hispaniae* (1570). As the arms of each nation were represented on the left hand side of the maps, the central trees supporting the escutcheons in the “Four Nations” engravings have been removed.

Hans von Aachen's drawings were freely interpreted by Giacomo Franco and Alessandro Fabri (with Italian verses—end of the sixteenth century),³¹ by Robert Boissard (before 1603)³² and Pierre Firens (before 1625),³³ while the Latin epigrams were transcribed by Sigmund von Birken for the Nuremberg print-publisher, Paul Fürst (1652).³⁴

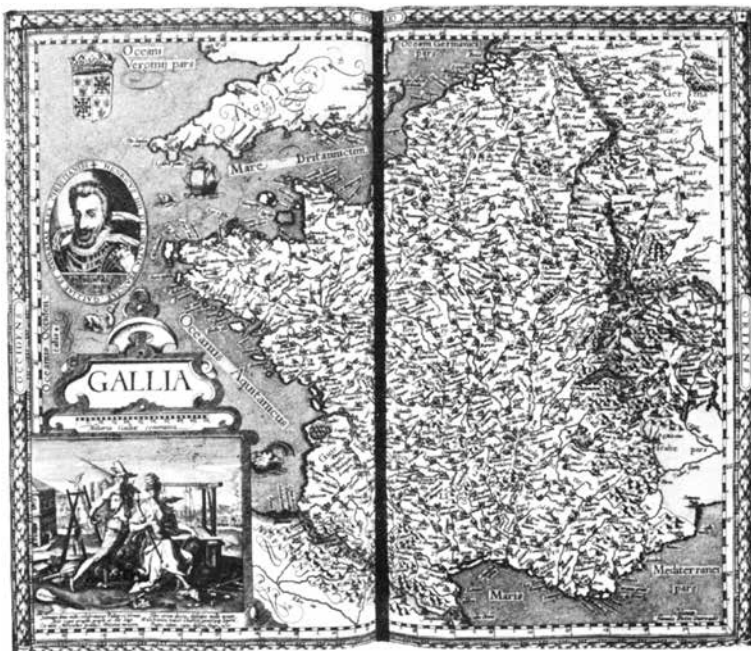


FIG. 7. *GALLIA*, map by Peter Overadt (1598), including Hans von Aachen's motif of *FRANCIA*, in the *QVATVOR EVROPAE NATIONES* (c. 1594), engraved by Jan and Raphael Sadeler, W. R. Streitberger, "Five Rare Maps: Peter Overadt's 'Italy,' 'France,' 'Germany,' and 'Spain' (1598); and Peter van den Keere's 'England' (c. 1600)," *Imago Mundi*, 2nd ser., 27, 1 (1975): 48, fig. 2.
SOURCE: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1150572>.

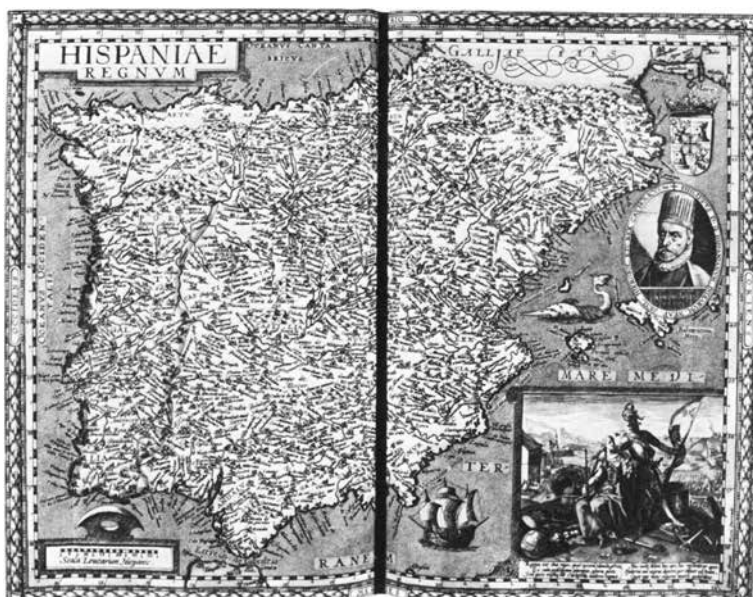


FIG. 8. *HISPANIA REGNUM*, map by Peter Overadt (1598), with Hans von Aachen's motif of *HISPANIA*, in the *QVATVOR EVROPAE NATIONES* (c. 1594), *ibid.*, 49, fig. 4.

THE ONLY painter linked to the city of Braşov in the early decades of the seventeenth century, when the “European Nations” murals are datable, is János Brassai Képiró, as mentioned in the Hungarian documents, a German painter who was recorded as twice travelling through the city of Cluj, in the summer of 1629, from the site of the princely castle in Oradea to Cetatea de Baltă, at the invitation of Gabriel Bethlen’s brother, Stephen Bethlen, himself prince for a very short time, in 1630.³⁵ An artist of sufficient stature to be appreciated by the Transylvanian princes could well be the author of the Braşov “Four Nations,” the only known representation of the motif derived from Hans van Aachen’s designs in European mural painting.

The then owner of the house, who chose the models for the paintings, is not known, as archival research takes us back no further than approximately a century after the murals were done. Gernot Nussbächer identified the earliest known owner as Johannes Albrich (1687–1749), city physician from 1715, senator from 1729, and author of such works as *Observationes de peste Barcensi in Transilvania annorum 1718 et 1719, praesertim Coronae saeviter grassatae* and *Palladium Coronense*, a collection of City Privileges.³⁶ Albrich would have been responsible for the interventions from 1720, when other further works altered the house, after the previous medieval and premodern phases. Several new spaces were added in the rear of the house, comprising a vestibule with two small cross-vaulted bays adorned with flowers in relief at the center, opening onto the back yard, with window- and doorframes of very friable sandstone, now extremely degraded. The door lintel indicates the year of execution—1720—on the central cartouche.

After the Albrich family (1713–1777), the house was the property of the Hiemesch family (1777–1824), who also owned the neighboring building next to the Black Church, and who unified the ground floor spaces. Starting in 1824, Petrus Giesel, the owner of both houses, gave the façades a Classicist appearance, with the portico completely hidden by the new masonry, as seen in the 1848 drawing of Eduard Hulverding, displayed today in the Museum of Urban Civilization in Braşov.³⁷ Since then, the ground floor openings to the square have undergone minor alterations, as can be seen in the photographs in the Stenner Collection (c. 1875, Archiv und Bibliothek der Honterusgemeinde, Braşov). In 1872, the two houses became the property of Senator Joseph Trautsch, and subsequently of his heirs, the Pleckers von Pleckersfeld, who finally donated them to the Peter Czeides Foundation of the Evangelical Church of Braşov, in 1905. The restoration works ended in 2013, with the final phase coordinated by the architect Johannes Bertleff.

THE MURAL paintings discovered and restored in the principal room of the ground floor of the house at no. 16 Town Hall Square in Braşov, in the middle of the former so-called Short Row, represent one of the most valuable premodern ensembles in Transylvania, with floral decorations on the vaults and unique figural compositions on the west wall representing the “European Nations,” the only example of murals inspired by Hans von Aachen’s *QVATVOR EVROPAE NATIONES* drawings engraved by Jan and Raphael Sadeler (c. 1594) known in monumental European Mannerist art.

The ensemble commissioned by the rich members of the Transylvanian Saxon urban elite who owned the house in Braşov, together with the painted decoration of the same era preserved in the centers of other cities, such as Sibiu and Sighişoara, completes the lesser-known chapter of the history of art in Transylvania, from the early decades of the seventeenth century. □

Notes

1. Dana Jenei, *Renaşterea transilvăneană—identitate culturală în context european* (Bucharest, 2013), 113–134; ead., “Pictura murală din Transilvania Renaşterii în secolele XVI–XVII,” in *Arta din România din preistorie în contemporaneitate*, vol. 1, edited by Răzvan Theodorescu and Marius Porumb (Bucharest–Cluj-Napoca, 2018), 611–622.
2. Dana Jenei, “Casele din Piaţa Sfatului nr. 15–16 din Braşov: Studiu de istoria artei în vederea restaurării,” mss. (Braşov, 1990–2011), Archives of Romanian National Heritage Institute (INP), coll. DMASI (Direction of Monuments, Ensembles and Historical Sites), Bucharest, with the information of the report used by several authors without acknowledgements; ead., *Renaşterea transilvăneană*, 114–117, with the names of the three houses according to the List of Historical Monuments in Romania: Closius-Hiemesch-Giesel; ead., “Pictura murală din Transilvania Renaşterii,” 620.
3. Erich Jekelius, “Kronstadts Gassen und Plätze,” in *Das Burzenland*, vol. 3, pt. 1 (Kronstadt, 1928), 28.
4. The middle and west houses have the same number, 16, as they were the property of a sole owner since the end of the eighteenth century; the so-called Hiemesch-Giesel Houses (as they are mentioned in the List of Monuments of Romania), or Albrich-Hiemesch (after their first known owners), were part of the *Chatarina* quarter, while the east Closius House, at no. 15, belonged to the *Corpus Christi* quarter. Gernot Nussbächer, “Documentaţie istorică preliminară privind complexul de clădiri ‘Turist’ din Braşov, Piaţa Sfatului nr. 15–16,” mss. (Braşov, 1991–1993), INP Archives, coll. DMASI Bucharest.
5. Dana Jenei, “Casele din Piaţa Sfatului nr. 15–16 din Braşov,” *Renovatio: Foaia monumentelor istorice şi de artă* (Bucharest) 11–12 (1991): 5. In the second part of the

sixteenth century, important works were undertaken in all three houses, built in a *Nachbarschaft* system, and characterized by an oblong plan with the rooms disposed longitudinally, an upper level covering the ground floor and the passageway, and an open portico on stone pillars built onto the square, similar to the house in Sibiu, Piața Mică no. 26 (1568), which in the case of the middle house was preserved only in front of the passageway. Here the access was marked by a rectangular carved stone doorframe, of the type most commonly found in the Transylvanian Renaissance, but altered by the construction of the later vaults of the passageway. Another carved stone doorframe of the same date was found dismantled in the filling of the basement of the house next to the Black Church (1566).

6. Enrico Parlato, “Hermathena nelle Imagini di Vincenzo Cartari e nei libri illustrati del secondo Cinquecento,” in *Vincenzo Cartari e le direzioni del Mito nel Cinquecento*, edited by Sonia Maffei (Rome, 2013), 233–236. Among the representations of the motif in the second half of the sixteenth century are Fulvio Orsini’s *Imagines et elogia* (1570) and an illustration by Bolognino Zaltieri (1571).
7. <https://archive.org/stream/achillisbocchiib00boc#page/216/mode/1up>, with the motto: *SAPIENTUM MODESTIA, PROGRESSIO ELOQUENTIUM, FELICITATEM HAEC PERFICIT.*
8. <https://archive.org/stream/leimpreseillustr00rusc#page/284/mode/2up>.
9. <http://www.kulturpool.at/plugins/kulturpool/showitem.action?itemId=4295030730&kupoContext=default>. The inscription, *Me duce perficies tu modo progredere*, is taken from Bocchi’s plate, and shows the Italian source of inspiration.
10. https://research.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=3576517&page=1&partId=1&peoA=138246-2-23&people=138246. Joachim Jacobi (comp.), Ger Luijten, and Robert Zijlma, eds., *The New Hollstein German Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts 1400–1700*, vol. 1 (Rotterdam, 1996), 121–127, nos. 48–51.
11. The source of the representation in Brașov is not Cesare Ripa’s *Iconologia*, as János Fehér erroneously stated in *Az olaszteleki Daniel-kastély es 17. századi falképei* (Olasztelek, 2016), 150, and who, in the Romanian-English edition, pp. 146–147, took the information regarding paintings in houses in Brașov, Sibiu and Sighișoara without citing my book, *Renașterea transilvăneană*, 113–134.
12. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_2013-7090-3.
13. Of the kind of Ruscelli’s *Imprese illustre* (1566): <https://archive.org/details/leimpreseillustr00rusc/mode/2up>.
14. Before finding the graphic source, I considered the goddess to be Venus.
15. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_2013-7090-4. Lettered within the image with production details: *R. S. scalp [sic]: excud: Monachy. cu[m] priv: S. Caes: Maiest: Joan. ab Ach figur:.*
16. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_2013-7090-1. Lettered within the image with production details: *Cu[m] priu: S. Caes: M:Ioan. Sadeler sc. J. ab Ach fig.*
17. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_2013-7090-2. Lettered within the image with production details: *Sereniss: Bavar: Ducis chalcog: I.S. scalp [sic]: et excud: Monachy. Joa[n] ab Ach / Colonies figur.*

18. Rodney Shirley, "Allegorical Images of Europe in Some Atlas Titlepages, Frontispieces, and Map Cartouches," *Belgeo: Belgian Journal of Geography* 3–4 (2008): 341–354, <https://doi.org/10.4000/belgeo.8811>.
19. Peter Meurer, "Europa Regina: 16th Century Maps of Europe in the Form of a Queen," *Belgeo: Belgian Journal of Geography* 3–4 (2008): 355–370, <https://doi.org/10.4000/belgeo.7711>. The author dates the first posthumous edition of Sebastian Münster's *Cosmography* containing the *Europa Regina* map in 1588. Other anthropomorphic maps are signed by Heinrich Bünting and Matthias Quad in 1587.
20. Ellen R. Welch, "Picturing Europe," *Journal 18: A Journal of Eighteenth-Century Art and Culture* (May 2017), <http://www.journal18.org/1812>.
21. <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/RP-P-BI-6063>.
22. https://research.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?assetId=232574001&objectId=1667551&partId=1.
23. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/370219>; https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=ocsQcOQLh5MC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Cesare+Ripa&redir_esc=y&hl=en#v=onepage&q=Cesare%20Ripa&f=false, 304 and 418.
24. <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2016/travel-atlases-maps-natural-history-116405/lot.121.html>.
25. Shirley, fig. 5.
26. Rainer Schoch, "Germania," *RDK Labor* (2014), <http://www.rdklabor.de/wiki/Germania>.
27. Ibid. An earlier personification of *Germania* by Albrecht Altdorfer und Werkstatt: *Das Reich Germaniae* (1512/15).
28. Ursula E. Koch, "Allégories féminines de la nation," in *Encyclopédie pour une Histoire Nouvelle de l'Europe*, accessed 27 March 2020, <http://ehne.fr/en/node/2618>; [https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Polonia_\(personification\)](https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Polonia_(personification)).
29. Malcolm Jones, *The Print in Early Modern England: An Historical Oversight* (London, 2010), 84. See also Conraad Goltzius' series of the *Months of the Year in the Habits of Twelve Nations* (1595), copied in the early 1620s by Robert Vaughan, *ibid.*, 44. I thank Malcolm Jones for the suggested analogies and for the revision of the text.
30. W. R. Streitberger, "Five Rare Maps: Peter Overadt's 'Italy,' 'France,' 'Germany,' and 'Spain' (1598); and Peter van den Keere's 'England' (c. 1600)," *Imago Mundi*, 2nd ser., 27, 1 (1975): 47–51, accessed 29 March 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1150572>.
31. Chiara Stefani, "Giacomo Franco," *Print Quarterly* 10, 3 (1993): 273, respectively <https://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/Details/Index/1020722>. The Italian editions have a vertical format, but they do not include the coats-of-arms of the nations in Sadeler's engravings, also depicted in the murals of Braşov. An edition with the verses translated into Italian by G. A. Bianchino is also mentioned on the British Museum's website: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_2013-7090-1.
32. Lettered within the image with *Ioan ab Ach Colonios figuravit / Robert Bossart scalpesit [sic]*: <https://www.boijmans.nl/en/collection/artworks/151723/allegory-of-italy>.

33. Lettered within the image with *Petrus Firens excud / J ab ach fig*, <http://diglib.hab.de?grafik=22-1-geom-00384>. <http://diglib.hab.de?grafik=22-1-geom-00385>.
34. Klaus Garber, Christoph Hendel, and Hartmut Laufhütte, eds., *Stigmund von Birken: Werke und Korrespondenz*, vol. 2, *Birken-Wälder*, pt. 2, *Apparate und Kommentare* (Berlin–Boston, 2014), 704–705. The Italy epigram appears in a later poem by Genesius Golt (Leontius von Eggs), in *Oestrum Poëticum Ephemericum* (Munich, 1712): <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=ElhEAAAACAAJ&pg=PA332&lpg=PA332&dq>. The collection of the information concerning the history of the motif in premodern Europe could not have been made without the contribution of Malcolm Jones, Rhoda Eitel-Porter and Michael Bury, to whom I express my gratitude.
35. Jolán Balogh, *Varadinum: Várad vára* (Budapest, 1982), vol. 1: 61; vol. 2: 150–154.
36. <http://forumkronstadt.ro/kultur/kronstaedter-persoenlichkeiten/#c1693>. Albrich studied medicine in Halle and Leiden (from 1706), obtained a doctoral degree in Utrecht (1709), and was a member of the city council during the most serious outbreak of plague in Braşov and Burzenland, in 1718–1719. In 1740, he became a member of the Leopoldine Academy of Science under the pseudonym Chrysippus III.
37. The stone slab embedded outside the opposite east side wall is incised with the date 1835 and not 1635, as some authors have mistakenly written, and it actually refers to the neighboring Closius House.

