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ASTRA
A Model for the Organization of Romanian Civil Society in Transylvania During Dualism

Ioan Bolovan

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Undoubtedly, after 1989, one of the notions that became quite topical in Romanian political science is that of civil society. The mass-media significantly contributed to this spectacular evolution. Civil society could be defined very simply as the system of intermediate associations that are neither the state, nor the extended family. Consequently, civil society includes associations based on voluntary activity, businesses, and other corporative entities. It is represented by the social and civil institutions and organizations which are the basis of a functioning democracy. Civil society organizations

A more concise variant of this article was published in Romanian: Ioan Bolovan, "ASTRA, societatea civilă românească din Transilvania şi statul dualist," in *Administrație românească arădeană: Studii şi comunicări*, ed. Doru Sinaci and Emil Arbonie (Arad: Vasile Goldiş University Press, 2012), 198–206.

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participate in the decision-making process underpinning social development and in all public decisions. Actually, according to a widespread formula:

> *Civil society is a notion referring to apolitical associative forms which are not part of any fundamental institution of the state or of the business world. Thus,* NGOs*, associations or foundations, trade unions, businessmen's unions make up civil society. They intervene with the decision-making factors and the institutions supporting the rule of law in order to influence them with a view to defending the rights and the interests of the citizens that they represent.*[1]

Modern society is structured into three components: the economic component, the political element (the fundamental institutions of the state), and the civil society, the non-profit sector which legitimizes and amends the other two components. In other words, civil society includes a whole system of structures allowing citizens new roles and social relationships through various forms of participation in public life. Beyond its institutional level, civil society is made up of citizens who associate under various forms and participate in public life, influence policies, defend and promote the people's interests. The well-known specialist Sergiu Tămaş stated that

> *the formation of civil society is the result of the spontaneous and creative movement of the citizens willingly instituting various forms of political, economic, and cultural association. Within civil society, citizens become part of a network of social relationships, voluntarily participating in the activity of many associations, organizations, clubs, in pursuit of various objectives and interests. The organizations of civil society are autonomous in regard to the state, as they represent multiple centers of power, a system of non-state powers.*[2]

It is Liviu Maior, a well-known historian of Transylvania, who has recently introduced in Romanian historiography the notion of "Romanian civil society." During dualism, as a consequence of the Romanians' status in Transylvania, hundreds of professional and cultural, regional and local institutions were created: cultural associations and societies, women's associations, primary school teachers' organizations, school and student reading clubs, choirs, economic associations, etc. They helped strengthen the Romanian national conscience. This associative emulation led to the emergence and consolidation of the Romanian nation and it represents a genuine "Romanian civil society" adapted to the political, cultural, and economic conditions of that time.[3] Consequently, it is my contention that the "Romanian civil society" in Transylvania exhibited a peculiarity that resulted from the Transylvanian Romanians' living conditions between

1867 and 1918. This does not minimize in any way its value and importance for the Romanians in this province. The contribution of the Romanian civil society to the modernization of Transylvania during the decades preceding World War I was manifest and undeniable. The model followed by the Romanians was quite widespread in the Dual Monarchy, as some peoples had begun the associative process earlier, the Czechs being the most advanced in this respect.[4]

The Austro-Hungarian Dualism made Transylvania lose any trace of its autonomy, as this province was integrated, from the political and the administrative point of view, into Hungary. The legislation passed by the Hungarian Parliament after 1867 was meant, explicitly or not, to create a homogenous Hungarian national state. By assimilating ethnic groups and through a demographic policy that met the interests of the administration in Budapest, the percentage of the Hungarian population increased. The Romanians' reaction to dualism was not slow in coming. First came the representative national assemblies, a formula consecrated during the 1848 Revolution. On 3/15 May 1868 thousands of Romanians celebrated two decades since the Great National Assembly of 3/15–5/17 May 1848. A political document entitled *The Pronouncement* was also adopted on that occasion. Then, at the beginning of 1869, the city of Timişoara hosted the National Conference of the Romanians in Banat, where Alexandru Mocioni proposed the creation of a party-like modern political organization and the National Party of the Romanians in Banat and Hungary was founded. Their preferred tactic was political solidarity with the other nationalities in Hungary and with the Romanians in Transylvania. The stated political program accepted dualism, but challenged it from democratic and liberal positions. In the spring of 1869, at the initiative of Ioan Raţiu, Ilie Măcelariu, and Visarion Roman, the National Conference of the Transylvanian Romanians was convened and the National Party of the Romanians in Transylvania was founded under the leadership of I. Măcelariu. The program of the Party relied on the principles of the revolutionary program presented at Blaj, in 1848, and it included provisions on the autonomy of Transylvania, equal rights for all nationalities, the democratization of political life and of the administrative and judicial institutions, etc. The tactic proposed was one of passivism, followed until 1905, when the Romanians returned to political life and participated in the elections for the Parliament in Budapest.[5]

Besides political manifestations (the Memorial, the Memorandum, parliamentary struggle etc.), the Romanians resisted dualism especially through their cultural institutions. Nowadays nobody doubts that the strategy of the nineteenth-century movements for national emancipation in Central and Southeast Europe relied on culture as a decisive element in the process of fostering national solidarity. This cultural component included, among many other things, the regional associations founded before the *Ausgleich* of 1867.

The Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People (ASTRA)—1861, the Society for Romanian Culture and Literature in Bukovina—1862, the Arad National Association for the Culture of the Romanian People—1863, etc., brought an important contribution to the assertion of national identity and, indirectly, to political militantism. Thanks to their regional character, these NGOs energized the cultural activity on a wide geographical area, coalescing the intellectual elite from several urban centers. At the same time, they granted rural communities access to culture.[6] After 1869, ASTRA founded branches almost all over Transylvania, which favored and amplified the culture–society dialogue and brought the rural community into public life, even if sometimes this involved only the local elite (teachers, priests, public notaries). ASTRA made the Romanians visible in public life and involved them in the life of the national community that could, therefore, overcome the historical marginalization experienced for centuries.[7] The periodical election of the leadership of all ASTRA branches meant that thousands and thousands of Romanians could exercise their right to vote, even if at that time they did not participate in political elections because of the income-based suffrage. For them, the election of the central and the local leadership of ASTRA was an extremely valuable democratic exercise, because it fostered and validated the political maturity of the Romanian nation in Transylvania for the autumn of 1918, when the county national committees and the local ones, as well as the delegates to Alba Iulia, were democratically elected.

The periodical meetings of the Board in Sibiu and the yearly general assemblies which were held in various towns were also opportunities when political leaders could meet and discuss their political and cultural strategy. The general assemblies also allowed for deliberations about the main problems of the Romanian political movement in a more intimate setting. For instance, in 1869, the leaders of ASTRA initiated and organized national conferences in Banat and Transylvania, which led to the founding of the two parties. The yearly general assemblies and the Board meetings were opportunities to express national solidarity and ensure the unity of the national cultural strategy that had been agreed upon by the regional associations. On the other hand, these general assemblies attended by the representatives of all Transylvanian Romanians were "a great parliament of Romanian culture which paved the way for a political parliament."[8] The political role of the regional cultural associations did not dwindle after 1869, when national political parties came into being. The activities of these parties were not permanent and most of the Romanian general public were not involved in them (except during the election campaigns and during some exceptional events, such as the Memorandum). Every month the Transylvanian leaders attended the board meetings of the regional associations, where they could get information about the political developments within the Monarchy and about all the political and the national issues that concerned the Romanian community. Because of the strong presence of its members and of a numerous general public (diverse from the point of view of its social composition), the ASTRA yearly general assemblies fostered relations among the Romanians and fueled the enthusiasm for the great national ideals.[9] Socializing during the general assemblies, the periodical contact between the elites and the base of the political, the cultural, and the national movement increased the solidarity specific to the institutional forms of modern civil society. The adage formulated by Slavici—"For the Romanians, the sun rises in Bucharest"—meant that general cultural Romanian values were promoted and that the Transylvanian Romanians' cultural and political evolution was in agreement with the realities in Romania. In fact, the Transylvanian Romanians' leaders constantly had in mind the Romanian Old Kingdom's general model of social organization. It is equally important that the 1859 Union, the creation of the national Romanian state and of its institutions, as well as the construction of civil society in the Romanian Old Kingdom, spurred the associationism of the Romanians living outside of Romania.[10]