Abstract

EVROPAE NATIONES: Allegories Painted in a House in Braşov in the Early Seventeenth Century

The present study analyses the premodern wall paintings discovered and restored in the principal room of the house situated at no. 16 Town Hall Square in Braşov, in the middle of the former Short Row, which are datable to the early decades of the seventeenth century. Two fragmentary figurative panels with mythological figures are preserved on the west wall, and vegetal decoration on the vaults, with flowers painted perpendicularly to the edges, unlike the other regular schemes of the known “Transylvanian Floral Renaissance” murals of the period. The pairs of mythological deities in the panels are derived from the drawings of Hans von Aachen, engraved by Jan and Raphael Sadeler, and represent allegories of the “European Nations” (c. 1594). Hermes and Athena (who usually make up the composite alchemical motif *Hermathena* in Mannerist art), have here a different meaning and symbolize France, while Juno and Mars represent Spain. The other two motifs of Hans von Aachen’s series, Italy and Germany, may have been shown on the opposite eastern wall, but they were probably destroyed by the later works which remodeled the house. This ensemble commissioned by the rich members of the Transylvanian Saxon urban elite who owned the house is the only example of murals inspired by Hans van Aachen’s *QVATVOR EVROPAE NATIONES* (c. 1594) known today in monumental European art.

Keywords

Transylvania, Braşov, mural painting, *QVATVOR EVROPAE NATIONES*, “Four European Nations,” Hans von Aachen, Jan and Raphael Sadeler

Space Sacralization in Antiquity

CSABA SZABÓ

The Case Study of Roman Dacia



FIG. 1. Bronze statuette of Artemis Ephesia
SOURCE: Szabó, Ota, and Ciută (2016)
with the confirmation of Dénes Gabler, editor
of *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum
Hungaricae*.

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Introduction

SINCE PREHISTORIC times, humans have been in constant communication with beings endowed with superhuman forces, known as gods or “not unquestionably plausible divine agents.”¹ The past of the objectified religion(s) and figurative divine agents goes far beyond the temporal dimensions of written history and institutionalized religion.² Establishing and maintaining religious communication needs not only a constant interaction between human and divine agents,³ but shows also an interdependent relationship between space and its materiality.⁴

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Although van der Leeuw introduced a phenomenology of sacred sites in the 1930s, it was only in the 1970s that the theme of ‘space’ truly developed as a research field within religious studies.⁵ According to Lefebvre, space is dependent on human interaction, and he coined the term of “space production” to describe how space is created, maintained and reproduced by social interaction between human actors.⁶ Subsequently, Foucault developed the idea of simultaneity in space, where spatial transformations coexist within both the human body itself, as well as political and social spaces.⁷ J. Z. Smith later argued that space sacralization is more than the Eliadian duality of “sacred and profane,” emphasizing the imaginary and interconnected aspects of space in religion,⁸ and the fact that the sacralization space produces meaningful places, “sacred spaces.”⁹ J. Z. Smith’s theory of *homo faber* created a human agent that, through dialogue with the divine world, “sacralizes” the profane space through an active, dynamic, transformative process.¹⁰ The sacralization of space is thus not possible without the active role of the human agent: there is no “sacred space” without the creative act of human devotion, verbal transmission, habitual repetition or reinvented traditions.¹¹ However, space sacralization does not end with the creative act itself: its aim is to provide a successful and possibly long-lasting space for the dialogue between the human and divine worlds, so the divine agent also plays a key role in transforming and sacralizing the space. This process involves several tools and strategies.

Based on these theoretical models, along with the paradigmatic works of V. Anttonen¹² which discussed the corporeal and territorial boundaries in religion, K. Knott developed a complex spatial theoretical and methodological approach focusing on five major features: the body, as source of space; the dimensions of space (physical, mental, social); the properties of space (simultaneity, extension); the aspects of space (perceived and lived) and the dynamics of space.¹³ The spatial theory of religion developed by Smith and continued by Knott focuses almost exclusively on space itself, particularly the multidimensionality and the lived, transformative aspect of space in which human agency, as the transformative force, is the crucial element. However, the materiality of religion and the macro-spaces of larger clusters (cities, states, economic routes, climate, environmental aspects) are neglected in this theoretical model. Moreover, their model also maintains the dichotomy of ‘local’ and ‘global,’¹⁴ although globality, as a methodological tool in historic narratives, has recently been reinterpreted in more fluid terms as ‘glocality.’¹⁵

It is therefore necessary to establish a new spatial taxonomy which goes beyond the paradigm of space as social production to understand the dynamic aspects of space sacralization as a facet of religious competence and strategy at the level of both the individual and the group in Roman religious communica-

tion.¹⁶ Placing the materiality of religion in the scaled nature of sacralization and introducing the large clusters of macro-spaces in the new analytic model can help us to do so.¹⁷

Deep Mapping Space Sacralization: A New Spatial Taxonomy

NEW APPROACHES to the spatiality of religion have developed in the fields of prehistoric and cartographic studies.¹⁸ Understanding prehistoric religion involves the interconnectivity of nature, climate, long distance mobilities and the locality of small groups, with a special focus on the material agency of religion which was the exclusive source of religious communication in this period.¹⁹ P. Biehl and F. Bertemes have produced a complex space taxonomy of religion, which included not only the human and material agency of religious communication, but also large geographic and natural clusters, such as rivers, commercial routes, and social hierarchies.²⁰ This model has unfortunately remained neglected by classical archaeology and religious studies scholars, who often fail to engage with disciplinary metahistories.²¹ Instead, they have tended to focus on the architectural, functional and visual (art-historical, decorative) aspects of the sacred space.²² There are some exceptional cases where the materiality and human agency of religion has been interpreted through a complex spatial theory, such as that established by H. Cancik, where objects and their users are perceived in the physical, social and imagined simultaneity of landscapes.²³

Combining the Lived Ancient Religion (LAR) approach²⁴ with David Clarke's space archaeology and systemic model of past societies²⁵ evokes the theoretical framework proposed by Biehl and gives a complex framework which goes beyond the previous space-models in religious studies.²⁶ The LAR approach—currently the leading theoretical approach in Roman religious studies—focuses on the role of agency, individual choices and modes of religiosity, but pays little interest to the spatial aspects of religion.²⁷ As Biehl's and Cancik's model has shown, space sacralization is not only a product of human interaction but is interconnected with material agency, the natural landscape, and socio-political and economic structures (fig. 2). A systemic model of space sacralization—similar to the paradigmatic deep maps in cartography²⁸—aims to unite hierarchies of spaces with levels of religious intensity, appropriations and simultaneity where human and material agencies are interconnected and in constant dialogue with divine powers (gods). In this active, living, transforming and creative act of dialogue between human and divine, the materiality of religion and their hierarchy

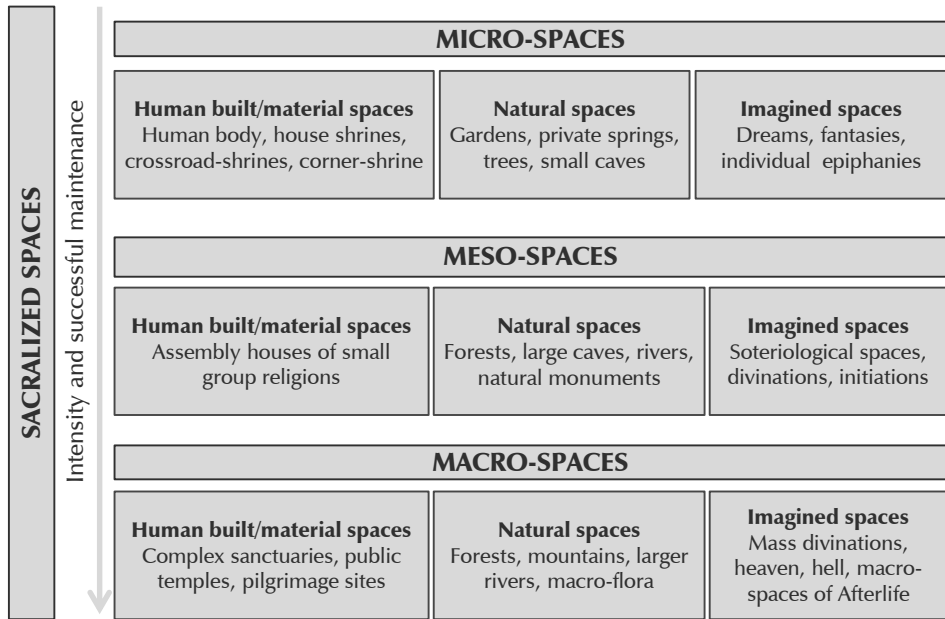


FIG. 2. Taxonomy of space sacralization
 SOURCE: author.

plays a very important role. The inner dynamics of the four major components of space sacralization (divine agency, human agency, space itself, and materiality of religion) is also influenced by macro-spaces, such as the city (citification of religion), climate changes, economic routes, military interventions, medical and public health issues (such as pandemics) and larger administrative or financial units, such as provinces, routes or customs systems. Within this network, accessibility, personal choice and the intensity of religious experience is crucial: this reflects the simultaneous co-existence of private and public, sacred and profane and the three major spatial categories are often overlapping as the following case studies will show.

In this theoretical framework of a new space taxonomy of religious communication, the material evidence of Roman religion in a provincial context can no longer be referred to as “peripheral” or “local”: the interconnectivity of individuals in micro-, meso- and macro-spaces and their omnipresence in larger clusters within the Roman Empire creates a glocalised spatial network.²⁹ Here I will discuss this space taxonomy and apply it to the case study of Roman Dacia, focusing not only on the general and global aspects, but also on particular glocal facets of space sacralization in this new context of space taxonomy.

Space Sacralization and Materiality of Religion in Roman Dacia

UNDER THE Emperor Trajan (98–117), the Roman Empire expanded far beyond the natural borders of the *Orbis Romanus*.³⁰ Among the most important of these new conquests was the Kingdom of Dacia,³¹ which subsequently remained part of the Roman Empire for nearly 170 years. During this period, the province became a true cultural bricolage thanks to the imperial trade, road networks and military dislocations. This is attested to not only by the social diversity evident in Dacia, but also by the material evidence relating to religious practices in the province, including nearly 1,600 inscriptions dating to between AD 106 and 271 which were erected in around 140 sacralized spaces.³² Of these 140 spaces, 54 have been discovered through archaeological excavations, 19 are attested epigraphically, and the remaining 67 have been identified via artifact assemblages discovered in the 18th–19th centuries.³³ After 150 years of research history and the discovery of more than 3,000 artifacts in 140 archaeological contexts, the paradigmatic question is: how do we analyze this corpus of material attesting to religious communication in Roman Dacia?

Romanian literature—following a classical, positivistic tendency in Roman provincial archaeology taken from the 19th century German tradition—has traditionally focused on the descriptive and quantitative analysis of these materials. Many of the archaeological materials that had been used for religious communication were published in archaeological catalogues, typologies, and art history albums.³⁴ In these cases, the objects are only presented as tools, to establish chronological sequences, for prosopographic studies, or in the discussion of architectural/statuary decorations in a Winckelmannian tradition. By contrast, the material and spatial turn, which has had a significant impact on post-processualist approaches to archaeology,³⁵ has until recently been largely neglected in Central-Eastern European historiography. Recent discussions regarding sacred sites in pre-Roman Romania opened a new tendency in this region as well.³⁶ In the case of Dacia, recent studies have concentrated on “spiritual interferences” and the role of divine agency in religious syncretism.³⁷

By giving special attention to the social agency of objects and the creative act of space sacralization as a facet of lived religious communication, new insights on the archaeological heritage of Roman Dacia can be obtained. Using the abovementioned space taxonomy of micro-, meso- and macro-spaces and their interconnectivity with material, human and divine agents we can understand the local specificities and glocal aspects of Roman religion in Dacia.

Naturally, Roman Dacia would have contained the most intimate dimensions of space sacralization: the human body itself. The sacralization of this

the space could be performed by marking signs on the skin (tattoos, writings, figurative marks, wounds, cuts, mutilations), or through dances, songs and outdoor processions and neurobiological processes caused by religious ecstasy.³⁸ This level of sacralization is unfortunately not well-attested in the archaeological record: the role of religion and belief in the funerary practices of Dacia has not yet been significantly studied, although this approach can give us valuable insights on individual, macro-religious appropriations and strategies of religious communication.³⁹ One example could have been the tomb of a priest of Jupiter Dolichenus identified at Ampelum (Zlatna) in the 1980s, but only the funerary stone is preserved.⁴⁰ Additionally, small portable objects, vestments and physical aspects of agents in religious communication are attested without figurative representations or archaeological contexts.

A high degree of religious individualism is also attested by the so-called domestic spaces (house shrines, corner shrines, rooms, corridors, private gardens, cellars, etc.). In order to break with the now much discussed “private-public” dichotomy, I will refer to these spaces as micro-spaces.⁴¹ These micro-spaces provide for the participant a high level of religious individuality,⁴² creativity and spatial coherence. In these cases, religious experience and the various aspects of lived religion can be observed much more easily.⁴³ The material evidence of religious communication in micro-spaces also demonstrates a personalized aspect, also with a high level of individuality in visual narratives. The dense network of sacralized micro-spaces and their close intertwining with the diverse world of meso-spaces has already broken the “private-public” duality in contemporary works on spatial theory.⁴⁴ However, such micro-spaces in which individual religious choices can flourish are not well attested to in Roman Dacia, and studies of domestic spaces have focused almost exclusively on architectural typologies and specificities.⁴⁵ Most of the small finds used in religious communication (bronze and terracotta statuettes, vases, miniature altars) have no documented archaeological context or have not yet been published.

That being said, there are few case studies which can help us reflect on the locality of space sacralization in the micro-spaces of Dacia. One is a beautifully crafted bronze statuette representing Jupiter *in repos en majesté* (h: 12 cm, 15.8 cm with the pedestal) discovered in room no. 5 of the Principia (seat of the legionary commander) in Potaissa (today Turda, Romania). It is the only bronze statuette with a lavishly decorated *postamentum*. The statuette probably originates from the northwestern provinces, as it finds parallels among examples produced in Gaul in the second half of the 1st century AD.⁴⁶ The statuette was discovered in a private room of a high-ranking military officer in one of the largest public buildings of the province, and it not only illustrates the import of imperial high art and classicism in Dacia, but it also provides a particular case

study of a material evidence of religious communication, where micro-space and individualization (the private room of the officer) combine with the visibility and accessibility of the macro-space, as his room was visited by other officers and guests (in this case, the legionary fortress and its Principia).⁴⁷ This statuette may have carried not only the memory of a pre-Roman Dacia and a long lasting familial or personal heritage spanning numerous generations since the 1st century AD, but also served as a symbol of both the wealth and the religious piety of the chief officer, a personal choice of an individual which is impossible to reconstruct at this stage.

Meso-spaces (e.g. assembly houses, synagogues, small group religious meeting places, spelaeum, Mithraea, springs etc.) have a much stronger social coherence, uniting numerous individuals in the same place, serving as a dynamic physical, visual and imaginary agent (thirdspace) in religious hierarchies and new social structures.⁴⁸ Architectural atmosphere and visuality play a secondary function in these spaces, although the layout of the assembly houses could play an important role in the social cohesion of small group religions.⁴⁹ These places tended to be occupied for only a short period of perhaps one or two generations, with their longevity and maintenance dependent on charismatic religious leaders and the so-called critical phase of small group religions (i.e., when they expand from familial and personal networks into larger groups and social clusters),⁵⁰ although most of these spaces were abandoned before this phase. Roman Dacia is particularly rich in this regard, with a significant number of the 140 sacralized spaces falling into to this category.⁵¹ The popularity of these meso-spaces in Roman Dacia is linked to the many who arrived in the new province following its annexation in AD 106, including active or former soldiers, as well as individuals and organizations connected to Dacia's economic development. These small group religions represent not only the most powerful religious networks (especially Mithraic, Bacchic groups), but also had an important impact on the political and economic networks of the province and beyond.

In Dacia, the vast majority of the sacralized meso-spaces have been found in urban environments, primarily in the two largest cities of the province: Apulum and Sarmizegetusa. These were small buildings, with only several rooms, which usually included a separate kitchen and banquet spaces that could house groups of 10 to 30 people.⁵² These small religious groups usually originated from Asia Minor, Dalmatia, or Syria, but often we also find Thracian groups in such spaces. In some fortunate cases, a list of community members has also survived, such as the *album* of the Syrian group from Sarmizegetusa.⁵³

These sacralized meso-spaces have received little attention from scholars. Mithraea (sanctuaries dedicated to Mithras) provide special case studies on meso-spaces, where the inner geography of the sanctuary plays an important role



FIG. 3. Torso of Cautes
with bucranium from Apulum.
SOURCE: author.

and is part of the religious knowledge of the cult. Of the 20 Mithraea identified in the province, only 4 have been excavated, the most recent one in 2008 and 2013–2016.⁵⁴ The rich material evidence related to the cult that has emerged from these sanctuaries reflects not only the wealth and connectivity of the members among the local (urban and provincial) elite, but also the extra-provincial financial networks. Many members of the Mithraic groups active in Apulum, Sarmizegetusa, and Micia were part of the staff of the customs system of the *publicum Portorii Illyrici*, the largest economic cluster in the Danubian area of the empire.⁵⁵ Meso-spaces used by these wealthy and influential groups provided unique opportunities for changing and transforming

the visual language of a religion. As a result, the meso-spaces used by Mithraic groups in Dacia created several unique representations of the Mithras myth. One of them is a rare representation of Cautes, a torchbearer of Mithras, who is usually represented as a young male figure in Persianized vestment with a torch in his hand. In some examples from Roman Dacia, the appearance of Cautes has been altered and he appears as a young, beardless person holding the head of a bull (Cautes with bucranium, fig. 3). This iconographic innovation only appears 5 times in the Roman Empire, with examples found at Sarmizegetusa, Apulum, and Boppard (the ancient Bodobriga), suggesting a direct connection between the Mithraic groups in these settlements of Dacia and Germania Superior.⁵⁶ The mobility of innovative ideas carried by groups and individuals indicates the importance of social cohesion among the religious meso-spaces in the Roman Empire, which represented one of the major results of the citification of Roman religion.⁵⁷ Indeed, most of the votive material in the province of Roman Dacia was produced in the meso-spaces of small group religions.