The introduction of the dualist system influenced the cultural and the national strategy of the emancipation movement of the Romanians in Hungary and it called for new organizational forms. In 1870, Iacob Bologa suggested that ASTRA should have branches in various areas of Transylvania: Abrud, Alba Iulia, Blaj, Braşov, Cluj, Dej, Gherla, Făgăraş, etc. By the end of the nineteenth century, as the influence of ASTRA in Maramureş, Crişana, and Banat increased, the number of its branches and offices grew. Just before World War I, ASTRA had 87 branches. They ensured closer contacts between the leaders of the national movement and the rural community. The branches and offices of ASTRA, the social program of the Arad Association, considerably influenced the ordinary people's approach to public life. Romanian writings were disseminated among the peasants, conferences for the general public and literacy campaigns were organized, public libraries (about 600) opened before World War I, community centers and farmers' clubs were established. The aim of all these activities was to involve the rural community in national militantism. ASTRA also issued other publications, more or less long-lived, such as *Ţara Noastră* (Our country) or *Revista industrială* (The industrial magazine). Very popular in the villages were the series of pamphlets or booklets entitled *Biblioteca tineretului* (The youth library) and *Biblioteca poporală* (The people's library) which dealt with very diverse topics: literature, morals, hygiene, history, or farming. Among the authors there were important personalities such as V. Alecsandri, O. Goga, G. Coşbuc, Ion Creangă, P. Ispirescu, I. Lupaş, Il. Chendi, M. Sadoveanu, C. Negruzzi, and I. Agârbiceanu. Printed in tens of thousands of copies, these publications developed the Romanian peasant's taste for reading and contributed to educating several generations in the national spirit. 165,000 copies had been printed by 1911.

ASTRA also initiated cultural and social actions for the benefit of the whole national community. The teachers' prestige was very high and this professional group constantly supported the modernization of the Romanian society from all points of view. As recently noticed, through its numerous associations, societies, and clubs, the Romanian civil society in Transylvania intended to bring about and stimulate the secularization of the national ideology, modernize the nation and organize society.[11] We must also emphasize the very important role of ASTRA in supporting the students of vocational schools. Their number increased and this led to their more efficient integration for the benefit of the communities to which they belonged. The development of civil society is usually associated with a middle class that can afford to get involved in specific actions, benefitting from a certain economic and cultural position. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, this Romanian middle class had gained visibility in Transylvania. All the associations and institutions that were the result of the appearance and development of the Romanian civil society in Transylvania were funded only by private donations and membership fees. They were associative forms relying on ethnic and socio-professional criteria, they were based on voluntary commitment and the desire to work within the community for its material, social, cultural, and also national progress. In conclusion, the massive integration of all the Romanian social classes in Transylvania in the society–culture–nationality dialogue was achieved, first of all, through ASTRA and all the associations functioning during dualism. This represents an undeniable proof of the political and national dynamism present at the level of all socio-professional structures of the Romanian nation in Transylvania at the outbreak of World War I. Generally speaking, at the end of the nineteenth century and during the decades preceding the war, not only in Transylvania but also in the extra-Carpathian Romanian territories there was an increase in the social groups connected to industry, trade, banking, etc. and a decrease in the percentage of the working population connected to primary production. It is common knowledge that, in general terms, it was not the peasantry who got involved in civil society, but other socio-professional groups from Transylvania. During the decades preceding the Union, education, increasing literacy, and better education had a very important role in the transition of the socio-professional structure of Transylvania from a quasi-agrarian model to an agrarian–industrial one. Without entering into a detailed analysis of this problem, I only want to point out that in 1869 only 311,847 inhabitants of Transylvania (13% of the population) could read and write, whereas in 1910, there were 823,053 inhabitants (28,3%) who had these skills.[12] Within four decades, the population having received an education—of course, at different levels—doubled. It was against this framework that the professions specific to an open, capitalist economy (court clerks, the army, the administration, the banking system, trade, health, intellectuals, etc.) and implicitly, the headhunting for various organizational structures of civil society increased. When the war broke out, in spite of all the discrepancies that still characterized the province, Transylvania was irreversibly on the road to a modern society, with an occupational structure showing the remarkable progress made in the six decades since the abolition of feudal relations. The Romanian civil society experienced the same evolution.

The ethnographic exhibitions organized by ASTRA (in 1862, 1881, 1905), the balls, the activities intended to valorize and preserve the traditional heritage initiated in Sibiu, Arad, or Sighet were extremely popular among the Romanian general public. The impact of such activities was huge. They showed the Romanian people's progress in home industry and the trades, as well as the artistry of its traditional heritage. Obviously, the opening of the ASTRA Museum in Sibiu, in 1905, was one of the most grandiose Romanian national events. Built by the Romanians' own efforts, without any support from the Hungarian state, the ASTRA Museum became one of the most enduring national museum complexes.

Cultural societies and the professional institutions previously mentioned were due, first of all, to the evolution towards modernity of the Romanian society in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, although more than once the foreign domination proved to be intolerant to the manifestations of the Romanians' national spirit. It is obvious that, beyond their national component, they were all part of a genuine civil Romanian society where problems relevant for the general societal evolution of the time were approached and dealt with: women's emancipation, women's right to vote, universal suffrage, the industrial workers' social protection, the fight against illiteracy and alcoholism, specific professional rights, etc. A very important aspect of this problem is that, in most of these institutions functioning all over Transylvania, there were quite a lot of lawyers, which increased the prestige of these associations and also made it possible to secure funding for many initiatives.[13]

The general Romanian solidarity was very strong in the autumn of 1918 and this was largely due to the activities initiated during the five decades when professional associations and cultural institutions functioned and kept promoting the ideal of national unity. The contribution of the Romanian civil society to the national revival of the Romanians in Transylvania was acknowledged and appreciated by the entire Romanian political class. In the 7/10 November 1918 summons to the Great National Assembly of Alba Iulia, there was an explicit provision about the presence of the elected representatives of the cultural associations: "Two representatives of the cultural associations (ASTRA, the Theatre Association, the Arad Association) shall attend the Assembly." This means that the cultural and the national importance of these institutions was recognized.[14] On 1 December 1918, in Alba Iulia were present delegates of the main institutions and associations that made up the Romanian civil society in Transylvania. ASTRA was represented by 2 delegates, the Arad National Association sent 2 delegates, the Society for the Assistance of the Romanian Journalists in Transylvania, Banat, and the Areas Inhabited by the Romanians in Hungary sent 2 delegates, etc. Although it was not as sizeable as the civil society in other areas of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the Romanian associative movement in Transylvania was an element that cannot be neglected in the modernization of the Romanian society in this region and in the development of national identity. Especially after 1866, ASTRA was both a Romanian Academy for the Romanians in the Austrian Monarchy and the civic leader that awakened the civic and the democratic conscience of the Romanian population in Transylvania. We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to those who founded ASTRA and then made it the most representative institution of the Romanian nation in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy till 1918.