Macro-spaces (e.g., complex sanctuaries, healing shrines, pilgrimage sites, mountains, forests, etc.) represent the most successful case studies. Such places are maintained through the intense investment of financial and human resources and represent significant concentrations of religious experience, knowledge, and

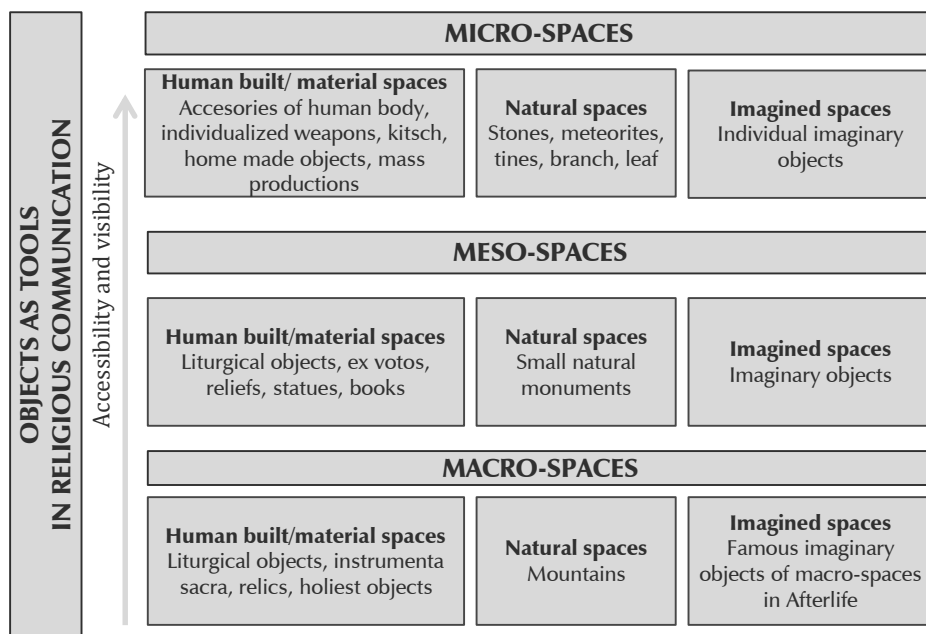


FIG. 4. Hierarchy of objects and their spatial taxonomy
 SOURCE: author.

personnel.⁵⁸ Sacralized macro-spaces also tend to have a *longue-durée* existence that relies on religious pilgrimage, monopolization of religious knowledge and divine agencies (central sanctuaries, temples, shrines of religious founders, oracular sanctuaries). In these cases, architecture, visual narratives and monumentality, religious traditions and the memory of the sacred all play crucial roles in the production and maintenance of the sacralized space.⁵⁹ The successful survival of these sacralized spaces is dependent of the ongoing communication between humans and the divine and the materiality of religion used as tools in all of the abovementioned locations (fig. 4). These spatial categories are highly interconnected across natural, rural and urban environments, each of them having a direct impact on the transformations occurring in religious practices.⁶⁰ Larger spatial units, such as provinces or even macro-economic, political or geographical clusters (e.g., the Amber and Silk Roads, maritime routes, *publicum portorii Illyrici*) also have an indirect but visible impact on the movement of objects and religious groups between places and the sacralization space (fig. 5).⁶¹ In macro-spaces, religious knowledge and experience are controlled, while the accessibility and visibility of the sacred is dependent on a strict hierarchy of religious specialists (*sacerdotes*, priestly *collegia*).

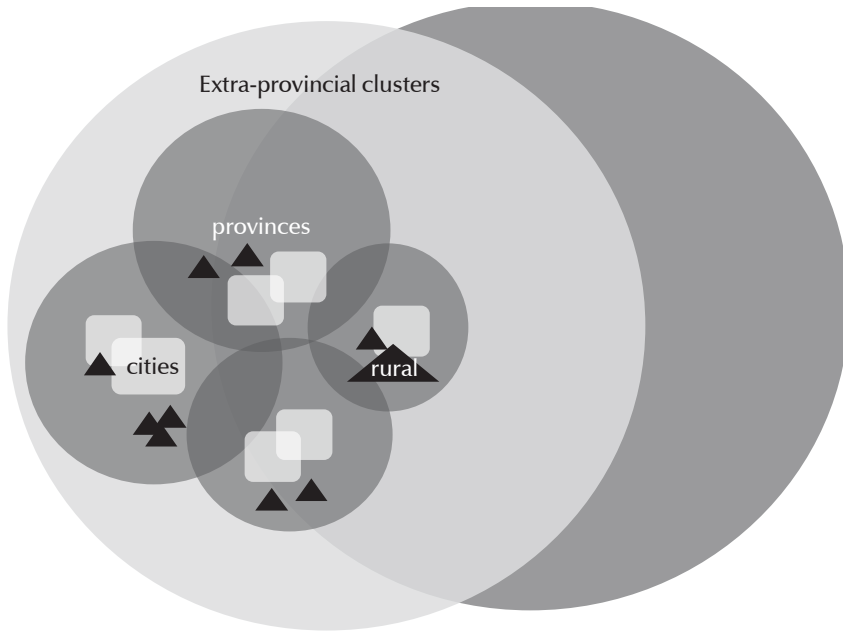


FIG. 5. Macro-structures as spatial factors in religious communication
SOURCE: author.

There are few well-attested sacralised macro-spaces in Dacia. Most notable among these are the Asklepieia, the healing sanctuaries which appear almost exclusively in urban environments (e.g., Apulum, Sarmizegetusa, and Ampelum). The best-preserved macro-space and complex sanctuary lies in the so-called Area Sacra (sacred area) in the *extra-muros* of Sarmizegetusa.⁶² This healing complex had at least three construction phases, which suggests—similarly to the case of Apulum—a constant economic and human investment. The first phase, dated to the end of the 2nd century AD, entails an irregular structure with multiple compartments. It is possible that in this phase the structures had another function and did not serve as a sanctuary. In the second phase (early 3rd century AD) the wall of the sacred precinct was constructed. This demarcated the *temenos* of the macro-space and established the liminality of the site: walls not only separated the sacred from the profane, but also protected the visitors and the sick from the rest of the world. The macro-spaces of Asklepieia are usually well-defined religious zones in Roman urban topography: their insularity is represented by natural islands (the Asklepieion of Rome on the Tiber) or walled *temenos* in watery environments.⁶³ The Asklepieia were special buildings, where the three categories of space sacralization came together: their macro-spatial aspect is re-

flected by the massive investment of the local elite and the monumentalization of the building complex. In the Asklepieion of Sarmizegetusa, a great number of statuettes, reliefs and mass-produced terracotta objects were found, along with almost 1,400 lamps, which also ensured the successful maintenance of the sacralized space.⁶⁴ Sick individuals who visited the sanctuary served as micro-spaces via the ritual of incubation, with the human bodies inside the Asklepieion becoming agents of religious communication.⁶⁵ After staying in the healing sanctuary for several days, these individuals would become a coherent group, united by their common medical issue and physical pain, which had the same religious grouping effect as small group religions operating in meso-spaces. Subsequently, the successful religious communication that occurred in these healing sanctuaries was materialized in altars, reliefs or terracotta objects representing body parts, which were then displayed as memories of divine encounters in the *temenos*. Moreover, news of successful religious communication was carried outside of the Asklepieion by worshippers who would speak favorably of the divinity.

It is important to state that these three major categories of space sacralization are modern, artificial concepts. Mapping religious experience and lived religious communication, where human, material and divine agencies are in constant interaction and interconnectivity, is much more complex than creating a hierarchical system of spaces and objects. Religious communication in antiquity was also limited and controlled by legal aspects, religious specialists and traditions. In many cases, the micro-space of an individual is experienced within a macro-space, while in complex spatial environments, especially in cities, spaces of sacralization co-exist in multiple levels and forms. In the remainder of this article, I will discuss two case studies from Roman Dacia where the multi-spatiality of religious communication is well-attested by both small portable objects and monumentalized spaces.

A small bronze statuette used by an individual in a micro-space (domestic environment) was discovered in 2006 on the territory of the *colonia Aurelia Apulensis*, one of the largest Roman conurbations in the Danubian provinces.⁶⁶ The small bronze statuette (10.4 cm) represents Artemis Ephesia, the great goddess of Ephesus, one of the most important pilgrimage sites of Asia Minor. The rare, miniature representation of the central statue of Artemis Ephesia was probably the result of mass production at the sanctuary in Ephesus, which carried the memory of a journey between Asia Minor and Dacia. The statuette therefore held a very special, intimate meaning for its owner and was more than just a bronze statuette and a material tool of religious communication in a micro-space (lararium, house shrine). The small object represented the materialized memory and imaginary macro-space of the 1,500–1,800 km-long voyage between Apulum and Ephesus, which took at least 29 (by sea) or 49 days in Roman times

(fig. 1).⁶⁷ It also carries the memorization of the macro-space, the grand temple of Artemis in Ephesus: the temple was represented on the *corona muralis* of the divinity in the form of a monumental temple restored by Hadrian. A small object, used in a moving, constantly changing micro-space also carries the memory—the absent presence—of a sacralized macro-space.

The second example is an inscribed statue base discovered in the 1950s within the Principia of the XIII Gemina legion at Apulum (today Alba Iulia, Romania), and it represents a unique case study for material religion used as an active agent in macro-spaces (in this case: the legionary fortress and the Principia). Votive stone inscriptions (altars or statue bases) of the Roman Empire were usually treated as textual sources for prosopographic studies, and for epigraphic or—rarely—art history analysis. Recently, a paradigmatic shift suggested the complex agency role of these inscribed stones and their environment.⁶⁸ In these cases, where the provenance of the objects is known, the textual resources can tell us a lot about the impact of such objects in a sacralized space. In this context, the votive epigraphic corpus of Dacia (almost 1,550 inscriptions) offers great research possibilities. The following case study represents a great example of how votive inscriptions can unite the material, human and spatial aspects of sacralization. The monument has been identified as a mid-sized statue base that has been rudimentarily done, with an unusually large corona. The statue is again missing and, as in the other case, it seems to be very hard to identify what it represented. The text of the inscription reads:⁶⁹

Dis Penatibus Lari/ibus Militaribus Lari / Viali Neptuno Saluti / Fortunae Reduci / (A)esculapio Dianae / Apollini Herculi / Spei Fa(v)ori P(ublius) Catius / Sabinus trib(unus) mil(itum) / leg(ionis) XIII g(eminæ) v(otum) l(ibens) s(olvit)

The inscription's exact place of discovery is not known but it lay close to the recently discovered Principia.⁷⁰ In comparison with the other inscriptions found near to this location, this is by far the most rudimentary, which might indicate that it was unfinished or ordered urgently. The dedicator is P. Catius Sabinus,⁷¹ a loyal servant of Septimus Severus and his successors, although at the time of his arrival in Apulum c. AD 197 Sabinus was still only a *tribunus legionis XIII Geminae*.⁷² The precise date of the dedication is unknown, but Sabinus' motivation is quite clear: expressing the loyalty of the army, the officers and himself to the recently elected emperor after an extraordinary event, probably the successful return from a war (perhaps the Civil War of AD 193–197 or the Parthian War of AD 198–199). The dedication of this monument could have even taken place as part of a military triumph or for one of the major military festivals of the Feriale Militum.⁷³ In any case, it was a public event with the participation

of all the officers, soldiers and civilians, which emphasized the importance of Sabinus's dedication.

The text itself is very unusual. Crowded with rudimentary lines and letters in a small area (c. 35 × 40 cm) the text refers to 12 divinities and personifications: Dii Penates, Lares militares, Lares viales, Neptunus, Salus, Fortuna Redux, Aesculapius, Diana, Apollo, Hercules, Spes, and Favor.⁷⁴ Bundling numerous personifications and divinities together represents similar needs to the *sive deus dive dea* or *dis deabusque immortalibus* formulae, while also maintaining a traditional, even archaic, nature of worship.⁷⁵ This tendency represents a much elaborated and consciously constructed religious narrative involving Sabinus as part of his familial heritage and religious tradition.⁷⁶ In this sense, the dedication served two roles: a) immortalizing the name and fame of the family of the *Catii* and b) supporting the emperor and raising morale among the soldiers, as was the duty of a young senator in such a position.⁷⁷ Senatorial power is elegantly combined with the religious duty of a loyal military officer in time of crisis. The enumeration of the divinities—similar to a *carmen* or *vota publica*—was not spontaneous, but devised with a particular purpose for special events, such as the *vota annua pro salute Imperatoris* or *vota extraordinaria*. The inscription could be interpreted as a 'thanksgiving' prayer or a ritual 'reaction' and reply to a *vota extraordinaria* in a military context,⁷⁸ a personal thanksgiving of Sabinus and his soldiers who fought with him on the side of the emperor, keeping him and the empire alive. The dual nature (individual and communal) of the prayer-inscription is reflected by the nature of the gods and personifications evoked within it (Italic divinities, some of them, such as Neptune, Hercules, or the Penates appearing in other inscriptions of Sabinus and his family, combined with military divinities, such as the Lares militares). However, this is more than just an individual's list or 'pantheon' of gods with public aspects. It is a sacralized narrative and an immortalized, shorter version of a prayer. The divinity list represents the chronological timeline of a military mission, from leaving home (Dis Penates), under the auspices and protection of the military divinities (Lares militares), travelling on dangerous roads (Lares Viales) and seas (Neptune), then fighting for the health and preservation of the empire (Salus), and escaping from the war with great fortune (Fortuna Redux). The association of Aesculapius–Diana–Apollo can suggest a local characterization from Apulum, where the three divinities were attested in the same healing sanctuary-complex. Their presence on the list emphasizes the importance of healing gods and divinities, probably invoked by soldiers in the *vota extraordinaria* before they left the fort. During their mission soldiers were protected and supported by Hercules, Spes and Favour. The hypothesis that this inscription was an immortalized version of a loudly presented oral prayer is substantiated by Sabinus's personal penchant

for poetic, narrative inscriptions; two dedications made by him at Rome and Ostia also contain a religious narrative as a specific form of prayer.

In summary, although exactly where and why the dedication was made is unknown, the statue base with its small-sized statue was surely installed in the *Principia*, which implies the presence of officers and soldiers as well. The text also suggests a communal act in the name of the whole vexillation. Sabinus' monument is therefore an important and rare example of combining the traditional (Italic) Roman-Senatorial religion with individual and opportunist tendencies in times of crisis.

Conclusions

THIS ARTICLE has sought to provide a brief summary of the concept and changing methodology of sacralization and presented a new space taxonomy, where materiality of religion plays a significant role in creating, shaping and maintaining a large variety of sacralized spaces. These are more than atmospheres, as “realized semantic potential of socio-spatial arrangements which evoke a specific semantic framework,” as Radermacher argued, but active agents and facets of religious communication and glocalization.⁷⁹ In my space taxonomy of space sacralization, human, divine and material agencies are interconnected and shaped by the three major spatial categories which often overlap. This provides a large variety of analytical tools for researchers to understand the complexity of spatial religion and the role of the human, material and divine actors within, breaking some traditional spatial categories, such as “private” or “public” and peripheral or central.

This study has focused on Roman Dacia, a province often labeled in classical literature as “peripheral,” “military,” “ephemeral” or “multicultural.” These traditional socio-economic or cultural categories are also related to the complex notion of Romanization, where religion was a marginal consequence of a political-historical event, such as the conquest of pre-Roman society and its radical transformation. My thesis shows that Roman religious communication in Dacia is more than just a consequence of Romanization: it is the dynamic interaction of individuals and groups in three space categories which often overlap. The case studies I have presented in this study reflect the major characteristics of space sacralization in Dacia. However, micro-spaces of religious communication are less well-attested and in this regard Romanian classical archaeology needs to evolve and further studies will need to focus on domestic architecture, votive small finds, and the promising field of archaeoethnology. The large number of terracotta and bronze statuettes, the few cases of miniature marble statuettes

and curse tablets in Dacia suggest that the province had similar richness in terms of space sacralization and religious communication in micro-spaces to any other provinces of the empire.

A much better-documented category are the meso-spaces of Dacia. Small group religions formed around the cult of Mithras, Liber Pater (Bacchus), Isis-Serapis, Magna Mater, Jupiter Dolichenus and many other divinities (especially home-divinities of the ethnic groups arriving in Dacia) represent a special case of this province. Dacia was particularly rich in small group religions, because the province was formed in the middle of the so called “second paganism,”⁸⁰ a period of elementary religious transformations in the history of Roman religion, which began around the 1st century AD but has its roots in the late Republican era.⁸¹ In AD 106 the major religious changes in the Roman Empire already produced numerous small group religions, and Dacia represented a new macro-space in the topography of a dynamic religious market, where mobile groups, such as the army, the economic elite and the auxiliary groups thereof (miners, merchants, religious specialists, artists) found their new home. The meso-spaces of Roman Dacia offer not only a replication of the religious realities of the Roman Empire but also provide numerous examples of local religious appropriation and re-invented traditions created within the borders of the province. These meso-spaces saw a high level of religious creativity, unique visual languages, and local varieties of centralized religious knowledge. In particular, this is demonstrated by the case of the Dacian Mithraea and their localized iconography.