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Notes

1. For further details on this topic, see the following sites: www.fdsc.ro; http://www.fndc.ro/comunitate/societatea_civila.html; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_society.
2. Sergiu Tămaş, *Dicţionar politic: Instituţiile democraţiei şi cultura civică* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1993), 258.
3. Liviu Maior, *Habsburgi şi români: De la loialitatea dinastică la identitate naţională* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2006), 8. More recently, Professor Liviu Maior dealt with this topic in a fascinating study: *Asociaţionism şi naţionalism la românii din Transilvania* (Cluj-Napoca: Şcoala Ardeleană, 2022).
4. Jan Havranek, "The Development of Czech Nationalism," *Austrian History Yearbook* 3, 2 (1967): 239.
5. Dumitru Suciu, *Mişcarea antidualistă a românilor din Austro-Ungaria şi Ilie Măcelariu (1867–1891)* (Bucharest: Albatros, 2002), 194.
6. Ioan Bolovan, *Asociaţia Naţională Arădeană pentru Cultura Poporului Român: Între local, regional şi naţional (1863–1918)*, foreword by Nicolae Bocşan, preface by Liviu Maior, 3rd edition, rev. and enl. (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Academiei Române, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2023), 15.

7. Vasile Curticăpeanu, "Caracterul european şi modernizator al concepţiei şi activităţii ASTREI până la Unirea din 1918," in *Astra (1861–1950): 125 de ani de la înfiinţare*, ed. Victor V. Grecu (Sibiu: Academia Republicii Socialiste România, 1987), 85 sqq.
8. Vasile Netea, *Spre unitatea statală a poporului român: Legături politice şi culturale între anii 1859–1918* (Bucharest: Editura Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică, 1979), 74; Ioan Bolovan, "Raporturile ASTREI cu Asociaţia naţională arădană pentru cultura poporului român (1863–1918)," *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai, Historia* 32, 1 (1987): 36.
9. Mihai Sofronie, "ASTRA—promotoare a solidarităţii româneşti," *Transilvania* 4 (81), 5 (1975): 60; SJAAN, ASTRA Archival Collections, file 210/1907, fols. 108 sq.
10. Nicolae Bocşan, "Transilvania şi unirea din 1859: Implicaţii culturale," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie şi Arheologie Cluj-Napoca* 27 (1985–1986): 487 sqq.
11. Maior, *Habsburgi şi români*, 8.
12. Ioan Bolovan, *Transilvania între Revoluţia de la 1848 şi Unirea din 1918: Contribuţii demografice* (Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2000), 235.
13. Dan Demşa, "Avocaţii români arădeni în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea," in *Societate şi civilizaţie în Banatul istoric*, ed. Camil Petrescu (Timişoara: Mirton, 2003), 147 sqq.
14. *1918 la români: Documentele Unirii*, vol. 8, eds. Ştefan Pascu and Ion Popescu-Puţuri (Bucharest: Editura Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică, 1989), 6.

Abstract
ASTRA: A Model for the Organization of Romanian Civil Society in Transylvania During Dualism

Liviu Maior, a well-known historian of Transylvania, used for the first time in Romanian historiography the notion of "Romanian civil society," in order to depict hundreds of professional and cultural, regional and local institutions that were created before World War I: cultural associations and societies, women's reunions, primary school teachers' organizations, pupils' and students' reading clubs, choirs, economic associations etc. This associative emulation led to the building and the consolidation of the Romanian nation and it represents a genuine "Romanian civil society" adapted to the political, the cultural, and the economic conditions of the age. The contribution of the Romanian civil society to the modernization of Transylvania during the decades preceding World War I was visible and undeniable. The Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People (ASTRA)—1861, the Arad National Association for the Culture of the Romanian People—1863 etc. had an important contribution to affirming national identity and to the extension of the cultural activity on a wide geographical area coalescing the intellectual elite from several urban centres. ASTRA made the Romanians visible in public life and involved them in the life of the national community that could, therefore, overcome the historical marginalization it had experienced for centuries. All the associations and the institutions that were the result of the appearance and the development of the Romanian civil society in Transylvania were funded only from private donations and the members' fees. They were associative forms relying on ethnic and socio-professional criteria, they were based on voluntary commitment and the desire to work within the community for its material, social, cultural, and, not lastly, national progress.

Keywords
Transylvania, Romanian civil society, ASTRA, modernization

Iuliu-Marius Morariu

Romanians and Cultural Associationism in the Bistriţa-Năsăud Area During the Dualist Period

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Introduction

Cultural associationism is a topic that has been previously approached by Romanian historians.[1] During the dualist period (1867–1918), it was almost a survival strategy for Romanians, in terms of their national identity. In those decades, given the difficulties posed by political representativity, Romanians resorted to associations in order to educate the next generation. This was a means of passing on values and a form of preserving the spiritual and literary heritage. The same held true for other nations that were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which also had such cultural associations. Given the relevance of cultural associationism for the Romanians living in Transylvania, we intend to bring attention to a particular aspect. Based both on historiographical approaches already published, and on documents found in the archives, such as those of Bistriţa-Năsăud County, we will discuss how cultural associationism was understood, its principles, its role, and how it helped the Romanian people become more aware of their responsibility in relation to their national identity.

Cultural Associationism and Its Forms of Manifestation in Bistriţa-Năsăud County

As other studies have already emphasized,[2] cultural associationism emerged under various forms in that northern part of Transylvania that we focus on, namely, the territory of the current Bistriţa-Năsăud County. Since the majority of the Romanian population in the area was concentrated in Năsăud rather than in Bistriţa, where the German population was dominant, most of the activities of the four most important associations in the field (ASTRA, the Mariana musical association, the teachers' association, and the reading association) took place in Năsăud. ASTRA (The Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and Culture) was founded in 1861, the musical association in 1881,[3] the reading one in 1857 (with a multinational content),[4] and the teachers' association in 1861–1862.[5] We see that, with one exception, all of them were founded before 1867, the moment when dualism began. Most probably, they were originally designed as institutions with a cultural relevance, meant to promote the Romanian heritage and to bring together intellectuals in an effort to stimulate the dialogue between them and the transmission of values. After 1867, they also became a form of survival for the Romanians living in Transylvania, who were almost completely deprived of political rights. Some of these associations also edited journals, which can be considered a consequence of cultural associationism.

ASTRA—The Năsăud Department

Clearly, the most influential cultural institution in the area, active continuously until 1948 (and revived after 1989), was ASTRA. With a department founded in 1881,[6] the institution had members from the city and its neighboring villages since its founding in 1861.[7] The Greek Catholic dean of Rodna, together with some intellectuals and priests,[8] took part in its meetings and encouraged young people in particular to join it. In 1870, before the official recognition of the Department, ASTRA held its general assembly in the city.[9] Another general assembly followed in 1870,[10] while the one from 1914 was cancelled because of the beginning of the Great War. Although ASTRA did not publish a journal in the Năsăud area, its general publication, *Transilvania*, which was printed in Sibiu, often provided information about the members of the institution, the conferences it organized, and other elements related to the institution.

On closer inspection, the activities organized in Năsăud included conferences held by various scholars, libraries, or meetings. The conferences took place mostly in churches, given that, at the time, they were the only venues which could provide the space for the approximately four or five hundred people attending such events. In rare situations, the meetings of the Department took place in restaurants or clubs. As to the topics approached, they included especially aspects related to the Romanian culture or to religion and agriculture. The purpose of the institution was therefore to contribute to the dissemination of practical knowledge among the people, while also aiming to enhance the feeling of accountability in relation to their ethnical belonging. Moreover, works like that of Octavian Goga, entitled "Ţăranul în literatura noastră poetică" (The peasant in our poetic literature) (Bistriţa, 1907), or that of Archpriest Grigore Pletosu, entitled "Creşterea naţională" (The national growth),[11] published the same year, encouraged the production of literary creations meant to stimulate or promote the peasant.