Finally, the province also provides several examples of sacralized macro-spaces, most notably healing centers such as the Asklepieia, which became local or sometimes regional centers of pilgrimage and religious tourism. The heavy looting of the major sacralized spaces in urban and military environments (e.g., legionary fortresses, palace of the governor, buildings of the Principiae in forts, seats of the procurators or other dignitaries, major urban public temples, etc.) during the medieval period limits what can be ascertained about this area of the Roman Empire, but the overall number of sacralized spaces in the province is above average among the Danubian provinces.⁸² The short existence of the province in the 2nd–3rd centuries (AD 106–271) is the major reason for the extremely large number of votive inscriptions (almost 1,600), with Dacia producing almost twice as many as Raetia or Noricum. However, the majority of materials relating to religion in Dacia (at least 45%) originate from the two major conurbations: the double city of Apulum and the capital of the province, colonia Sarmizegetusa. Subsequently, religious materials from this province were predominantly urban in nature, which highlights the importance of citification in religious communication in global aspect: many of these urban religious groups

were interconnected (especially the Syrian and Dolichenian groups, but also the Mithraic groups) within the province. A few cases also demonstrate extra-provincial mobilities and connections.⁸³

The lack of indigenous religious spaces and their transformation in the new provincial context in Dacia is unusual among the Roman provinces, but this could once again reflect the current state of research and the lack of archaeological investigations in the rural and mountainous areas of Romania.⁸⁴ Additionally, due to the short existence of the province, Dacia also produced little evidence of early Christian activity.⁸⁵ These local specificities do not affect the spatial taxonomy of religious communication in the province, but, on the contrary, they contributed to the more dynamic, explosive nature of material production and to the fast and radical decay of sacralized spaces, abandoned after AD 271.

Dacia provides a great case study on how a politically exceptional history and a geographically specific macro-space can shape and create glocal forms of religious communication and space sacralization. The spatial taxonomy used here as an analytical tool can be a starting point for a more complex digital mapping of the religious communication in the Danubian provinces.⁸⁶



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Abstract

Space Sacralization in Antiquity: The Case Study of Roman Dacia

This article has sought to provide a brief summary of the concept and changing methodology of sacralization and presented a new space taxonomy, where materiality of religion plays a significant role in creating, shaping and maintaining a large variety of sacralized spaces. In my space taxonomy of space sacralization, human, divine and material agencies are interconnected and shaped by the three major spatial categories which often overlap. This provides a large variety of analytical tools for researchers to understand the complexity of spatial religion and the role of the human, material and divine actors within, breaking some traditional spatial categories, such as “private” or “public” and peripheral or central. My thesis shows that Roman religious communication in Dacia is more than just a consequence of Romanization: it is the dynamic interaction of individuals and groups in three space categories which often overlap.

Keywords

space taxonomy of religion, materiality of religion, religious communication, religious experience, Roman Dacia

CONCERTATIO

Extended Control Cycle in Ritual Behavior and Narrative Scenarios

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*“No time could exist before
the appearance of the reality
narrated by the myth.”*

Mircea Valeriu Deaca

Mircea Valeriu Deaca

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1. The Organism and the Environment

Embodiment and Enaction

THE PROPOSITIONS and analyses presented in this study originate from the *embodiment-of-the-mind* hypothesis, i.e., the *enactive* approach in which cognition is the enactment of the world and the mind.¹ The central idea of the embodiment hypothesis is that it is unproductive to dissociate mind and body when we are speaking about mental phenomena. The mind and brain-body support and guide each other. The patterns and processes our body is familiar with are constantly mapped upon the stimuli provided by the world. Humans engage with and grasp patterns and make sense of the surroundings by projecting the body relations and processes they experience at a conscious and unconscious level.² Cognition depends on embodied action whereas meaning is emergent out of the basic-level em-

bodied patterns of interaction. Embodied meaning is linked to the motor and affective engagement with the world.

The functional principle of *emergence* grounds living behavior. The term emergence is often used to refer to the appearance of interesting behavior in systems where several components influence one another reciprocally and via circular causality (Clark 2001: 113–114; Colombetti 2014: 56; Tewes, Durt, and Fuchs 2017: 7). In “dynamic co-emergence” part and whole co-emerge and mutually specify each other (Thompson 2007: 60, 38). Living systems exhibit circular causality. One aspect of the circular causality is displayed by the construction of an emergent behavior of the whole due to the activity of individual components (bottom-up) and the subsequent enslavement or constraint exerted by the whole self-organized system upon the behavior of the components (top-down).

In this framework, the organism and the environment mutually co-specify each other, i.e. the organism enacts an environment inseparable of its own structure and actions (Thompson 2007: 59). Hence, “the boundaries of cognitive systems are nested and multiple—and that, with respect to its study, cognition has no fixed or essential boundaries” (Ramstead et al. 2019: 2). Where to draw the boundaries between mind, body, and environment depends “both on the nature of the phenomenon being investigated and on our explanatory interests” (ibid.).

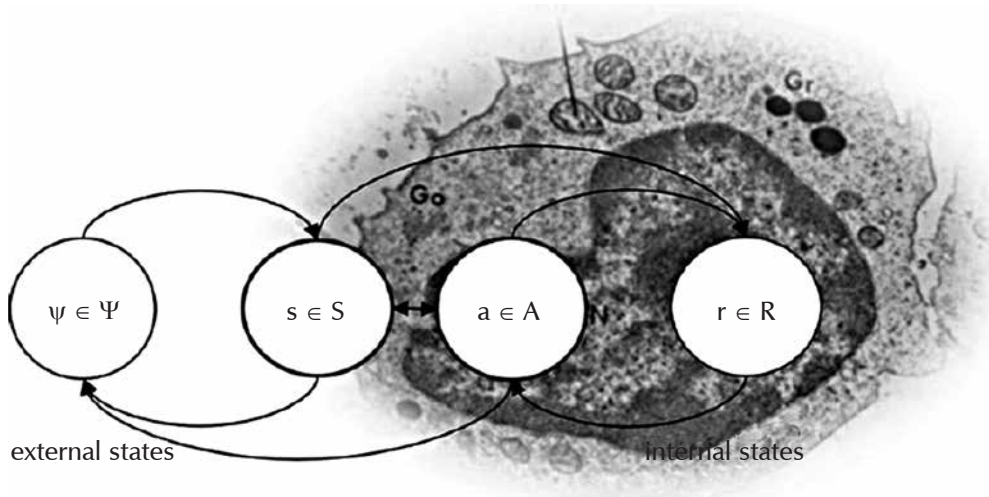
The Free Energy Principle, Active Inference and mbs

ONE SUCH boundary is the *Markov blanket*. The Markov blanket (MB) is composed of the states of a region of a system that mediates the exchange between external and internal states. The MB consists of the states that separate the two and can be further partitioned into active and sensory states. For an embodied nervous system, the active states correspond to effectors and actuators and sensory states to sensory organs. The internal and external states can influence each other only via sensory and active states. The internal and external states are independent (fig. 1).

MBS define the boundary within which processes work to optimize evidence, i.e. self-evidencing dynamics. Evidence is “model” evidence and internal states—in Bayesian statistics—are a model or a “belief” (expectancy) of the external states. Minimization of the “free energy,” i.e., negative model evidence or “surprise,” is a process of model optimization. Minimization of the free energy ensures that entropy is bounded. Any system that possesses an MB can be seen as an “agent” that is optimizing the evidence for its own existence. The internal states and the MB are autonomous. An MB mediates exchanges between the agent organism and the environment (target, *Umwelt*).³ The MB insulates the internal

states of the agent from the direct influence of the external states (Ramstead et al. 2019: 4).

FIG. 1



SOURCES: Friston et al. 2015: 3; Kirchhoff and Kiverstein 2019: 66.

Under the *active inference* scheme—a corollary of the *free energy principle* (FEP)—a collective of MBS can self-assemble into a global system that has a shared MB. These autonomous systems have layers of nested and self-sustaining boundaries (Kirchhoff et al. 2018: 1).

The Bayesian Mechanism and the Model

A *BAYESIAN MECHANISM* grounds the adaptivity of living organisms. Organisms construct—via the establishment of a boundary between an inner region and an outer region—the self and the environment in an act of sense-making. Sense-making becomes, at higher level of cognition, bodily grounded meaning in domains of interaction and in contexts (situations). Consciousness keeps under an emergent order parameter the complex array of neuronal activity. Patterns of activity are kept in check.

The free energy principle (FEP) is a mathematical statement of the fact that living systems act to limit the states (physiological and perceptual) they can find themselves compatible with survival. Hence, organisms act in order to minimize free energy, i.e., entropy and uncertainty or surprise (Friston 2005, 2010, 2013; Friston, Kilner, and Harrison 2006; Veissière et al. 2020).

Any uncategorized stimulus in the environment is sensed as threatening. Valence and arousal of internal states measure the categorization of the “hidden” states of the environment in affective terms.

The organism has a model of the regularities it expects to encounter in the environment and in (phylogenetic and ontogenetic) time the organism becomes a model of its environment, i.e., “regularities in the environment of an organism become embodied in the organism” (Kirchhoff et al. 2018: 4). The organisms are “close to optimal models of their local surroundings, i.e. their niche” (ibid.). The organism embodies the “statistical regularities of its world in its physical and functional composition” (ibid.). On the other hand, the organism is partly responsible for generating the sensory evidence (ibid.). Therefore, “time, agents will come to be the authors of the external states (i.e. environments) that reciprocate with predictable, uncertainty resolving sensory feedback of exactly the right sort to sustain cycles of self-evidencing” (ibid., 5). In simple organisms/systems, internal and external states tend towards synchronization and “mutual information”/“mutual predictability” (Bruineberg, Kiverstein, and Rietveld 2018: 2436). This process “need not be thought of as representational.” The dynamics can be understood as “circular causality,” where “there is no clear difference between internal dynamics attuning to external dynamics and vice versa” (ibid.). In these cases, both systems are “bidirectionally coupled and reduce the disattunement between them until equilibrium (synchronization) is reached” (ibid.). In conclusion, “synchronization is a form of free-energy minimization, which can be given a Bayesian interpretation” (ibid., 2438). This process can be “understood in terms of the coupled dynamics of the system as a whole” (ibid.).

Eddies in Space and Time

IN SOME circumstances MBS include extra-individual features of an organism’s local environment (Kirchhoff et al. 2018: 8; Kirchhoff and Kiverstein 2019: 19). Some organisms incorporate elements of their niche in order to keep a functional area of control. Self-organization as an emergent property can include the organism and parts of the environment. For instance, the spider and its web form an extended MB in which the vibrations in the web can be understood as the sensory observations of the spider.

One particular dynamic pattern grounds the organism’s behavior in the environment. This pattern defines the boundary of an organism in space and in time. The boundaries of the MBS of autonomous systems can be malleable (Kirchhoff et al. 2018: 9). The living entity is not only a thing in space but is equally a process (expanse, flow) in time and, hence, during this process, it can acquire

different shapes and experience different life cycles. A life cycle is a transformation occurring between two states due to a phase transition. Therefore, an entity can experience several sequential mutations (life cycles) during a particular time scale. In this framework, for instance, it is not necessary to describe two entities in the process of cell division from parent cell to sibling cells. The entity is defined by the whole process. The process contains the “death” of the parent cell and the “birth” of the child. At a lower level the death and the birth are two nested life cycles. The superordinate MB is an order parameter, i.e. a global feature of the system that captures the coherency (dependencies) among the parts making it up in an ordered coordinated pattern (ibid., 8).

From the Embodied to the Cultural Domain of Interaction

ACTIVE INFERENCE is informed and depends on the goals and intentions of the agent (Bruineberg, Kiverstein, and Rietveld 2018: 2431). The selection of the goals is done from the perspective of the basic concern of the organism towards improving its grip on the affordances of the environment (ibid.). The attractiveness of relevant affordances has “an affective character” (ibid., 2434). In the context of skilled action and engagement with the world, the main concern of the agent is “what needs to be done” (ibid., 2432). Affordances represent perceptions correlated with possible motor actions, i.e. actions of capture and control (Tewes, Durt, and Fuchs 2017: 3). The significance of an object is connected to a goal-based concept that guides possible action. The goal-concept will dictate the landscape of affordances in a domain of interaction with an environment. The selection of relevant possibilities for action is structured by the agent’s skills and concern. Sensing is inseparable from moving, and the organism acts as to generate the sensory input it expects (Bruineberg, Kiverstein, and Rietveld 2018: 2434).

Cultures and cultural patterns of behavior (generic rules) are internalized by individuals and become constraints internal to the self-organization of an extended cognitive system (Di Paolo and De Jaegher 2017; Kirchhoff and Kiverstein 2019: 22). The cognitive system thus established is constituted by the set of dynamic coordination of the multiple elements of which a cognitive system is composed.

The individual is thus “the loci of coordination,” but the control of its activities is decentralized and distributed among “multiple structured media and practices” (Sutton 2010, p. 213). It is the individual as embedded in a network of practices that is reconfigured in their coupling with the environment. (Kirchhoff and Kiverstein 2019: 22)

Cultural practices guide what an individual attends and how he perceives the world. The system composed by the individual and the separate pattern of stimuli it self-organizes and assembles is “in part based on constraints that come from the symbol-using practice” (Kirchhoff and Kiverstein 2019: 22–23).

Thus, some of the active dynamic processes involved in the process of softly assembling a cognitive system are located beyond the individual agent, in the wider practices in which the individual is nested. (Kirchhoff and Kiverstein 2019: 23)

Predictive coding can also describe cultural exchanges and interaction in terms of control. This suggests that “structuring our worlds [is] genuinely continuous with structuring our brains and sculpting our actions” (Clark 2013: 194). Agents structure their worlds and actions in order to make their predictions come true, and the role of perceptual contact is to check and, when necessary, to “correct the brain’s best guessing concerning what is out there” (ibid., 199–201).

For Ramstead, Veissière, and Kirmayer (2016: 1) culture is formed by “cultural affordances,” i.e., “practices and regimes of shared attention.” Culturally patterned practices modulate the salience of the sensory inputs originating from the world. Hence, individuals immersed in culturally constructed niches can select “to select sensory evidence relative to the individual’s goals and to identify sources with high reliability” (Veissière et al. 2020: 11). Regimes of attention “correspond to the salience or epistemic affordance of sources of cultural information embodied in the epistemic cues of the niche” (ibid.). In his perspective “cultural content and normative practices are built on a foundation of contentless basic mental processes that acquire content through immersive participation of the agent in social practices that regulate joint attention and shared intentionality” (Ramstead, Veissière, and Kirmayer 2016: 1).⁴

Cultural meaning depends on the capacity of the individual agent to exploit social “conventions” (shared values, expectations, norms and moral frames etc.) in order to infer the intentional states of other agents (Ramstead, Veissière, and Kirmayer 2016: 6).⁵ Social norms and conventions are “devices” meant to “reduce mutual uncertainty” (ibid., 16). Generative models are instantiated at different levels and timescales. At lower level, “skilled intentionality” means “contentless direct coping,” and, at the cultural level, it is “symbolically dense and strongly content-involving forms of collectively and conventionally rooted intentionality” (ibid., 14). The agent organism in this framework is a statistical model of its cultural niche (ibid., 10).

In simpler organisms the homeostatic driven control cycle is bound to affect and sentience, i.e., the “protoself” that allows the emergence of the “core self” and “core consciousness,” and in more complex organisms mutual controls al-

low the emergent of the “autobiographical self” that is based on an “extended consciousness” which has “many levels and grades” (see Damasio 1999, 2010, 2018). In this context, the attention mechanism is a process of conscious availability of the state of affairs in which the agent organism is involved.⁶

Cultural practices integrate different agents and their MBS in a network of interactions, e.g., the action states of ones are the sensory states of others (Veissière et al. 2020). The modification of the patterned cultural practices (e.g., people and artifacts) modulates salience of information and facilitates cultural learning. Hence culture can be envisioned as “an extensive process that recruits elements both within the brain and in the shared cultural world (e.g., constructed places and designed artefacts)” (ibid., 11), i.e., an extended MB.

The resulting network of interactions is the field of control of a cultural domain. The cultural self-assembly is similar to multicellular organisms in the sense that its structure is an emergent property of units that “share a common . . . model of organismal form” (Friston and Frith 2015: 1). The external states of one social unit are the active states of another and entail a form of “generalized synchrony.” Uncertainty is resolved when synchrony is achieved. Each individual adjusts its model (generative model) such as the target morphology of the group emerges. The shared cultural organism exhibits a self-modeling process and maintains the integrity of the whole.

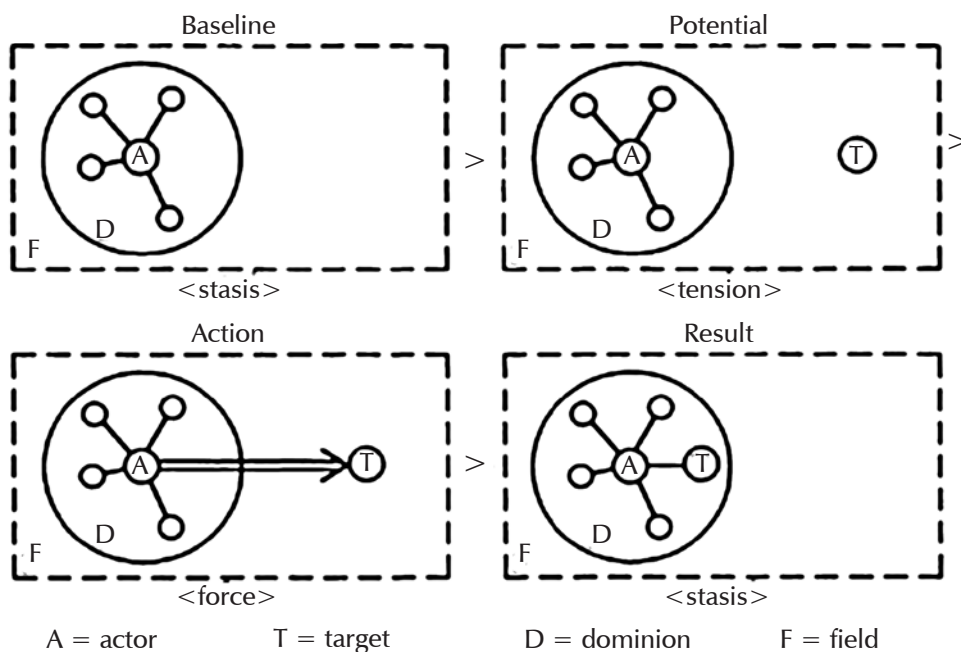
2. The Control Cycle

What is a Control Cycle?

ORGANISMS TAKE shape in space and time. They draw patterns of behavior or life cycles. The *control cycle* is such a dynamic pattern of behavior that defines an MB. The *control cycle model* was used extensively in the cognitive grammar developed by Ronald W. Langacker (Langacker 1987, 2008, 2009). The model has several in-built stages that define the interaction between a region of internal control and access and an external entity, a target defined in space and time. The model is a hard ‘glued’ gestalt-like composite that enlists several image schemas components (fig. 2). Langacker summarizes the basic form of the control cycle as follows:

In the static baseline phase, an actor (A) (in a broad sense of the term) controls an array of entities (small circles) which collectively constitute its dominion (D). In the next phase, some target (T) enters the actor’s field (F), or scope of potential interaction. This creates a state of tension, for the actor has to deal with the target in

FIG. 2



SOURCE: Langacker 2009: 130.

some manner. The typical means of dealing with it is by somehow bringing it under the actor's control, i.e., exerting force (double arrow) resulting in its incorporation in the actor's dominion. The result of this action is a modified situation that is once more static (a state of relaxation). (Langacker 2009: 130, 306)

The control cycle is inherently affective. The unfolding of the phases inherent in the control cycle generates a basic affective state of low excitement ingrained with a positive valence of fulfillment. This study proposes that the control mechanism can be seen as an instantiation of the homeostatic drive (Damasio 2018) or *allostatic* regulation (Barrett 2017).⁷ In allostatic regulation, the result stage is modeled (conceptualized) by the organism before its fruition. The action stage is structured by the goal-result expected or predicted. We can say that—in the tension stage—the bottom-up sensory input is already categorized by the top-down predicted outcome of the encounter—the anticipated result stage. The organism perceives in the *now* a sensory input as a particular type of stimulus based on its explanatory model of the consequences that will follow in the foreseeable future. For instance, the regulatory response to stimulus of bacteria and

microbes does not represent a reflexive response to current conditions but rather a “prediction of what they are likely to encounter in the near future” based on an internal model (Freddolino and Tavazoie 2012: 370). For Larkum this behavior is at work from the cellular to the cortical regional level (Larkum 2013).

The control cycle can be envisioned as a rule governing the behavior of the simplest of organisms, i.e., the cell, as well as of complex organisms that aggregate multiple entities in coherent behavioral wholes. The behavior based on the control cycle give us the rules that tell us how networks of brain cells behave. In other words, scaled up in complexity this behavior gives us sense-making mechanisms that interconnect living organisms/selves and the world. In other words, from the perspective of the embodied mind, the control mechanism plays a vital role in shaping the interaction between self and the environment. Social interactions between minds are further constrained by the core biological mechanism of the control cycle.

In the social domain of interactions, the control mechanism is assessed as either positive or negative. For example, on the positive side, there is the improvement of collective life, but on the negative we have instances of violence toward other human beings and abuse of power (Damasio 2018: 157). Humans create and use symbolic constructions in order to exercise processes of control and ground them in social intersubjectivity. Different symbolic constructions belong to distinct categories of messages grounded in domains of interaction, i.e., law, science, art, persuasion, and in different media that are manifest in the basic domains of sensorimotor modalities. For instance, symbolic constructions are instantiated in the artistic domain as mediated representation, e.g., theater, installations, performances, painting, sculpture, literature, and film.

The main idea is that a similar life cycle covers a multitude of experiences in different domains of experience. The domains of experience are situations (contexts). A similar dynamic pattern (a life cycle) is instantiated in a vast array of situations that can be conceptually described at different levels of abstraction. For instance, in the biological domain of interaction the control cycle is instantiated as eating and digesting a target organism and its incorporation in the processes that generate energy for the organism. In the epistemic domain of interaction the control cycle is instantiated as perception and understanding. The same dynamic shape constrains the process of capture and control of an external target in different situations. In some situations the concept instance can be labeled as romantic love, rational understanding, teamwork, maternal bonding, influence and manipulation, etc. With each experience a new concept is constructed part similar to previous models part different and novel. The same abstract dynamic model of the control cycle is instantiated in the domains of biological interaction

as play in situations of skills learning, as performance in theatrical settings, as narrative in reporting situations, and as ritual in situations involving the generation of new realities.

The control cycle is a dynamic process or life-cycle in the sense that, once accessed, it launches the sequence of internal states like a computer program running a series of code lines. The cognitive model of the control cycle has a bodily meaning-structure that instantiates a temporal process, i.e., structures the experience according to a series of stages and is not as a static pattern. The life-cycle of the control model is a single metamorphic process, i.e., an “agent” that is not identified by a specific stage, one state of the life cycle, but with the “temporally extended whole” (Kirchhoff et al. 2018: 9). The act of transformation and successive stages construct the whole “agent” or the bounded thing-like entity.

In the social domain the control cycle is a dynamic system that recruits a multitude of other mental processes and schemas and glues them together in a sequence. As such it can be grasped by a cross-domain mapping. The control model is instantiated in the mechanism of mirroring the gestures of others and incorporating them by mimicry in order to understand and coordinate with others.⁸ Mimicry facilitates the access to what the other is experiencing as a self-experience.

The environment, as a control cycle, influences the behavior of the agent. The agent, based on its abilities or expectancies, controls in a conditional way the environment. As Veissière put it, during the history of co-adaptative interactions the agents and their environments are modified and become attuned to each other (Veissière et al. 2020: 7).

The Tension Cycle

THE CONTROL cycle is based upon the *Tension Cycle* (fig. 3a).

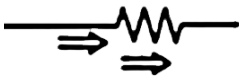
The Tension Cycle, consists of four successive stages: an initial stage of relaxation (i.e., non-force-dynamic continuity); next a stage of increasing tension; then a force-dynamic event which has the effect of releasing the built-up pressure; and finally, resulting from the event, another stage of relaxation. (Langacker 2009: 306)

A state of tension is created when “something comes close enough to us that we can interact with it” (Langacker 2009: 306). The entity enters our field or region of potential interaction. The potential for interaction creates a state of tension. Tension is linked to the bodily experience of internal equilibrium of the balance of forces of the entities occupying the dominion, and the potential loss

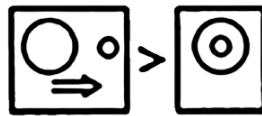
of this equilibrium. Perturbation of balance or equilibrium of the stasis is felt, as Mark Johnson argues, as a negative valenced affect, e.g., we feel physically sick (Johnson 1987: 75). The actor can deal with the situation in two basic ways in order to keep under control a set of entities in his dominion.⁹ One way to resolve the tension is to *capture* the target, i.e., “taking control of the intruding entity, or target.” The prototype is the “instance of physical capture, as when a cat catches a mouse” (Langacker 2009: 306) (fig. 3b).¹⁰ Another way to resolve the tension can be achieved by *avoidance*, i.e., “acting in such a manner that the target is no longer in the field” (fig. 3c).¹¹

FIG. 3

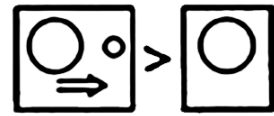
(a) = Tension Cycle



(b) Capture



(c) Avoidance



In cognitive terms, the control cycle displays an inherent circularity. From a predictive coding theory of cognition, on one hand, the external perturbations sensed explain and confirm the internal model of the self in the environment. On the other hand, the internal model explains the nature of the perturbations. In front of disparities the agent can either modify the model by perception or can modify the target by action.

The control cycle has inherently a gestalt-like or emergent structure. Any stage of this dynamic process triggers the other stages and the whole. The component image schemas are, at the same time, causing the whole to emerge, and are constrained by it. In a self-feeding circular loop the whole cycle causes the interaction of the component image schemas, and, as an effect, it results from the process of coming together of the components.¹²

Sense-making obeys or is shaped by underlying life cycles that are reflected on all scales of biological complexity. In other words, the control cycle arises with the emergence of living entities. Human scale experience is situated at an intermediate level between cellular organisms and cultural structures.

What lies beyond the control field of the organism is uncertain and elicits affective tension. Core affect is modulated, i.e. the intensity and valence of affect (Russell 2003), by different situations in which the organism is finding itself.¹³ The control life cycle model shapes core affect.¹⁴ In other words, all experience has a feeling tone.¹⁵ In this sense the control cycle is equally an affective model. Behavior aims to maximize pleasure and minimize displeasure (Russell 2003: 149).

3. The Power of the Magical Thinking: the Ritual

RITUALS MEDIATE the relationship between the organism and the world. They also simulate the “incorporation” of the world and the self. By action, the agent includes in its area of control the external states. In simpler organisms, the action means the inclusion of the external target into the internal metabolic process. Stated in epistemic terms, cognition is also way of control and “incorporation.” Once included in the agent’s area of control, the target can be manipulated and modified. Nevertheless the agent, in this framework, since it is overlapping with the dominion of the field of control, undergoes a radical change of status. The agent-dominion endures the extinction of the initial state of his area of control and the gain of a new dominion-structure. Hence, the agent is transformed (if we highlight continuity) or, like the life cycle of the caterpillar, pupa, butterfly process, is destroying its old body in order to obtain a new body (if we highlight discontinuity) which contains the external target as an incorporated aspect. At the same time, the target is no more a hidden external state but a controlled one, i.e., it is included in the internal complex of synergies. During this process the *Umwelt* as an entirety doesn’t cease to exist. The controlled target is only a facet of the world which, since the agent evidences himself, is still existing in its entirety as a hidden whole.

The agent and the target are coupled in a bi-directional control cycle. The agent controls the target and the target, once included in the field of control, changes the structure of the agent which becomes a new system. Rituals targeting the individual designate the personal transformation (e.g. birth, transition from child to adult, marriage, and death) and rituals of collective transformation (spring festivals that mark the passage from one year to another) target the evolution of the world in time. The collective rituals allow the reconstruction of the performer’s collective “body,” and facilitate the temporal transition of the world-environment from past to future (conceived as a cycle of destruction and reconstruction) (see Turner 1982).¹⁶

Rituals mediate a transformation that can be described in ontological and epistemic terms. In ontological terms, the ritual allows the emergence of an external reality and of a self that lasts in time. Magical thinking allows the control of mundane events, not yet known future events and the imposition of lasting patterns of being over indefinite timescales. Often, the purpose of the ritual is to mediate the passage of time and the indefinite continuation of the world and the self. In other terms, its goal is the indefinite preservation of life cycles, i.e. immortality. In epistemic terms, the ritual tends to include the environment in the area of control of the agent. Understanding “truth” or the process of knowing future events is conceived as the integration of the hidden external reality

in the area of control in order to achieve a status of complete synergy between constituents.¹⁷ Therefore uncertainty (i.e. entropy or alterity) is avoided in a system that lasts in a state of internal synchrony.¹⁸

4. The Sacred and the Profane

The World As a Fuzzy Category

IN THE spiritual domain humans are confronted with external hidden variables that are conceived as spiritual entities (or nature) that are mysterious and elicit obscure descriptive languages. Eliade described the domain situated behind the “threshold” of the domain of control as the “chaos”:

the unknown and indeterminate space that surrounds it. . . . a sort of “other world,” a foreign, chaotic space, peopled by ghosts, demons, ‘foreigners’ (who are assimilated to demons and the souls of the dead). (Eliade 1961: 29)

What we call here the reintegration or the categorization stage is for Eliade the “sacred.” In other words, taking possession of a territory is equivalent to constructing/categorizing it by a cosmogonical act as a cosmos and a sacred space (“By occupying it and, above all, by settling in it, man symbolically transforms it into a cosmos through a ritual repetition of the cosmogony”) (Eliade 1961: 31).

The world is first and foremost revealed as something to be grasped and controlled. The emotional tone associated is fear and the subsequent attitude is veneration. For traditional societies the spiritual world is indifferent to the human fate. Hence humans must gain benevolence. The sacred is depicted as mystery, entities that are different (deities, nature, ghosts, spiritual beings), inaccessible to language, reuniting contraries (the androgyne), and attainable only via a radical transformation of the agent. The spiritual per se is not accessible to categorical thinking and is conceived under the shape of concepts that reunite contraries. For certain traditions the world is conceived via the feminine metaphor, e.g., the “universal mother” (Eliade 1961: 117). The cosmos itself is conceived as “real, living, and sacred” (ibid.). The feminine is procreative, multifaceted and has a life cycle extended on a wide time scale, e.g., Cybele, Isis, Dea Mater, Gea, Tiamat (Deaca 2009). Most often it is associated with the sea, e.g., the locus of infinite possibilities of existence. First and foremost, via the existential legacy of transmission of genes from mother to daughter, the feminine constructs a never-ending succession of life cycles that generate a superordinate wider life cycle of generations.

Being outside the realm of the categorization-control field, the sacred is conceivable as that which is abject, i.e. the a-categorical (e.g. entities that are “no-longer-alive and not-yet-dead”) (Elsaesser 2019: 190). Knowledge and truth are frequently associated with humans that are on the fringe (the infant, the carnival fool, the stranger, the ill) and bodily states that are associated with malady (epilepsy), and loss of conscience (mystical states). Their knowledge is less rational (based on high level cognition) and more embodied (the blind man) lacking at the same time articulated language.

FIG. 4

Control cycle	Ritual	Narrative
a. Stasis	Model simulacrum	Initial state of equilibrium
b. Tension (Potential)	Description or formulation of the a-categorical (liminar perturbatory events and realities). Sacrifice, and trials (passive mode) (assessment and probing).	Sensing of the disruption or lack. Formulation of the agent and the counteragent.
c. Action	Exploratory journeys, incorporation or capture process (active mode).	Reparatory action
d. Stasis (Result)	Formulation of the enhanced new model simulacrum.	Achievement of the final state of equilibrium.

5. The Scenario of the Ritual

The Initial State

RITUALS AND narratives mirror the phases of the control cycle. An *initial state* of relaxation and stasis (the initial phase of narrative) is followed by a *state of tension* due to the presence of an external perturbation (fig. 4). In narrative terms, a disruption or a lack is sensed. The tension state is a sensory state. In rituals, the perturbation is depicted as contact with a chaotic world (e.g. the inferno, the world upside down) described as challenging known categories. It disrupts the boundaries of the body and does not belong to known categories. Sensing the disruption is often depicted as fragmentation and dismemberment or as seclusion (Turner 1982: 26). Sometimes, the performer of a ritual offers as a sacrifice a model of the a-categorical or himself as model. The

reality status of the model simulacrum is ambiguous since it both profiles the agent in its relationship with the target and is a model of the target. As an MB it both evidences the inner states (the agent self) and the external states of the environment (the target or the sacred).

The Tension State

THE *DISRUPTIVE/tension state* is depicted as sacrifice (fig. 4b). The sacrificed body is a simulacrum of the agent. Its destruction (death) describes the influence of the sacred and reveals it. The novices are “dead to the social world and alive in to the asocial world” (Turner 1982: 27). In carnival, the farce instantiates the disruption phase. The tension (sensory) phase can be depicted in the passive mode (it is a farce) or, in the active mode (it is a journey), it becomes action (active) phase.

Turner in his comments about the “rites de passage” (Van Gennep) labels this state as a “liminal phase” that features inversion and chaos (Turner 1982: 41–45, 29–32). He also designates this stage an “anti-structure” (which includes “liminality” and “communitas,” i.e., the integration of the individual participating to a ritual in a collective social entity) (ibid., 44–47).¹⁹ As Turner states, liminality may involve a “complex sequence of episodes in sacred space-time, and may also include subversive and ludic (or playful) events” (ibid., 27). Liminality is correlated with play: “in liminality people ‘play’ with the elements of the familiar and defamiliarize them. Novelty emerges from the unprecedented combinations of familiar elements” (ibid., 29).

The signs of liminality—as indicated by Turner (1982: 26)—are the physical separation of the ritual subject from the rest of society, and inversion of normal reality as “effacement” and “ambiguity and paradox” (ibid.). Other signs are “eating or not eating specific foods, disregard of personal appearance, the wearing of uniform clothing, sometimes irrespective of sex,” and gaining “uniformity, structural invisibility, and anonymity as possible” (ibid., 27). The initiands are in “close connection with non-social or asocial powers of life and death” and the novices are frequently compared with “on one hand, ghosts, gods, or ancestors and on the other, with animals and birds” (ibid.). It is often represented as an exploration of the a-categorical realities: the inferno, the world of the dead, excessive sexual and culinary actions, the world upside-down.