Considering its origins, ASTRA also encouraged people to study and supported them. Together with Fondurile Grănicereşti năsăudene (The Năsăud border funds)[12] and the Gojdu Foundation, ASTRA contributed consistently with funds for young people who wanted to study. While the two aforementioned institutions focused more on the university level, ASTRA also helped young people to study agriculture or in practical fields (arts and crafts). Moreover, it was Pletosu's concern, as president of the youth section (1901–1911), to work on a project dedicated to young people who finished their studies in agriculture, so that they would stay in touch with culture.[13]

The Mariana Musical Association

ALTHOUGH IT was not one of the most relevant institutions from the point of view of its representativeness, the Mariana musical association had an important say in the development of the Romanian imprint in the Năsăud area. It was founded in 1888 and its aim was to stir the passion for music, in particular the Christian-inspired one.[14] It did not neglect cultural and literary life, either. Unfortunately, in the Archives of Bistriţa-Năsăud County, there is a real scarcity of documents about this institution, which complicates the task of any historian trying to piece together its activity.

Compared with ASTRA, which had honorary, ordinary, associated, and collective members, the Mariana musical association had active, supporting, founding, and honorary members[15] and received most of its funds from membership fees and donations. As stipulated in its statutes, the association had a yearly general assembly. During the 19th century, the presidency was mostly held by Alexandru Larionessi, who had a PhD in law,[16] was a lawyer in Năsăud, and was supported by the Romanian intellectuals in the city. At the same time, the Border Gymnasium of Năsăud had a consistent contribution to the activity of the institution. Thus, associations were mostly hosted in the big hall of the school,[17] with professors and their families almost always attending them.[18] Since the headquarters of the Second Border Regiment also had representatives in the Rodna village, soon after the founding of the singing association, a section was also opened in Rodna.

The activity of the institution was rich, with a particular focus on culture. If we look at different schedules kept until nowadays, we find lists of carols, piano compositions, poems belonging to various Romanian authors, such as Dimitrie Bolintineanu, and theatre activities, among others. As expected, the association also had a choir,[19] which prepared performances for each event. On some occasions, like in 1889, religious events were accompanied by performances of the Mariana musical association. The consecration of the new school of Rodna was followed by such a representation.[20] At the time, the president of the association was Gherasim Domide, and its secretary was the teacher and writer Ion Pop Reteganul. These moments were also an occasion for the institution to collect funds that were later invested in purchasing books for school libraries, or in scholarships offered to students. Therefore, for each event the participants paid between 50 and 80 *crăiţari*.[21]

Later, at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, the association was sometimes a real bridge between the Romanians in Transylvania and the ones beyond the Carpathian Mountains. The first soloist of the Romanian Opera in Bucharest, Irena de Vladaia,[22] performed at one of its events. Quite notably, the students enjoyed discounts.[23]

Another particularity of the institution was that it promoted feminism before this aspect became important for society. Upon looking closer at the membership list, one can notice that the majority of the leading committee consisted of women.[24] Although the president was a man, and there were also some other men on the list, the fact is that a majority of at least 75% of all members were women. This can be partially explained by the activities carried out by the association and by the existence of a choir.

The Reading Association (Casina)

Together with ASTRA, it was one of the most important cultural associations in the Năsăud area. It was also founded before the dualist period. Moreover, from its beginning, it was a multiethnic institution. Based on the Romanian Reading Society in Sibiu,[25] founded three years earlier, in 1854, the Reading Association, also called the Casina[26] due to its location, received money from membership fees and brought together an important number of journals, both in Romanian and German. The role of the association was to update people on news of the world,[27] and to discuss important decisions regarding the community. Just like the musical association, for a few years the reading one also had a Department in Rodna (founded in 1862), with eight journals published.[28] Later, the association was integrated into ASTRA. The Năsăud section remained functional until 1948, when the communists closed it down. Both in Rodna and Năsăud, the association held monthly events with an average of 30 participants. This was important because they were dedicated only to intellectuals.[29] The list of journals that the institution published covered pedagogical, cultural, literary, and social topics. The journals published in Transylvania and in Bucharest[30] were part of the collections we studied.[31]

In 1861, the Năsăud Romanian autonomous district was founded, which meant that some of the foreign officers left the area and the number of Romanians increased, which led to the association becoming a Romanian one. Unfortunately, there are no documents from between 1871 and 1878, which prevents us from reconstructing its full history.[32] Nonetheless, the association is supposed to have had a constant, uninterrupted activity.

Beyond cultural topics, the Reading Association also touched upon social and religious aspects. Therefore, the 1910 meeting discussed the issue of appointing the dean of Rodna. The 41 members of that time discussed the three candidates, namely, the priest Ioan Dologa from Tiha Bârgăului, and Ioan Năşcuţiu and Alexandru Haliţă from Năsăud,[33] suggesting the appointment of the latter. At the same time, a suggestion was also made to the Gherla bishop, who took it into consideration. In 1912, the project of a National House in Năsăud was discussed. This was meant to host all cultural and economic institutions in the area.[34] The association received 1,000 lei from the Mercur Bank. It also requested money from the Năsăud Border Funds and a venue at Hotel Rahova. Unfortunately, their efforts were not successful, because the National Border school was later built on that same location.[35]

The Mariana Teachers' Association of Năsăud

This association stems from the one founded on 17 September 1862, in Sibiu, which was intended for all the schools of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolitan Church of Transylvania. Starting from 1862–1863, conferences were hosted every year.[36] Given that Romanian schools were mostly confessional in this part of Northern Transylvania and the majority of the population was Greek Catholic, in 1869, the dean of Rodna, Maxim Pop, asked for an association of the deanery and an association of the teachers.[37] In the same period, circles were also founded in Caransebeş (447 members, in 14 circles), Arad (238 members, 14 circles), the diocese of Alba Iulia and Făgăraş (108 members).[38] Năsăud had 152 members, grouped in 4 school circles. The number of members was even higher than in the case of ASTRA and it remained constant. Professors and institutors took part in all activities. Since the founding of the association, each member was asked to write a short monograph of the place where they were working.[39] The requests for both associations to be founded were sent to the Ministry in 1872, but they were only approved in 1876.[40] Between 1878 and 1901, there were 23 assemblies and the headquarters remained in Năsăud.[41]

The activities carried out by the association included some related to the Romanians outside Transylvania, which is proof of the solidarity with them. For example, on the occasion of a prize received by Vasile Alecsandri at Montpellier in France, Vasile Petri and the members of the committee sent him a telegram, to congratulate him.[42]

A particularity of the association is that it had a publication, called *Vatra Calendarului pedagogic* (The hearth of the pedagogical calendar), which was founded in 1885 and was meant to be an almanac.[43] Unfortunately, it was discontinued. Moreover, on 3 December 1884, there was also a conflict between the members of the association, because the editor, who was at that time Vasile Petri, decided to print 500 copies without consulting them.[44] As expected, the dean of Rodna was also the president of the association and some of its activity caught the interest of the Austro-Hungarian authorities. Consequently, the association was suspended at the end of the last decade of the 19th century, given the change of statutes. At the insistence of dean Grigore Moisil and of other intellectuals, it was soon reopened.[45]

Conclusions

As we have tried to show in this paper, during the second half of the 19th century, cultural associationism was an important form of expression and action for the Romanians living in the Năsăud area. The four important associations we presented spoke both about existing cultural concerns and about the needs of the people. As a general consideration, we noticed that the good cooperation between the school and the Rodna deanery[46] contributed to the unity and the visibility of certain actions. Another observation is that the process unfolded from the top to the bottom. The intellectuals were the ones who coagulated and exported certain principles. At the same time, while some institutions, such as ASTRA, dedicated their work to all the people and provided access to their events to everybody, there were also professional associations, like the one of the teachers, or elitist associations, like the reading association. Another relevant aspect is that, in some cases, the work of associations was discontinued and the help of Romanian publications like *Telegraful Român* (The Romanian telegraph) or *Transilvania* of Sibiu contributed to the dissemination of the results of their activities. The fact that teachers issued their own journal, although with interruptions, is also important. In conclusion, cultural associationism represented an important pillar in the development of the Romanian identity in Transylvania and in the dissemination of literary, ethnographic, linguistic, or religious values.