The Active State

THE *ACTIVE state* is made of several cycles of tension and action, i.e. sensory and active states that adjust inner states and external states in order to achieve the *final state* of equilibrium (fig. 4c). Quite often the active state is represented as the “paradigmatic victory over the dragon,” e.g., the paradigmatic figure of the marine monster, of the primordial snake, symbol of the cosmic waters, of darkness, night, and death—in short, of the “amorphous and virtual, of everything that has not yet acquired a ‘form’” (Eliade 1961: 48). The active phase of the narrative reparatory phase is an exploratory stage depicted as a sequence of trials and journeys. It is composed of successive episodes of tension and action. In the active phase the novices are instructed in novel social practices, e.g., a secret language and “various non-verbal symbolic genres, such as dancing, painting, clay-molding, wood-carving, masking” (Turner 1982: 27). In this stage the novices’ symbolic patterns amount to teachings about the structure of the cosmos and their culture (ibid.). Liminality implies also a sequence of episodes in sacred space-time and subversive and ludic (or playful) events (ibid.). As Turner mentions, out of unprecedented combinations of familiar element novelty emerges, and in “liminality people ‘play’ with the elements of the familiar and defamiliarize them” (ibid.). Cultural elements or factors are recombined in grotesque ways, e.g., “a monster disguise may combine human, animal, and vegetal features in an ‘unnatural’ way” (ibid.).

Ritual is ordered by a dramatic structure and involves an “act of sacrifice or self-sacrifice” (Eliade 1961: 56, 101; Turner 1982: 81). Since the sacrifice is also a way of instantiating the sacred, the active phase includes in several rituals only the sacrifice and dismembering action. In carnival rituals it is often instantiated as the farce. In farce the fool is the entity to be sacrificed. In rituals of sacrifice the agent becomes consubstantial with the model that it captures or consumes.²⁰ If the model is external, an act of incorporation takes place. The agent “eats” the sacrificed entity, e.g., “eating of the divine body” (Eliade 1961: 102). The eating and the capture of the external body represent both the tension/dismemberment phase of the old body and the active phase of the transformation of the old agent system into a new one that fuses the agent and the target. In other cases the agent himself plays the disruption and the transformation phases.

The normative structure is the social equilibrium and the anti-structure represents the “latent system of potential alternatives from which novelty will arise. Games exhibit this structure of order-disorder as well as other liminoid rituals as “charivaris, fiestas, Halloween masking, and mumming, etc.” (Turner 1982: 28). Turner emphasizes the idea that liminal situations are the “seedbeds of cultural creativity” out of which new elements and new combinatory cultural rules

can be conceived (*ibid.*, 28). Eliade mentions that the reparatory phase is often represented as the construction of a temple (Eliade 1961: 45). This stage can describe a cosmogonical act. For instance, the creation of the universe or man takes place from the “navel of the earth” or the *axis mundi* (*ibid.*, 37, 44). The sacred space is to be understood as a model of the cosmos (*ibid.*, 29).

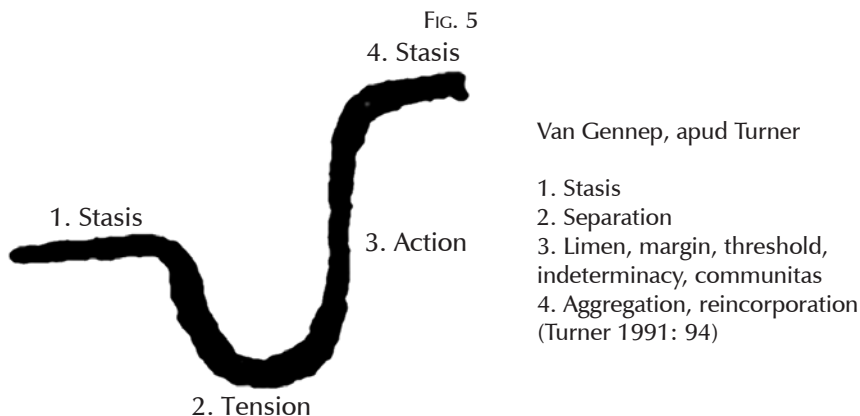
The Final Stasis

THE FINAL stage of the scenario is the *reestablishment of the stasis* (fig. 4d).²¹ In rituals this stage is the recovery of a new body. It can be depicted as rebirth, reincarnation, the mystical union with the sacred or the building of a new architectural construction (the temple) that display immortality. It is often represented in carnival ritual as the feast in which the performers incorporate the food to be consumed. Incorporation can be depicted as the carnival feast (as an instantiation of the *communitas*) (Turner 1982: 51), the mystique of love, the conception of immortality and the architecture of immortality (the temple).

For Turner, rituals and social-dramas involve liminal situations and anti-structure experiences performed in order to achieve reintegrative outcomes which serve to “communicate information about a culture’s most cherished values” (Turner 1982: 78–79). Rituals have a transformative capacity and accompany transitions from one state to another augmented state (*ibid.*, 80). To quote Turner once again, the ritual life-cycle sequencing occurs “most radically in the ritual ‘pupation’ of liminal seclusion” (*ibid.*, 80–81). The rite of passage (as defined by Van Gennep) postulates a unidirectional move towards an indicative mood transformed by immersion in subjunctivity which implies an “abyss” of meaning concerned with “wish, desire, possibility, or hypothesis” (*ibid.*, 82). The initiand is transformed by liminal experiences, i.e., a world of “as if” (*ibid.*, 83).²² The reestablishment of the stasis celebrates the “man-made meaning, the culturally determinate, the regulated, the named, and the explained” (*ibid.*). The ceremonial is a statement of form against the indeterminacy present in the liminal phase of the ritual. For Turner ritual is a “transformative self-immolation of order as presently constituted, even sometimes a voluntary sparagmos or self-dismemberment of order, in the subjunctive depth of liminality” (*ibid.*).²³ Via transformation, i.e., destruction and reconstruction an “authentic reordering” comes about (*ibid.*, 84).²⁴ As Turner puts it: “ritual liminality . . . contains the potentiality for cultural innovation” (*ibid.*, 85). Ritual allows play, understood as an experimental “play of symbol-vehicles” and “play of meanings” out of which rise new meanings and semantic models, i.e., cultural innovation (*ibid.*, 85, 52).

Ritual behavior can also optimize the epistemic value or epistemic affordance of particular ways of exploration/sampling of the environment with high uncertainty but which will provide the most relevant information and enhance adaptive advantage (Veissière et al. 2020: 12–13). Narrative, for Turner, is derived from ritual and is an instrument for binding “values” and “goals” into “situational structures of ‘meaning’” (Turner 1982: 86). The concept of narration is also, for Turner, an appropriate term for “a reflexive activity which seeks to ‘know’ . . . antecedent events, and about the meaning of those events (ibid., 87).²⁵ Therefore, “the narrative component in ritual and legal action attempts to rearticulate opposing values and goals in a meaningful structure” (ibid.).

The graphic representation in fig. 5 can describe processes of active inference, play as “pattern recognition” (Grodal 1997: 26; Boyd 2009: 88–94), comic re-categorization (Carroll 1996: 147; Grodal 1997: 186–190, 200; Berliner 2013: 202) narration²⁶ and “social drama” (Turner 1982: 92).



SOURCE: Langacker 2009: 306.

6. The Narrative

NARRATIVE FORM is “founded in a pre-cognitive process of bodily sensing” of experience (Kiss 2015: 54). Our sensed bodily order and our ordered existence in the environment induce “the sensing of a structure and by extension a narrative form” (ibid.). One’s ability to structure both real-life and mediated experiences allows and “drives the practical procedure of organizing information into an intelligible form, where narrativity stands for the extracted format that is intelligible specifically to humans” (ibid.). Mental schemas are thus “arrangements of knowledge” (ibid., 53) that emerge from

proprioceptive and exteroceptive explorations both in real life situations and mediated experiences.

Because of this loop between creativity and comprehension, “narrative functions” are just as much of the internal features of the work, as of the embodied mind’s that creates, appropriates, then recognizes, and ultimately labels the experience as “narrative.” (Kiss 2015: 54)

Mediated stimuli evoke the narrative form understood as a “feeling of meaningful order” (Kiss 2015: 54).²⁷ In this study, narrative form is one instantiation of the control cycle. The control cycle appears in more general discussions about sense-making in different interactive domains, e.g., perception, event structuring, emotion elaborations. The circular loop is considered the fundamental mechanism of cognition. Perceptual cues in different domains of interaction evoke/cause a control cycle cognitive model which, in its turn, explains and shapes the stimuli at hand. Intersubjectivities (producers and comprehenders), likewise in a closed-loop manner, can temporarily agree on a similar description of their experiences. Both subjects can play in turn the roles of producer-comprehender and construct a mediated support that elicits similar embodied outcomes (affective, and verbal).

7. The Relationship between the Sacred and the Profane

The Constative and the Performative

JOHN SEARLE (1983) defended the idea that speakers use linguistic utterances in order to achieve either a constative or a performative action. In the constative frame the belief prompted by a particular expression is used in order to fit the structure of the world (the direction of fit occurs between the word to the world) and in performatives the direction of fit is reversed (the world fits the word). However, performatives exhibit circularity. The agent making an utterance describes a state of affairs (the world) which, in its turn, creates the designated state of affairs. In the appropriate conditions declaring a man and a woman married (the word fits the world) introduces in the world a new state of affairs (the world fits the word). This mechanism mirrors the partition between sensory and active states.

Two papers develop the idea that certain metaphoric construals instantiate the circular coupling (Coulson and Oakley 2000; Sweetser 2000). Sweetser gives the example of a “painting of a buffalo hunt on a cave wall” (Coulson

and Oakley 2000: 185; Sweetser 2000: 312). Is the painting a depictive record, “following and modeling itself on events in the represented world” or is it a performative that is magically intended to “bring about in reality the situation it represents”? (Sweetser 2000: 312). This dual nature of representations is considered to hold for metaphorical representations and literal ones. Sweetser considers that, in rituals, the same representation is simultaneously depictive and performative.

Does kneeling to a divinity metaphorically represent the already extant differential in power and status between worshipper and god (a depictive use), or help to bring the worshipper into the right state of humility (a performative use)? Perhaps both. (Sweetser 2000: 315)

The relationship between the sacred order of the ritual and the world environment (the *Umwelt*) is both constative and performative. The collective ritual—as a new larger MB—constructs a new entity and performs the function of magical thinking. For instance, quoting again Eliade, annual festivals bring into reality time by performing the ritual “because no time could exist before the appearance of the reality narrated by the myth” (Eliade 1961: 72). Festivals reiterate each year the life-cycle of the ritual thus reinstating time as a “sort of mythical present that is periodically reintegrated by means of rites” (ibid., 70). With each New Year the world is created anew in its temporal (*tempus*) and spatial aspects (*templum*) (ibid., 75). It can be either the ritual itself understood as artifact/performance (a new social reality), or the external object of cult (the sacred domain), and the body of the performer (which simulates the body of the sacred domain). The equilibrium gained by the artifact MB is unstable. It can either become an external thing and thus gain independence (i.e., becomes a hidden state of the environment), or it can be fully integrated in the field of control of the agent (i.e., the internal states of the organism) and, as a consequence, be fully extracted from the environment. In the former case, it belongs to the realm of the world and, in order to be known, it has to be explored as any hidden state (i.e., captured and controlled in a biased and partial way). Its genuine nature is unknown. In the second case, it is integrated and consubstantial with the inner states of the agent and, therefore, brings no information about the external world.

The Attunement

IN THE process of attunement of the agent and the environment the MB plays the role of a catalyst. Language and symbolic artifacts enable selective attention as “spatial reorganization” and virtual items (Clark 2001: 46). Material symbols and epistemic artifacts “help sculpt and modify processes of selective attention and act as elements within hybrid representational wholes” (ibid., 57).

For instance, in the situation of the painter and the perceiver skillful bodily action and perception are in some sense intimately entangled or intermingled (Clark 2001: 170). In other words, “what we perceive is determined by what we do or what we are ready to do; we enact our perceptual experience: we act it out” (ibid., 171). Specific types of embodied agents bring forth by their own activity a perceived world characterized by a suite of distinctive sensorimotor dependencies, “whose nature sensitively determines the way the world is experienced through the senses” (ibid., 176). The cues and stimuli made available by the cultural artifacts modulate and influence the perceiver’s embodied potentialities for engagement with the environment.

The Sense-Making

AS BOYD suggested, narratives, myths and ritual reenactments are grounded in play (Boyd 2009: 107). We can further extend the observation and claim that play is one instantiation of sense-making (i.e., the creation of a proximal externalized MB) and we can understand artifact creation as composed of a population of different instantiations (e.g., rituals, narratives, artifacts like verbal or visual expressions) grounded on the same basic process.

Sense-making means, in the view presented here, the action of construction an external MB that is used as an intermediary alias (simulacrum, model) of the external states (the world, the “hidden” states environment). This MB allows the agent to exert active inference and, since the proximal externalized MB can be modified at will, operate changes on the distal hidden states of the world (i.e., magical thinking). Rituals belong to the class of cultural practices which encode information in a MB—under the form of coupling between the organism and its niche—that explains adaptive behavior (Ramstead et al. 2019: 6). In other words, cultural artifacts are the “material artefacts populating human niches [that] enable individuals to deal with perceptual uncertainty” (ibid., 24). Acting successfully to minimize uncertainty will construct the cultural econiche more predictable and more similar/grounded on the organism’s expectancies for continuous survival (Veissière et al. 2020: 14). One key point is that, during

this incorporation that has self-evidentiary consequences, the agent self is transformed in a different entity that can display a longer life cycle and thus escape the entrapment caused by the “arrow” of time (i.e., immortality).

One particular depiction of this MB is the conception of the “carnavalesque body” that mirrors the external spiritual agency that has to be instantiated by the collective ritual. Death and love intermingle in this behavior. The sacrifice of the old body (i.e., death) is the construction of a new entity achieved by capture and incorporation (i.e., birth and renaissance). Mystical love is achieved as a generalized synchrony in which the organism is consubstantial with the *Umwelt*.

8. Conclusion

RITUALS FORMULATE (in a descriptive manner) hidden realities and, at the same time (in a performative manner), bring them into existence as external realities that can be described and controlled. The dominant affective stance is one of fear and anxiety. Veneration is often translated as sacrifice of a simulacrum (of the body of the agent or the body of the target). Veneration is an action of incorporation of the external entity into an internal one belonging to the dominion of the agent. The external target and the agent become thus one single field of control and share a common set of properties in a synergy (often represented as musical harmony or breath rhythm). Rituals mediate the transformation of the body of the agent (the individual to be initiated or the social body). Creating a new reality is akin to the birth of a new entity as it is done by a genic feminine principle based on the life cycle of the control cycle. Rituals, as mediating MBS unfolding in time as dynamic patterns in which four stages can be identified, allow the construction of a new body and reality.²⁸ Rituals are constructed as simulations situated outside the common aspects of life that mirror/represent the individual’s inner processes of coping with the external world. Rituals belong to the category of processes of modeling ourselves modeling the world via narratives of control cycles. Hence, cultural agents extend their sensory MB features and include cultural artifacts in their internal states in order to control external states of the world and, simultaneously, provide evidence for the self.

Imposing rules of behavior on oneself because you don’t fully understand the phenomenon you are confronted with has the paradoxical result of regain of agency and control over the target. In other words, veneration and submission produces identification with the target and is a strategy of maintaining control and access to agency and to the sacred (Elsaesser 2019: 248).