❑

Notes

1. See, for example, Liviu Maior, Ioan Aurel Pop, and Ioan Bolovan, "Cuvânt înainte," in *Asociaţionism şi naţionalism cultural în secolele XIX–XX*, ed. Liviu Maior, Ioan-Aurel Pop, and Ioan Bolovan (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2011), 7; Maxim Morariu, *Asociaţionismul cultural din zona Bistriţei şi a Năsăudului (1850–1918)* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2017); Liviu Maior, "Despre asociaţionism şi autonomizare în Transilvania secolelor al XIX-lea şi al XX-lea," in *Asociaţionism şi naţionalism cultural*, ed. Maior, Pop, and Bolovan, 20–23; Josef Wolf and Marionela Wolf, "Asociaţiile germanilor din Banat," in *Asociaţionism şi naţionalism cultural*, ed. Maior, Pop, and Bolovan, 33–78; Teodor Tanco, *Academicienii năsăudeni şi bistriţeni* (Cluj-Napoca: Virtus Romana Rediviva, 1996); Iuliu-Marius Morariu, "Presa din zona Năsăudului în cea de-a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea şi prima parte a secolului al XX-lea: Tranziţia de la presa specializată la 'publicistica de loisir'," in *Noi teme pe agenda de cercetare: Lucrările Conferinţei Naţionale "Historia magistra vitae: Noi teme pe agenda de cercetare", Cluj-Napoca, 8–9 aprilie 2016*,

ed. Mihai-Octavian Groza et al. (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2017), 189–200; Liviu Maior, *Habsburgii şi românii: De la loialitatea dinastică la identitate naţională* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2006); Nicolae Bocşan, "Astra şi Academia Română," in *Asociaţionism şi naţionalism cultural*, ed. Maior, Pop, and Bolovan, 91–94.

2. Ioan Bolovan, "The Romanians' Ideals of Liberalism and Nationality in 1918," *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai, Series Historia* 63, 2 (2018): 1–15; Iuliu-Marius Morariu, "Reuniunea română de lectură din Năsăud (Casina) şi aportul ei în emanciparea culturală a românilor năsăudeni în perioada 1860–1918," in *Administraţie românească arădeană: Studii şi comunicări din Banat–Crişana*, ed. Doru Sinaci and Emil Arbonie (Arad: Vasile Goldiş University Press, 2016), 362–369; Maxim Morariu, *Preoţii năsăudeni şi Astra (1861–1918)* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut; Bistriţa: Charmides, 2016).
3. ANJSBN (National Archives, Bistriţa-Năsăud County Service), *Fond Reuniunea Română de cântări Năsăud*, file 6/1888–1889, fol. 1r.
4. Traian Pavelea, *Societăţi culturale năsăudene* (Bistriţa: Arcade, 2005), 10.
5. Maxim Pop, "Iarăşi despre reuniuni şi congrese," *Magazinu Pedagogicu* 3 (1869): 3. Cf. Iuliu-Marius Morariu, "Istoria Astrei năsăudene în viziunea lui Iuliu Moisil (1859–1947)," in *Tinerii istorici şi cercetările lor*, ed. Nicolae Dumbrăvescu and Gheorghe Dumbrăvescu, vol. 4 (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2016), 127–133.
6. Nicolae Trifoiu, "Năsăudenii şi începuturile Astrei," *Almanah cultural-ştiinţific Virtus Romana Rediviva* 3 (1998): 52.
7. ANJSBN, *Fond Protopopiatul Ortodox Român Bistriţa*, file 345/1861, fol. 3; ANJSBN, *Fond Vicariatul Rodnei*, file 170/1861, fol. 30. Ioan Seni, "Interferenţe şaguniste în spaţii năsăudene şi bistriţene," in *Bicentenarul naşterii Mitropolitului Andrei Şaguna: Lucrările celei de-a 103-a Adunări Generale a Asociaţiunii Astra, Sibiu, 14–16 noiembrie 2008*, ed. Dumitru Acu, Elena Macavei, and Cătălina Gruian (Sibiu: ASTRA, 2010), 170.
8. See Morariu, *Preoţii năsăudeni şi Astra*.
9. Ioan T. Echim, "Un mare eveniment cultural la Năsăud în 1870," *Plaiuri năsăudene* 2, 11–12 (1944): 14; Iosif Naghiu, "Adunările generale ale Astrei la Năsăud," *Arhiva Someşană* 20 (1937): 526.
10. Pamfil Matei, *Asociaţiunea în lumina documentelor (1861–1950): Noi contribuţii* (Sibiu: Editura Universităţii Lucian Blaga, 2005), 82; Elena Macavei, *Asociaţiunea Astra şi adunările generale (1861–2011)* (Sibiu: ASTRA, 2001), 44.
11. Matei, *Asociaţiunea în lumina documentelor*, 84. Cf. Iuliu-Marius Morariu, "Activitatea protoiereului şi profesorului Grigore Pletosu ca preşedinte al Secţiunii şcolare a Astrei (1902–1911)," in *Consemnări despre trecut: Societate şi imagine de-a lungul timpului*, ed. Anamaria Macavei and Roxana Dorina Pop (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2015), 187–198.
12. For more information about it and its activity, see also: Lazăr Ureche, *Fondurile grănicereşti năsăudene (1851–1918)* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2021).
13. Morariu, "Activitatea protoiereului şi profesorului Grigore Pletosu," 187–188.
14. ANJSBN, *Fond Reuniunea Română de cântări Năsăud*, file 6/1888–1889, fol. 1r.
15. ANJSBN, *Fond Reuniunea Română de cântări Năsăud*, file 6/1888–1889, fol. 1.

16. ANJSBN, *Fond Reuniunea Română de cântări Năsăud*, file 7/1897, fol. 1r.
17. ANJSBN, *Fond Reuniunea Română de cântări Năsăud*, file 10/1897–1910, fol. 1r.
18. ANJSBN, *Fond Reuniunea Română de cântări Năsăud*, file 10/1897–1910, fol. 3r.
19. ANJSBN, *Fond Reuniunea Română de cântări Năsăud*, file 10/1897–1910, fol. 7r.
20. ANJSBN, *Fond Reuniunea Română de cântări Năsăud*, file 10/1897–1910, fol. 16.
21. ANJSBN, *Fond Reuniunea Română de cântări Năsăud*, file 10/1897–1910, fol. 6.
22. ANJSBN, *Fond Reuniunea Română de cântări Năsăud*, file 10/1897–1910, fol. 21.
23. ANJSBN, *Fond Reuniunea Română de cântări Năsăud*, file 10/1897–1910, fol. 27.
24. ANJSBN, *Fond Reuniunea Română de cântări Năsăud*, file 10/1897–1910, fol. 1r.
25. ANJSBN, *Fond Reuniunea Română de cântări Năsăud*, file 10/1897–1910, fol. 9.
26. Traian Pavelea, *Societăţi culturale năsăudene*, vol. 1: *Varia* (Bistriţa: Arcade, 2005), 10.
27. Adrian Onofreiu, "Evoluţia Năsăudului în perioada 1851–1876," in *Monografia Oraşului Năsăud (1245–2008)*, ed. Ironim Marţian, vol. 1 (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Napoca Star, 2009), 223–224.
28. Adrian Onofreiu, "Cadrul intelectual al asocierii între idei şi realizări în Districtul Năsăud (1861–1876)," *Revista Bistriţei* 23 (2009): 202.
29. Cf. ANJSBN, *Fond Reuniunea Română de lectură din Năsăud (Casina)*, file 1/1868–1903, fol. 1r.
30. Pavelea, *Societăţi culturale năsăudene*, 12.
31. ANJSBN, *Fond Reuniunea Română de lectură din Năsăud (Casina)*, file 1/1868–1903, fol. 2v.
32. Ibid., fol. 12r.
33. ANJSBN, *Fond Reuniunea Română de lectură din Năsăud (Casina)*, file 4/1910–1938, fol. 1v.
34. Pavelea, *Societăţi culturale năsăudene*, 13.
35. Ibid., 14.
36. Ibid., 83.
37. Maxim Pop, "Iarăşi despre reuniuni şi congrese," 3.
38. Pavelea, *Societăţi culturale năsăudene*, 84.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid., 84–87.
41. Ibid., 89.
42. For more information, see Vasile Alecsandri, *Călătorii*, ed. Ion Pillat (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1936); Vasile Alecsandri, *Călătorii—misiuni diplomatice*, ed. Alexandru Marcu (Craiova: Scrisul Românesc, 1945).
43. *Calendaru Pedagogicu pre anulu ordinariu 1885, urmatu de almanachulu Reuniunei Mariane* (Gherla: Aurora, 1884), 1.
44. Pavelea, *Societăţi culturale năsăudene*, 94–95.
45. Ibid., 96.
46. About its role and history, see also Mirela Andrei, *La graniţa Imperiului: Vicariatul Greco-Catolic al Rodnei în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2006).

Abstract

Romanians and Cultural Associationism in the Bistriţa-Năsăud Area
During the Dualist Period

Being an important tool and form of expression for the Romanians in Transylvania, cultural associationism underwent a complex development during the dualist period (1867–1918). In the Năsăud area, on which we focus in the present research, there are four associations that stand out. Based on existing documents and historiography, we will try to highlight their role and to show how they contributed to and sustained the development of Romanian identity during dualism. We will show how the cooperation between the Rodna Greek Catholic deanery and school contributed to the development of said institutions and we will also touch upon aspects such as women's representation.

Keywords

ASTRA, Transylvania, dualism, Casina, Rodna Deanery

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Networks of Care
Women's Solidarity, Emotional Economies, and War Relief on the Transylvanian Home Front (1914–1916)

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Red Cross nurses handing out food
cca 1915

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Across Europe, the First World War was not only a military conflict on an unprecedented scale, but also a process of total mobilization of the population. In recent decades, historiography has shifted its focus from the exclusively military experience to an analysis of the home front, highlighting the decisive role of women in providing material, social, and emotional support to communities at war. Women's networks of charity, assistance, and care have thus become a privileged field of research, being interpreted as forms of civic mobilization and of the moral economy of care (Grayzel[1], Alacevich, Pescarolo[2], Ermacora[3]).

In Transylvania, these processes unfolded within a particular political and identity-based context. In 1914, the Romanians, as subjects of Dualist Hungary, responded to orders for military mobilization despite suspicions regarding their political loyalty, fighting in the imperial army alongside Hungarians and Saxons. On the home front, Romanian communities were progressively drawn into the war effort, and women played a central role in organizing community solidarity through fundraising and by collecting goods, caring for the wounded as charity nurses, and managing welfare institutions for vulnerable populations.

This article analyzes the care networks established and run by associations of Romanian women in Transylvania, proposing a perspective that goes beyond a purely descriptive account of charitable activities. Methodologically, the study focuses on the period 1914–1916, when these organizations operated within the legal and institutional framework of Dualist Hungary and actively participated in the war effort of the Central Powers. This delimitation is essential, as from the autumn of 1916, with Romania's entry into the war on the side of the Entente, the context changed radically: the withdrawal of the Romanian army across the Carpathians was followed by exceptional measures of surveillance and repression against the Romanian population, and numerous women's associations ceased their activity or were forced to operate in severely restricted forms. In this climate, some members of women's associations took refuge across the Carpathians, continuing their humanitarian work outside Transylvania.

From the perspective of Romanian historiography, the subject of women during the Great War remains insufficiently explored. Existing research has focused either on women's associations prior to the conflict (Simona Stiger),[4] on the activities of specific groups (Soroştineanu,[5] Băjenaru[6]), or on the portrayal of women's mobilization in the press of the time (Barna).[7] However, there is a lack of studies treating women's associations as functional networks of care capable of connecting urban and rural spaces, institutions and the community, material aid and emotional mobilization. By explicitly referencing the major strands of international historiography concerning the female experience of the Great War, the article proposes an interpretative approach that analyses the associations of Romanian women in Transylvania not as mere charitable extensions of society, but as essential structures of social solidarity in a context of total war.

August 1914: A Female Voice and a Call to Mobilization

Only a few days after the proclamation of general mobilization in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* (The gazette of Transylvania) published, on 6 August 1914, an inspiring appeal addressed to Romanian women.[8] It was signed by Maria Baiulescu, president of the General Union of Romanian Women in Hungary.[9] She was a respected voice in her native Braşov and in the intellectual circles of Transylvania. What had prompted her to speak out publicly was, on the one hand, a sense of clear civic responsibility towards the thousands of women, elderly people, and children left alone on the home front, and on the other, the conviction that women could provide moral and material support to all those called to arms. No less important was the need to state clearly and unequivocally the dynastic loyalty of the Romanian community, which was suspected and accused in those days, more than ever, of treason and hostile feelings towards the Hungarian authorities.[10] It was time to prove that women could be not only mothers and wives, but also nurses, a support for orphans and the elderly, civil servants, and agricultural workers. In a word, citizens loyal to the state. "To work, then," was the motto of her rallying call.[11] She addressed, above all, the Romanian women's associations, calling on them to initiate and organize local charitable actions in close collaboration with the civil administration and the Red Cross.[12] In the tense atmosphere of early August 1914, when mobilization orders were arriving incessantly and waves of recruits were heading daily towards the front lines in Serbia and Galicia, Maria Baiulescu understood that she had to be a clear, warm, and encouraging voice, capable of providing direction and meaning to women's solidarity. Her appeal outlined a model of collective engagement which would prove essential in the months and years that followed.

Both the Romanian press and, in particular, the network of women's associations—which, by 1914, comprised no fewer than 103 organizations[13] across Transylvania—contributed substantially to the dissemination of this appeal. Among the Romanian newspapers that immediately picked up Maria Baiulescu's appeal were *Olteanul* (The journal of Olt) (Făgăraş),[14] *Românul* (The Romanian) (Arad),[15] *Drapelul* (The flag) (Lugoj),[16] *Unirea* (The union) (Blaj),[17] ensuring a concerted reception both in the central regions and in the most remote areas of Transylvania, as well as across the broadest possible social strata. The first reactions came from women's associations in Braşov, Sibiu, Deva, Lugoj, and Turda, which urged their members to show solidarity with the cause of all those afflicted by the war. Before long, their initiative was taken up and replicated in every city, town, and village, where the example set by priests and teachers was followed by ordinary people, each contributing as best they could to provide support for the war's wounded, widows, and orphans.[18]

From August 1914 onwards, women's groups saw a substantial increase in their membership, either through the recruitment of new members or by encouraging existing ones to become more active, with community mobilization reaching unprecedented levels. Committees and support groups were set up for the families of those who had gone to the front, whose main task was to organize collections of money, food, clothing, and other essential goods. In urban centers such as Braşov, Sibiu, and Cluj, soup kitchens were set up to provide a hot meal every day to the most vulnerable groups. It was here too that the first forms of institutionalized involvement by young Romanian women emerged, as they enlisted as charity nurses with the Red Cross in field hospitals. Others were employed in services dedicated to identifying and assigning new jobs.