Sacrifice of an external artifact model or the sacrifice of the individual in a social body (the body of the sacrificed individual is an artifact model of the control cycle) restages the control cycle aimed at the incorporation of the environment in a self-assembled synergy-based whole capable of enduring on a long timescale. □

Notes

1. See Johnson (1987), Maturana and Varela (1987), Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1991), and Thompson (2007).
2. As Wojciechowski and Gallese (2011) indicate, embodied simulation hinges on the immediate and involuntary mirrored experience, i.e., “our brain-body system re-uses part of its neural resources to map others’ behavior. When we witness actions performed by others, we simulate them by activating our own motor system. Similarly, by activating other cortical regions we re-use our affective and somatosensory neural circuits to map the emotional and somatosensory experiences of others” (16). As the authors point out, embodied simulation may be compared to Antonio Damasio’s “as-if body loop” which enables us to feel an emotional state “as if the body were being activated and modified” (Damasio 1994: 157). On the other hand, the mind reflects statistical patterns of the environment.
3. The *Umwelt* is the world around the organism transformed in an environment with significance for the organism through its sense-making activity (see Thompson 2007: 48; Colombetti 2014: 18).
4. “According to this perspective, cultural ensembles minimise free energy by enculturating their members so that they share common sets of precision-weighting priors. Human beings—with our specific forms of neural organisation, phenotypes, evolved behavioral tendencies and sociocultural patterns—minimise more free energy across spatial and temporal scales than any other species” (Friston et al. 2018: 13).
5. “The predictive hierarchical architecture of neural networks comes to encode statistical regularities about the niche, which allow the organism to engage with the field of affordances in adaptive cycles of action-perception. But the embodiment of generative models does not stop at the brain. Indeed, one radical implication of the free-energy principle is that the *organism itself is* a statistical model of its niche” (Ramstead, Veissière, and Kirmayer 2016: 10); “Is a graded phenomenon. At one extreme, skilled intentionality consists in contentless direct coping . . . At the other extreme, we find stereotypical human intentionality, that is, symbolically dense and strongly content-involving forms of collectively and conventionally rooted intentionality” (ibid., 14); “In this light, one can view social norms and conventions as devices to reduce mutual uncertainty, that is, consonantly with the free-energy framework, as entropy-minimizing devices . . . One must know ‘what is in the minds’ of others (such as what one would see and how one would interpret another’s action generally and in context) in order to make a successful inference (both explicit, content-

- involving or implicit, correlational inferences) about other agents in each situation” (ibid., 16).
6. “All conscious states are attentionally modulated intermediate-level perceptual representations” (Prinz 2012: 169).
 7. Allostasis is a process in which the organism prepares the body for anticipated energy spending and expected benefits (see Barrett: <https://how-emotions-are-made.com/notes/Allostasis>).
 8. See Gallese 2005; Gallese et al. 1996; Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia 2008; Iacoboni 2009; Colombetti 2014: 187–195; Zacks 2015.
 9. The “first moment of recognition, identification, or discernment in the arising of something distinct” is coupled with the “activation of a basic impulse for action toward the discerned object” (Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 1991: 66).
 10. For instance we might “see a piece of candy that we want very much to taste, and resolve this tension by eating it. Or if I use a book and leave it lying on my desk, I feel the tension of it being out of place until I dispel the tension by putting it back on the bookshelf where it belongs” (Langacker 2009: 306).
 11. For instance, “instead of putting the book away I could simply leave the room, so that I no longer see it lying there on my desk” (Langacker 2009: 306).
 12. Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1991) describe in these terms the contact between the senses and their objects, e.g., “the matching of sensitivity between a sense and an object in the sense field” (119). In their framework the concept of self is constructed in a similar way, i.e., “Ego-self, then, is the historical pattern among moment-to-moment emergent formations . . . a process of becoming that is conditioned by past structures, while maintaining structural integrity from moment to moment” (ibid., 121).
 13. Concepts and emotion concepts capture predictions about relevant actual and future allostatic events (Barrett 2017; Gendron, Mesquita, and Barrett 2020).
 14. Ruiz notes that the ability to exert control, reflected in language use as appreciative suffixation, i.e., diminutives and augmentatives, is perceived as positive from the vantage point of the controller and negative from the perspective of the controlled (Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez and Galera Masegosa 2014: 80). For him, “much of the appreciative value of diminutives and augmentatives are rooted in the emotional reactions that interacting with small or big entities may trigger” (ibid., 81).
 15. See Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1991: 113), and Thompson (2009: 152, 156).
 16. A similar role is played by the mask. Wearing a mask reveals a circular coupling between the incorporation by the human of the sacred domain and the possession of the human by the depicted entity.
 17. In a study conducted by Weinberger et al. (2020) the authors note that people whose brains are good at subconsciously discerning patterns in their environment may ascribe those patterns to a higher power, i.e. a god that intervenes in the world to create order.
 18. See also Kirchoff et al. (2018) for the idea that the ultimate endgame is to “engineer a world of predictability, harmony and (generalized) synchrony, in which there is no uncertainty about what to do—or what will happen” (7).

19. Turner notes that masonic rituals belong also to the class of liminal phenomena (Turner 1982: 55). The process of passage is often represented as a journey through several places (e.g., “opening of doors or the literal crossing of a threshold that separates two distinct areas,” pilgrimage or crossing of frontiers) (ibid., 25).
20. “The body of the immolated divinity was changed into food” (Eliade 1961: 101).
21. The Van Gennep model distinguishes three phases in a rite of passage: separation, i.e., separation of the ritual subjects from their previous social status or condition, transition (“margin” or “limen”) in which the subject is immersed in a period and area of ambiguity, and “reaggregation” or “incorporation” in which symbolic phenomena and action represent a new state of being (Turner 1982: 24).
22. See also Turner (1991: 94).
23. Here Turner thinks, for example, of “Eliade’s studies of the ‘shaman’s journey’ where the initiand is broken into pieces then put together again as a being bridging visible and invisible worlds” (Turner 1982: 84).
24. See the ritual activities that indicate a reconstruction of the world in Eliade, e.g., activities of cultivation or repairing of boats or sanctuaries which are considered to be models (“mythical archetype”) (Eliade 1961: 86).
25. “narrative is knowledge (and/or *gnosis*) emerging from action, i.e., experiential knowledge” (Turner 1982: 87). On the other hand drama is understood as doing and acting
26. See the remarks about the sense-making involved in narrativity made by Ryan (2006: 11) as “emplotting” or “storying,” i.e., the fundamental narrative nature of thought that is put into play in “cognitive processes that we also use in everyday life, such as focusing thought on certain objects cut out from the flux of perception, a process that also enables us to distinguish discrete states and events; inferring causal relations between these states and events; thinking of events as situated in time; and reconstructing the content of other peoples’ minds as an explanation of their behavior” (ibid., 11).
27. Kiss talks about different modulations of the narrative form, e.g., a “cinema of affordance” that seamlessly prompts a resonant experience of the viewer, an “art-cinema” that uses strategies of disruption or disembodiment, and a “post-classical” cinema that is relying on narrative form but challenges comprehension by complexification and ambiguity (Kiss 2015: 60).
28. The collective interaction of agents during a ritual episode allows the construction of forms of we engagement (bodily, intentional, normative, emotional and conceptual) (Brink, Reddy, and Zahavi 2017).

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Abstract**The Extended Control Cycle in Ritual Behavior and Narrative Scenarios**

The paper argues that rituals and symbolic cultural artifacts are external models of the world. The key idea is that human agents do not have direct or unmediated access to the external world. Humans can sense and act upon intermediary processes such as cultural artifacts and rituals and construct a model of the target external world. In biological terms a Markov blanket mediates sense-making exchanges between the agent organism and the environment. In the cultural niche, humans, via rituals, model themselves modeling the world. In this structure of several nested Markov blankets the individual is included in a larger blanket. Hence, cultural practice offers a model of the world and a model of the self in the world. The cultural practice allows the creation of a cultural body/self for the agent. Rituals mediate the relationship between the organism and the world. They also simulate the “incorporation” of the world and the self via the dynamic process of control. By action and sensory perception, the agent includes the external states in its area of control of the blanket. The agent and the cultural practice are coupled in a bi-directional control cycle. The agent controls the ritual and the ritual, once included in the field of control of a new encompassing blanket, changes the structure of the agent which becomes a new entity/self. Rituals targeting the individual designate the personal transformation (e.g. birth, transition from child to adult, marriage, and death) and rituals of collective transformation (spring festivals that mark the passage from one year to another) target the evolution of the world in time. Rituals formulate (in a descriptive manner) hidden realities and, at the same time (in a performative manner), bring them into existence as external realities that can be described and controlled via what is commonly labeled as magical thinking. Rituals, conceived as explanatory models, simultaneously provide evidence for a self nested in a cultural niche and for a conceptualized external environment.

Keywords

ritual, emergence, embodiment, predictive coding, Bayesian inference

BOOK REVIEWS

MONICA NEGOESCU

**Cărturari saxo-români în Transilvania
secolului XIX**

(Transylvanian Saxon scholars in the 19th
century)

Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2021

THIS VOLUME describes and analyzes the vivid and complex intercultural relationship between the Transylvanian Saxon and Romanian rural communities during the 19th century, as seen and interpreted by the Transylvanian Saxon scholars. These scholars became interested in collecting and publishing their studies on the Romanian folk beliefs and traditions because of the increasing influence of the European folklore research trends that gained significant importance in the second half of the 19th century.

Monica Negoescu, the author of this extensive study, creates a new perspective on the ancient Romanian cultural values, focusing on the contribution of the Transylvanian Saxon scholars in collecting, analyzing and promoting the Romanian folklore and traditions across Europe, as well as the moral principles that shaped the identity of the rural communities in Transylvania.

Although the documents presented in the book contain much valuable information, they have never been mentioned in any other monograph or scientific work until now. This is another element that makes Monica Negoescu's volume so captivating and complex.

The readers are presented with a unique and extremely valuable collection of folktales, myths, incantations, wooing rituals, Christmas carols written down by the Transylvanian Saxon scholars, some of which have never been published in any other scientific works. Every text is accompanied by a stylistic and literary analysis and by a short biography of each scholar which includes a presentation of their individual historical and cultural background. Another element that makes this work interesting is the comparative parallel presentation of the Romanian and Saxon folktales.

The last section of Monica Negoescu's book consists of pictures of rare and extremely valuable manuscripts (letters written by the Transylvanian Saxon scholars, fragments from their studies, front pages of various volumes, tables of contents of folk tale books). This collection of documents adds a great deal of value and importance to this entirely original and comprehensive scientific study.

The book is structured in two main sections, according to the literary genre and to the central subject of the analyzed texts. Monica Negoescu describes the significant role of folklore in the process of establishing the national identity through the representation of *the self* as mirrored by the image of *the other*, emphasizing the fact that culture and national consciousness evolve at the same time. Thus, the literary text becomes a means of creating connections between different cultures.

The first section entitled "Folk Beliefs and Traditions" analyzes the distinction

between the two main categories of folk traditions (the ones that are celebrated on certain pre-established dates and the life transition rituals). The function of life transition rituals that include specific literary forms of expression was to protect the individuals who find themselves in hostile circumstances or environments.

The author of this comprehensive study minutely describes in this section the research activity of four Transylvanian Saxon scholars (Wilhelm Schmidt, Robert Prexl, Heinrich von Wlislöcki, and Tibolt Schmidt), offering information on their personal and cultural background. By showing the different perspectives and areas of interest of the four scholars, Monica Negoescu manages to create a complete and objective image of the cultural, anthropological, sociological and historical development process of the rural Transylvanian society.

The first Transylvanian Saxon scholar whose activity in the field of folklore is being analyzed is Wilhelm Schmidt (1817–1901), a secondary school teacher in Sibiu (Hermannstadt, Nagyszeben) in 1854. He wrote a study on the origin of the Romanians entitled “Die Geten und Daken: Ein historischer Versuch als Beitrag zur siebenbürgischen Landeskunde” (The Getae and the Dacians: A historical attempt to contribute to the description of Transylvania), published in *Archiv des Vereins für siebenbürgische Landeskunde* (Historical Archives of Transylvania) (1859), and a volume about Romanian folk beliefs *Das Jahr und seine Tage in Meinung und Brauch der Rumänen Siebenbürgens: Ein Beitrag zur Kenntniß des Volksmythus* (The importance and meaning of the year and its days from the perspective of the Romanian communities in Transylvania: A Contribution to

understanding the Romanian folk beliefs), released in 1866 in Sibiu.

Robert Prexl, the second Transylvanian Saxon scholar whose contribution to the cultural research on Romanian folklore and traditions is presented and analyzed in this section of the volume, had no formal studies in the field of philology and theology, but he wrote a few important studies on incantations. He was allegedly Wilhelm Schmidt’s student. His collection of incantations was published in German, in the first and second volumes of the *Zeitschrift für Völkskunde* (Journal of Folklore Studies) in Leipzig in 1889 and 1890. This comprehensive study was also published in 1891 in the *Convorbiri literare* (Literary Conversations) journal. He wrote two articles on wedding, birth and funerary rituals in the *Globus: Illustrierte Zeitschrift für Länder- und Völkerkunde* (The Illustrated Journal of Cultural Studies and Ethnology). The title of the first study published in 1889 is “Rumänische Brautwerbung und Hochzeit in Siebenbürgen” (Romanian wooing and wedding rituals in Transylvania). The second one is intitled “Geburts- und Todtengebräuche der Rumänen in Siebenbürgen” (Birth and funerary rituals of the Romanians in Transylvania), and was published the same year. His studies on incantations analyze a very wide range of rituals used for curing various diseases or for making people fall in love, find their match or bring back their beloved. Furthermore, Prexl describes in these papers different methods of preparing potions which were meant to drive away the evil spirits. All these fascinating rituals had to be accompanied by words and phrases, sometimes even poems which had to be uttered in a specific way, at a precise moment of the day or night, only by old

women who had learned these magic practices from their female predecessors.

The third Transylvanian Saxon scholar whose activity is presented in this work is Heinrich von Wlislöcki (1856–1907). His main area of expertise was the gypsy culture, but in 1889/1890 he also published in Hamburg, in *Sammlung gemeinverständlicher wissenschaftlicher Vorträge*, a work entitled “Aus dem Leben der Siebenbürger Rumänen” (Aspects from the life of the Romanians in Transylvania). The main aim of this scholar was to draw the attention of Western Europe to the quasi-unknown Romanian culture, to make it part of the universal cultural heritage. Wlislöcki offers a rare glimpse into the daily life, the social climate and the unspoiled rural traditions, although he considers them quite uncivilized. He describes the relationships among the members of Romanian peasant families. Although he initially speaks about the uniqueness of the Romanian rural traditions, he later mentions the fact that the Romanians are reluctant when it comes to accepting new ideas. All these aspects are presented in a condescending tone, with subtle irony and with references to Lessing’s and Leibniz’s ideas. Still, Wlislöcki fails to take into consideration the political context of the period.

Tibold Schmidt, the fourth scholar whose contribution to a better understanding of the Romanian rural culture in Transylvania is regarded as very significant, published six studies, four of which are analyzed in this volume. His writings prove a thorough knowledge and understanding of the collected materials describing various rituals, such as *turca*, a folk play which was performed at the end of winter and the beginning of spring. He also describes the ev-

eryday aspects of life in the Romanian communities, expressing a balanced and objective point of view on these matters.

The second section of the book, “Folk Tales and Legends,” is dedicated to the Transylvanian Saxon scholars who focused their attention on the Romanian folk tales and legends (Franz Obert, Joseph Haltrich, Friedrich Müller, Joseph Carl Hintz-Hințescu, Adolf Schullerus and Pauline Schullerus). Monica Negoescu explores their studies and presents the individual contribution of all these cultural personalities to the establishment of a realistic image of the Romanian civilization.

The first scholars who began to record folk tales and legends in written form were the Schott brothers (Arthur and Albert) from Stuttgart. It was Arthur Schott, together with his collaborators who managed to collect a large variety of literary treasures, while he travelled to Transylvania and Wallachia, participating in occasional works. The result of this extensive research was comprised in a volume entitled *Walachische Märchen* (Romanian folk tales) (1845), which was highly acclaimed in Germany and Romania.

Franz Obert (1828–1908) is the most important ethnologist of the sixth decade of the 19th century. He was also considered one of the most prominent writers and pedagogues in Transylvania and an outstanding member of the Transylvanian intelligentsia. His article, “Die Mokbanen und ihre Heerden” (The mountain shepherds and their flocks of sheep) (1856) depicts the daily routines, cooking and work habits of the Transylvanian peasants living in the mountains. Along with this information, he mentions the results of the census, giving account on the real number of families living in the area during that pe-

riod. Obert also describes the practices of shepherding, the main occupation of the Romanian inhabitants in that region. Due to his notes and observations, the readers can imagine and understand the rural atmosphere as if they were direct witnesses. During his research work he collected 35 folk tales, published between 1856 and 1859 in several foreign and Romanian journals. After a few more years, Obert's collection of tales reached an astounding number: 85 folk tales and anecdotes, published in 1908, after his death.

Another Transylvanian Saxon scholar who studied the Saxon-Romanian folklore is Joseph Haltrich (1822–1886). He studied theology, classic and German philology in Leipzig. He was mainly interested in the Transylvanian Saxon folklore and folk tales, which he collected in a volume called *Sächsische Volksmärchen aus Siebenbürgen* (Transylvanian-Saxon folk tales). Joseph Haltrich gathered a group of students from the School of Pedagogical Studies and Theology in Sighișoara (Schäßburg, Segesvár), and he organized meetings, encouraging them to tell the folk tales they had heard from the elders. Consequently, he managed to create a scientific community that continued to popularize the folk heritage of Transylvania.

Monica Negoescu brings to light Friedrich Müller's (1828–1915) observations on the Romanian rural legends, which he published in an extensive volume—as well as his perspective on the historical and social development of the Romanian peasant communities in Transylvania. She also presents his contribution to society (he inaugurated a hospital and rebuilt an orphanage). Müller wrote a comparative study on the Romanian and Saxon legends, offering a new perspective

on the differences and similarities between them. He believed that every legend and myth is based on true historical facts, and he thought that legends are the ideal way of shaping the national identity and traditions.

This section of the volume also contains a pertinent analysis of Joseph Carl Hintz-Hințescu's (1828–1900) works in the field of folklore studies. He is the author of the first cookbook written in Romanian, entitled *Bucătăreasa națională* (The national cook), published in 1874. Hintz-Hințescu's collection of folk tales, proverbs, fables, stories and myths were published in several brochures, translated from German into Romanian. His largest volume (1877) contains 3,000 proverbs that were meant to teach moral values. Another significant work written by Hințescu contains 293 folk tales collected in Romania, Banat, Bukovina, Transylvania and Moravia.

Next, the readers are presented with an overall view on Adolf Schullerus' (1864–1928) scientific works and cultural activity. He was interested in the study of folklore, ethnography, literary history, theology. He inherited the passion for the Romanian language and folk tales from his mother, who was very devoted to the study of the Romanian folklore. His collection of translated tales (*Siebenbürgische Märchenbuch*/Transylvanian fairy tale book) was published posthumously in 1930 in Sibiu. Schullerus believed that tales are not meant only for children, but also for grown-ups, because everyone has something to learn from them. He is the first scholar who managed to sort the themes of folk tales into distinct categories.