These initiatives highlight the organizational capacity of the Romanian women's movement in a crisis context. At the same time, they indicate the gradual expansion of the women's sphere of action, as they found themselves for the first time in an active, visible, and publicly recognized position in support of a society under the pressure of war. Their exemplary mobilization was made possible by women's associations which enabled the creation of genuine mutual aid networks, whose nodes—large and small—contributed substantially to the war effort.

Network, Nodes, and Socio-Professional Profile, or When a Women's Association Functions as a Relational Mechanism

A particularly illustrative example is provided by the Association of Romanian Women in Sibiu,[19] whose yearbooks from the war years[20] allow for the reconstruction of both the geographical area in which it operated and the socio-professional profile of its members. The visual representation of this data via the map created in QGIS (fig. 1) merely confirms, in a concise and evocative manner, what the documents already suggest—the existence of a coherent network, comprising both men and women, with a radial structure, operating around a dynamic and recognized center: Sibiu.

In this figure, the city appears not merely as a geographical point, but also as a point of institutional, religious, and cultural convergence, from which initiatives originated and to which responses, resources, and connections with other women's associations returned.[21] It was the place with the largest number of members (95), whose social standing ensured multiple political and cultural connections and economic resources, which they utilized to support the projects carried out by the association.

The group's outreach to towns located around Sibiu, such as Răşinari, Orlat, Sălişte, Ocna Sibiului, Mediaş, and Făgăraş, demonstrates the existence of a sphere of proximity, constantly animated by clergymen, lawyers, civil servants, and teachers. This closeness was not merely physical but also social, involving entities and groups integrated into a shared economic and cultural space. The coherent functioning of the women's network in the area bordering Sibiu is closely linked to the density of an associative life that already existed in some of these localities.[22] The women's association in Sibiu was not an isolated case, being part of a broader associative landscape in which, under the influence of the nearby *Saxon Vereine* (Saxon associations) model, Romanian communities had gradually developed various forms of collective organization.[23] In this context, the presence of women's associations alongside other economic, cultural, and religious associations fostered the circulation of ideas and initiatives, as well as cooperation and the strengthening of social solidarity in this region. It is not without significance that many members of the Sibiu women's association were, at the same time, founders or coordinators of similar associations in their own localities. The case of Maria Şerban, president of the Orthodox Women's Association in Făgăraş, is emblematic in this regard. She was active in both the Făgăraş and Sibiu associations, where we find her alongside her husband, the lawyer Nicolae Şerban. Also from Făgăraş were Elisaveta Pop, the widow of a doctor and vice-president of the local Greek Catholic Romanian Women's Association,[24] as well as Lucreţia Peia. Agnes Măcelariu, the wife of a lawyer and president of the Romanian Women's Association in Miercurea Sibiului, also came from this network.[25]

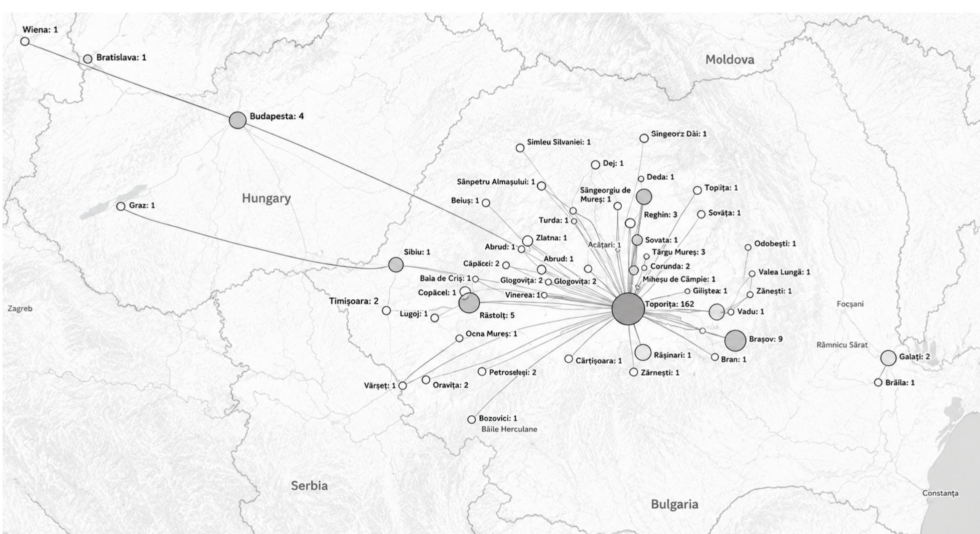


FIG. 1. GEOGRAPHICAL ORIGIN OF THE MEMBERS
OF THE SIBIU ROMANIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION, 1914–1919

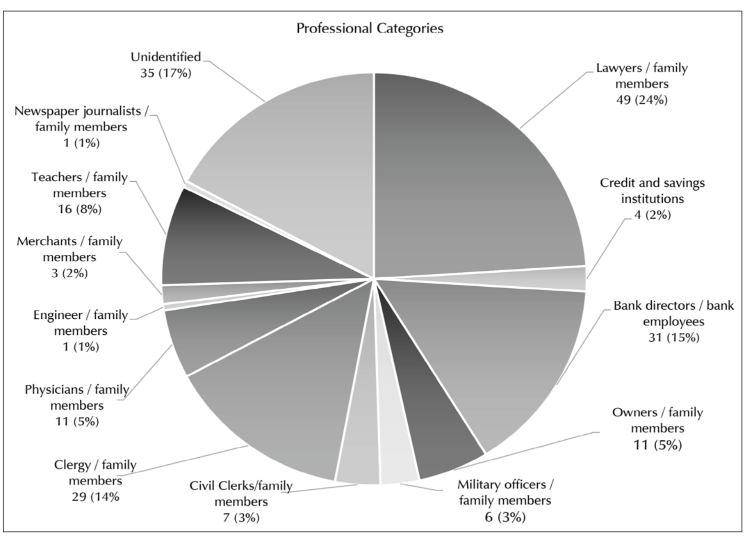
Beyond the core represented by the settlements around Sibiu, the diagram above highlights the network's expansion in two main directions, giving its structure a more complex dynamic than that of simple concentric circles. A first direction, situated on the south-eastern axis, linked Sibiu to Braşov, Târgu Mureş, and Reghin, centers where Romanian communities were also active. Of all these, Braşov occupied a distinct position, both due to the long-standing nature of the local association, founded in 1850,[26] and due to the coordinating role assumed under the presidency of Maria Baiulescu, who in 1913 had succeeded in unifying the Romanian women's associations into a single structure, known as the Union of Romanian Women in Hungary.[27] The presence of women and men from Braşov within the ranks of the Sibiu association reflects the existence of a collaborative and permeable relationship between two centers with complementary functions.