Pauline Schullerus (1858–1929) is the last important scholar whose remarkable

research methods and results are examined by Monica Negoescu in this book. The author analyzes the new perspective opened by this female Transylvanian Saxon scholar on the Romanian traditions and rituals. Pauline Schullerus witnessed many religious processions during her childhood years in the countryside and consequently she wrote several studies on incantations, the use of herbs in healing procedures or in different rituals. All her first-hand experiences and the way in which she presented them in her works contributed to the creation of a genuine picture of the Transylvanian village life.

All these cultural and anthropological, social and historical facts are brought together in a captivating manner, efficiently combining the results of scientific research with the fascinating writing style. The book is very interesting and compelling, very well-documented, being suitable for readers who wish to get acquainted with the Transylvanian rural traditions, rituals and cultural life.

In our opinion, Monica Negoescu's work should become a coursebook for philology students who are interested in the Transylvanian intercultural Saxon-Romanian relationship and in the social and historical context of the 19th century. □

BOGDANA-CRISTINA-LAURA NEDELCU

MIRCEA-GHEORGHE ABRUDAN

Protopopul Aurel Munteanu (1882-1940), martir al poporului român și mucenic al Bisericii Ortodoxe

(Le Doyen Aurel Munteanu, 1882-1940, martyr du peuple roumain et de l'Église orthodoxe)

Avant-propos par ANDREI ANDREICUȚ,

postface par VASILE PUȘCAȘ

Cluj-Napoca, Renașterea, 2020

LES EXPÉRIENCES de huit décennies qui nous séparent du soi-disant arbitrage de Vienne et de la série de tragédies individuelles et collectives qui s'ensuivirent n'ont pas conféré à l'écrit historique sur ce thème la propension au détachement objectif, élément indispensable à toute recherche en quête de la vérité. La dimension militante du discours historiographique des auteurs issus des deux nations impliquées est le résultat d'un cumul de circonstances objectives. Il s'agit, d'une part, de l'impact de ces événements sur deux réalités qui continuent à générer des défis dans le mental public contemporain, l'État et la Nation, de l'autre, du subjectivisme imposé par les affiliations ethniques et étiques des auteurs ainsi que de la pression que l'intégration de ces thèmes du passé récent dans le patrimoine de l'acte de propagande officielle a exercée sur l'effort honnête de reconstitution du passé. La succession des événements et la conduite des acteurs politiques et diplomatiques impliqués sont connues en détail, et la dynamique de ces événements est éloquente pour l'histoire du droit international ou pour la réflexion sur les conséquences que la Grande Guerre a eues sur les évolutions politiques et ethniques en Europe centrale-orientale. Par contre, leur impact au niveau de la perception des communautés roumaine et hon-

groise a généré la tentation de les mettre au service des causes politiques, depuis le nationalisme revanchard à l'internationalisme prolétaire propre aux régimes staliniens et à la propagande national-communiste ou bien de les abandonner pour des raisons d'opportunité, sous les auspices de l'engagement commun dans le projet de construction européenne.

La monographie publiée par l'historien Mircea-Gheorghe Abrudan se distingue au sein de ce spectre interprétatif, principalement par un sujet moins fréquenté par l'histoire politique : la biographie d'un hiérarque de l'Église orthodoxe transylvaine dont le sacrifice incorpore de véritables valences spirituelles, tout en suggérant de manière prémonitoire la tragédie collective des Roumains, victimes des expériences idéologiques. Si les données de cet assassinat, accepté partiellement comme tel par les autorités hongroises, avaient fait l'objet de plusieurs restitutions documentaires et d'actes juridiques réparateurs, la démarche de l'auteur justifie pleinement son statut scientifique par la multitude de sources documentaires employées, dont quelques-unes inédites, par l'appel à des données spécifiques de l'histoire orale et à des actes officiels antérieurement inaccessibles et, surtout, par l'élargissement de l'aire de recherche des événements traditionnellement circonscrits au politique. L'admiration déclarée de l'auteur pour la personnalité de ce hiérarque ne porte pas atteinte à la cohérence de l'effort de reconstitution de sa vie et sa carrière, comme en témoigne le vaste appareil critique mis à la disposition du lecteur intéressé par des recherches approfondies sur des thématiques similaires.

L'exposition proprement-dite est précédée d'un succinct et édifiant avant-propos appartenant à l'évêque métropolitain Andrei Andreicuț. Il insiste sur les fondements évangéliques ayant inspiré l'activité

pastorale et l'œuvre culturelle du martyr transylvain, ainsi que sur les significations profondes du sacrifice pour la conscience collective et l'existence même de l'homme contemporain. Les notations préliminaires de l'auteur placent la démarche historiographique en relation avec le moment commémoratif et proposent une restitution biographique du hiérarque en suivant sa dimension humaine. L'incursion dans l'historiographie inspirée par cette personnalité de l'orthodoxie transylvaine passe en revue les trois premières biographies du doyen – deux restées en manuscrit et une troisième, appartenant au professeur Nicolae Steiu, publiée –, ainsi que plusieurs mentions concernant les autres sources utilisées, tels que les actes paroissiaux et les écrits de Aurel Munteanu. L'exkurs biographique continue par une évocation succincte de son enfance, qu'il a passée au milieu de la communauté de Merghindeal, de ses études de théologie didactique et des missions précoces au service de la communauté. Son activité pastorale à Valea Drăganului est esquissée dans le chapitre suivant, qui témoigne d'un observateur lucide de l'état précaire de cette communauté mais aussi d'un vecteur actif du progrès social et culturel, grâce à son implication dans les activités de l'ASTRA (Association transylvaine pour la littérature et la culture du peuple roumain) et à la collaboration à des revues roumaines de Transylvanie. L'observateur eut l'opportunité d'entrer en contact avec la dimension concrète de sa mission spirituelle orthodoxe, le travail persévérant au bénéfice des autres, dans l'esprit de la dévotion christique et de l'engagement au service de la cause nationale. Les efforts du père Aurel ne passèrent pas inaperçus par les paroissiens et lui valurent l'élection comme doyen de Huedin, ce qui l'encouragea à s'impliquer plus activement dans la vie de la communauté. Cette impli-

cation s'est matérialisée dans la construction de l'église orthodoxe de Huedin et la création d'un département local de l'ASTRA, dans l'organisation de conférences sur des thèmes d'actualité et dans une attitude civique et politique d'exception à un moment de revirement des actions révisionnistes. Le clerc se révéla aussi un passionné d'histoire de la Transylvanie et de littérature universelle, comme l'atteste le projet de son ouvrage sur John Milton.

La section suivante marque l'entrée de la communauté orthodoxe du doyenné de Huedin en une connexion tragique avec l'histoire politique, suite aux nouvelles frontières roumano-hongroises établies par le Diktat du 30 août 1940 et à l'assassinat du doyen Aurel Munteanu le 10 septembre de la même année. Cet épisode est reconstitué par l'appel à des documents officiels rédigés au cours de l'enquête formelle entreprise par les autorités hongroises et du procès jugé au Tribunal du Peuple de Cluj, en 1946. Le lynchage du clerc roumain, œuvre des membres de la Garde nationale hongroise en complicité avec les autorités locales a généré des réactions de condamnation ferme dans les milieux ecclésiastiques et académiques roumaines. Cette réaction n'a pourtant pas altéré les options éthiques de l'orthodoxie à laquelle le martyr avait dédié toute sa vie, celles de l'amour et du pardon au nom de la Résurrection, évoquées *expressis verbis* dans le discours du métropolitain Nicolae Colan. La narration des faits avec l'exactitude du détail spécifique du document juridique est suivie de l'évocation de la postérité du père Aurel Munteanu, honoré en Roumanie des années 1940, ignoré durant l'expérience stalinienne et récupéré partiellement à partir des années 1970. Les notations finales de l'auteur réitèrent l'émancipation du sujet de l'empreinte de toute interpré-

tation nationaliste et xénophobe, se constituant en une profession de foi, dans le sens d'établir une relation de causalité entre l'appartenance nationale et confessionnelle du doyen et son assassinat comme ennemi de l'État totalitaire. La postface due au professeur Vasile Pușcaș est inspirée par l'attitude déférente à l'égard du clerc martyr et propose une succincte mais substantielle réflexion sur le rôle des élites dans le progrès de la société et leur relation avec les régimes politiques d'occupation ou totalitaires. La publication de quelques sermons et écrits du doyen Aurel Munteanu offre au lecteur l'opportunité de connaître de manière directe le profil culturel et moral de ce représentant du clergé transylvain et les coordonnées de sa mission pastorale.

C'est la biographie d'un représentant de l'élite locale transylvaine, victime de circonstances historiques tragiques, qui avaient finalement conduit à la perte de dizaines de millions de vie humaines sacrifiées au nom de quelques idéologies exclusives, condamnées comme telles par la communauté internationale à la fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Elle s'inscrit dans la série des autres sacrifices que l'engagement au service de la communauté d'origine avait imposés au clergé et au peuple, depuis Tănase Todoran (1659-1763) au saints des prisons. Cette multitude de tragédies personnelles pourrait paraître sans intérêt pour les options éthiques d'une individualité captivée par ses propres capacités, mais captive de l'instinct de conservation et du hasard moral inhérent à la compétition qui caractérise le monde contemporain. D'autre part, l'observateur mis en garde par le revirement du militantisme identitaire et par les risques de l'escalade des attitudes xénophobes peut trouver dans ces notations une certaine image de la chemise tâchée de sang, de nature à

réactualiser des failles que l'expérience de l'intégration européenne n'a pas réussi à totalement anéantir.

Pourtant, la reconstitution de la biographie et du martyre du doyen Aurel Munteanu a des significations incontestables pour les interrogations issues du discours historique roumain contemporain et particulièrement des significations éthiques. D'un point de vue historiographique, la carrière du martyr transylvain explique la survie de cette énigme indéchiffrable pour Ferdinand Lot, à savoir la survie du peuple roumain dans la succession de la dissolution du monde romain, des migrations et de la précarité politique de la région. Cette survie a été assurée par la résistance passive, mais tout aussi ferme, de ceux qui sont restés payer le prix de la loyauté envers leur foi, leur nation et leurs propres convictions, sans tenir compte du fait que l'État auquel ils avaient adhéré plus de deux décennies auparavant les a abandonnés. Ce refus d'une retraite honorable à l'intérieur des frontières établies par l'arbitrage de Vienne anticipe le destin de toute l'élite roumaine, qui a réussi à se sauver en 1940 mais a dû subir la persécution communiste et les expériences de la rééducation. Du point de vue de l'histoire de l'Église, les événements racontés amendent les préjugés intensément fréquentés par les promoteurs des opinions anticléricales en ce qui concerne l'obédience des hommes de l'Église à l'égard du pouvoir politique et leur complicité avec les auteurs des crimes contre l'humanité et établissent une différence nette entre auteurs, complices et victimes.

D'autre part, la tragédie du hiérarque roumain met en évidence une fois de plus que l'inoculation des produits spéculatifs du nationalisme revanchard dans les débats intellectuels de l'entre-deux-guerres risque d'affecter gravement les communautés lo-

cales déjà bouleversées par la dérive du monde capitaliste et les transferts de loyautés ayant accompagné les modifications des affiliations étatiques. Non en dernier lieu, cet épisode de l'histoire relativement récente est un défi pour les repères éthiques du passé et du présent. Ceux qui s'identifient au message christique et témoignent de leur conviction en la résurrection de Jésus-Christ trouvent dans la vie et le martyre du doyen de Huedin un exemple d'amour pour sa communauté spirituelle. C'est un amour qui affranchit l'homme des contraintes que lui impose son existence terrestre et lui assure une liberté inaliénable par rapport aux répressions de l'État totalitaire, à la violence collective, à son potentiel dégénératif et aux anxiétés engendrées par la solitude du monde contemporain. En même temps, le libre penseur pourra reconnaître dans la conduite du protagoniste la fermeté et le dévouement d'une personnalité d'exception, qui soutient ses propres convictions au risque de subir les conséquences de l'exclusivisme national. En dernière instance, le martyre du doyen Aurel Munteanu peut constituer pour chacun d'entre nous une bonne occasion de réfléchir sur nos propres vulnérabilités, telles la disponibilité au compromis, la primauté donnée aux opportunités et au succès facile. Il est aussi un appel indirect à la générosité, au dévouement et à l'altruisme, ainsi que l'illustration d'une thèse véhiculée par l'orthodoxie roumaine dans l'entre-deux-guerres, suivant laquelle la mesure de notre foi chrétienne est le sacrifice. Il ne s'agit pas d'un sacrifice inspiré par la passion autodestructive du fanatisme, mais bien du sacrifice comme acte qui unit le principe chrétien de l'amour pour son proche à la dimension thaumaturgique du pardon.

□

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IONEL BOAMFĂ
Geografie istorică

(Historical geography)

 Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza,” 2019

IN THE city of Iași, the start of the university year coincides with a well established event among geographers, entitled “Proceedings of Dimitrie Cantemir International Geography Seminar,” organized by the Geography Department of Alma Mater Iassiensis. Within this context, at the 39th edition of the event, on 18th October 2019, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University hosted the launch of *Geografie istorică* (Historical geography), authored by Professor Ionel Boamfă.

Quantitatively, it is comprised of a total of 476 pages, also encompassing a number of 14 tables, where the processed statistical information forms the basis of most of the cartographic representations (295 figures). The book also contains an Addendum (pp. 447–449), which proposes several ideas for the optimization of the administrative-territorial organization of Romania, taking into account the results of the 2002 Census. There is also a vast Bibliography (pp. 451–476), with 575 titles, out of which 508 are classic sources, the rest being website links. The front cover depicts “The Geographer,” an oil on canvas painting by Jan Vermeer van Delft, completed around 1669, currently on display at the Städelsches Kunstinstitut und Städtische Galerie).

After its Contents (pp. 5–6) comes a Foreword (pp. 7–8), signed by Emeritus Professor Alexandru Ungureanu, corres-

ponding member of the Romanian Academy.

The book’s author, gifted with one of the most comprehensive scientific educations when it comes to historical geography, succeeds in presenting several concepts regarding the evolution of this branch of human geography. Three distinct development stages are depicted, from the international level to European, and then to national-Romanian level. The subject matter was partially ignored after the Second World War, its return into the scientific spotlight taking place only during the last three decades. Furthermore, the author emphasizes the importance of historical geography and its status as an “intermediate discipline,” between geography and history, concluding with a definition put forward by geographer Élisée Réclus: “Geography is a History of space, while History—a Geography of time.”

The critical and thoughtful analysis of the bibliography allowed the author to create a theoretical and methodological basis, making use of human geography concepts, and formulating adapted hypotheses, updated specifically for the domain at hand. Also worth mentioning from the second chapter, the “Methodological Specifications on the Creation of an Administrative Database for the Romanian Space,” aided Professor Ionel Boamfă in creating an original codification for settlements. It uses a system of letters and numbers marking the state, geographical-historical province, administrative-territorial unit and so on. The result is therefore a code of different “lengths,” facilitating statistical-cartographic data processing, for different eras, based on the aggregated information. For instance, for the City of Cluj—we have the

following code: ROTRS10400101 (RO = Romania; TRS = Transylvania; 1 = Ardeal; 04 = Cluj County; 001 = City of Cluj; 01 = Cluj).

The third chapter of the book, “Evolution of the Natural and Anthropogenic Geographical Space: Review of the Humanization Process and Past Economic Activities with the Help of Historical Geography,” is the most extended (pp. 41–349), focusing primarily on the time-spatial distribution of the ethnic and linguistic structure of the world’s population for a period of more than three millennia (3,200 years), between 1200 BC and the beginning of the third millennium AD (the year 2010). The entire analysis is accompanied by a vast cartographic basis (36 maps) which “aims to depict the current international political-administrative divisions, in order to facilitate data comparison between different historical eras and periods” (p. 42). The second part of the chapter presents the time-spatial distribution of the per capita GDP, from the end of Antiquity (AD 1–600), followed by the Middle Ages, and the modern and contemporary periods (the year 2010).

It also contains some historical and geographic specificities regarding anthroponyms. A larger section is dedicated to issues regarding the time and space evolution of the Thracian-Gaeto-Dacian and Romanian space, with fascinating glimpses into Romanization and the formation of the Romanian people and language. Also, we find some information on the ethnic and religious structure of the Romanian space during modern and contemporary times (1831–2011), alongside 15 engrossing maps.

The same logic, depth and scientific approach are found in the subchapter titled

“Specificities of Agricultural and Pastoral Activities in the Carpathian-Balkan Space” (pp. 196–344), where the author makes use of an entire methodological arsenal, characteristic not only to the two main disciplines, but also to ethnography and linguistics, emphasizing “the past spatial distribution of shepherding based on toponyms and anthroponyms from the European Romanic space, attested by names derived from Latin **berbecariu(s)* and **pecorariu(s)*, as well as the spatial distribution of names derived from Romanian words: baci [shepherd], stână [sheepfold] . . .” (p. 196), concluding that “as an activity deeply rooted in the Thracian-Dacian and Roman periods, the shepherding from the Carpathian-Balkan space left a rich heritage in Romanian terminology, especially in etymology and proper names” (p. 343).

The book ends with chapter 4, “The Historical Geography Specificities of the Administrative Organization of the Carpathian-Balkan Space” (pp. 351–445), with focus on the old lands-counties-areas of the Romanian countries, as well as the old regime’s attempts to conduct an administrative reform of Romania. Another major focus was on the Romanian representation in the European Parliament, due to the numerous proposals for regionalization from 2012.

The scientific content, the thoroughness of the approach and the text’s accuracy make the book a must read for various specialists, such as geographers, historians, ethnographers, and social scientists.



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