A second direction of expansion, centered on a western axis, encompassed Banat and Crişana. Arad, Timişoara, Lugoj, Caransebeş, Beiuş, and Făget appear in this network as more distant nodes, yet very well connected to the initiatives and projects of the Sibiu center. The presence of members from these areas reflects the mobility of lawyers, bankers, civil servants, teachers, and clergymen. And, from this perspective, it was the women's network that capitalized on these connections, harnessing them and transforming them into avenues of solidarity and cooperation. In these areas, the Association took on the character of an interregional platform, which crossed county borders and connected Romanian centers with one another.

A final, much more restricted circle consists of nodes situated at a great distance from Sibiu, such as Budapest, Vienna, and Graz. Although limited in number, these concentrated significant political and symbolic capital, indicating the network's ability to anchor itself within the imperial sphere and to legitimize, even at this level, the mobilization and mutual aid efforts carried out locally. The presence of figures such as Anton, Eugen, and Alexandru Mocsony, known as politicians and great landowners, alongside the wives of former officers such as Ella Popovici and Blanca Lupu,[28] reinforces this dimension of representativeness and social anchoring of the Sibiu network.

The professional background of the members provides a more detailed picture of how this network operated. In Sibiu, the center of the association, no fewer than eighteen of its members were bank managers, clerks, and accountants, or were related to people in such positions. This is hardly surprising in a city which, four decades earlier, had become the headquarters of the first Romanian bank, Albina. This circle included Maria and Partenie Cosma, the director of the Albina Bank in Sibiu,[29] as well as Veturia Lepădatu, a teacher and the wife of Alexandru Lepădatu, the then director of the Ardeleana Bank in Orăştie.[30] They were joined, in roughly equal numbers, by fifteen Orthodox clergymen, representing the entire hierarchy: a metropolitan bishop, archpriests, consistorial assessors, archivists, priests, and priest wives. Notable figures in this regard include Ioan Meţianu, the Orthodox Metropolitan of Transylvania; Nicolae Ivan, then an assessor of the Orthodox Consistory in Sibiu; and Ilarion Puşcariu, an archimandrite.[31] Next came the lawyers and barristers, alongside the wives and daughters of some of them, followed by teachers, civil servants, doctors, officers, landowners, and merchants. There existed thus a coherent social milieu, well-connected institutionally and capable of supporting large-scale initiatives. Notable figures included Eugenia Tordăşianu, a teacher at the Civil School for Girls in Sibiu, and her husband, Victor Tordăşianu, president of the city's Association of Romanian Craftsmen, or Catinca Bârseanu, a teacher at that same School for Girls and the wife of Andrei Bârseanu, president of the ASTRA (The Association for Romanian Literature and Culture).[32] Together, these groups formed a social core capable of maintaining links with both the community and the local institutions. Their presence explains the success of the association's initiatives and its ability to intervene where the need was felt most acutely.

GRAPH 1. PROFESSIONS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE SIBIU ROMANIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION (1914–1919)



The area surrounding Sibiu proved to be a transitional social space, in which professions with symbolic and institutional capital were well represented. This explains the substantial number of clergymen and/or their wives, lawyers, merchants, landowners, doctors, and civil servants. The constant presence of priests or their family members explains the communities' capacity for rapid mobilization, whilst lawyers, teachers, and doctors ensured institutional mediation and the organization of activities. Without replicating the density of banks or medical facilities found in the center of Sibiu, these localities benefited from their own social and financial resources, functioning as points of contact between initiatives launched at the center and the responsiveness of rural and small-town communities. This explains the presence, within the Romanian Women's Association of Sibiu, of figures connected to its broader social and familial milieu, such as Anastasiu Boiu, a bank manager in Mediaş; Nicolae Comşa, a physician in Săliştea Sibiului; Magdalena Dancăş, the wife of a landowner in Răşinari; Agnes Măcelariu, the wife of a lawyer from Miercurea Sibiului; Ana Popa Isaia, a priest's wife in Ocna Sibiului, and others.[33]

On the south-eastern axis, linking Sibiu to Braşov and Târgu-Mureş, the professional profile took on a different hue. There, one found mainly people connected to the legal, commercial, and cultural spheres, but also women with organizational experience, attached to older, well-established associations. Notable names here include Eugenia Vecerdea and her husband Nicolae Vecerdea, a lawyer in Braşov; Lucia Bologa, the widow of a bank manager, Braşov; Maria Dima and her husband George Dima, a music teacher, Braşov; Eugenia Barbu, the wife of a bank clerk in Reghin, etc.[34] This area emerges as a space for the coordination and circulation of associative models, where initiatives are multiplied and heavily publicized through the local press. *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, based in Braşov, played a decisive role during the war years in mobilizing women's associations and civil society as a whole.

The western axis, extending towards Banat and Crişana, is characterized by a higher concentration of lawyers, bankers, and civil servants with high professional mobility. Notable figures here include Petru Truţa, a lawyer in Arad; Filaret Musta, an archimandrite in Caransebeş; Mărioara Monţia, the wife of a lawyer in Şiria; Letiţia Oncu, the wife of a bank manager in Arad, as well as others.[35] In this case, the women's network does not create the links, but capitalizes on them, transforming professional connections into concrete resources to support joint initiatives. Arad and the surrounding towns thus emerge as operational hubs, capable of ensuring the expansion and logistical support of the actions initiated in Sibiu. In general terms, socio-professional diversity does not fragment the network, but rather lends it coherence and flexibility. Each area mobilizes its own resources, and the Sibiu Women's Meeting functioned as a space for coordinating these skills, in a collective effort of solidarity and social support.

It is worth noting that these collaborations were not limited exclusively to Romanian associations, even though these were, naturally, given priority. From the very moment many of them were established, in the second half of the 19th century, Romanian women's associations operated within a predominantly urban and associative sphere characterized by ethnic and religious diversity. This meant that, from time to time, on the occasion of festivals, fundraisers, or philanthropic initiatives, they accepted invitations to support common causes alongside similar associations of Hungarians and Saxons.[36] These sporadic and circumstantial contacts were not accidental, but were part of a more widespread practice of urban sociability. Transylvania's mixed cities favored such rapprochements, and philanthropy proved to be a relatively neutral ground where confessional or ethnic differences could often be overcome. Against this pre-existing backdrop, the war years intensified such collaborations. All the more so as the state's civil authorities called for everyone's participation, regardless of denomination or ethnic affiliation, in the general war effort. In this context, Romanian women's groups found themselves involved in joint actions alongside Hungarian and Saxon organizations, whether in fundraising campaigns organized under the auspices of the Red Cross or in local social welfare initiatives. It is true that interethnic solidarity was not a permanent rule, but it occurred frequently enough to build bridges of cooperation between Romanians, Hungarians, and Saxons.

Against this backdrop of an already established urban social fabric, the war years made such collaborations more visible and frequent. A prime example is provided by Braşov, where, in August 1914, under the coordination of Countess Sofia Mikes, wife of the Count of Braşov and president of the local Red Cross, courses were organized to train charity nurses. The initiative was aimed primarily at young Hungarian and German women, but was also open to Romanian women, reflecting a practice of cooperation that transcended confessional or ethnic boundaries. Among those who attended these courses were young women from Braşov's Romanian high society, such as Virgila Branişte,[37] Tullia Găvruş, and Maria Oncioiu.[38] Another significant moment in this interethnic collaboration was the Christmas of 1914, the first to be celebrated under wartime conditions. At that time, in Braşov, Countess Sofia Mikes took part in decorating the Christmas trees in the city's hospitals, alongside women from Romanian, Hungarian, and German associations, as well as nurses of various denominations. Gifts were distributed to all the wounded, without distinction,[39] in a collective effort in which ethnic and religious differences faded away, and the shared experience of war created a foundation for practical solidarity. These initiatives continued in the following years, taking on more organized forms. In December 1915, on the occasion of the "Christmas for the Wounded," a large-scale public fundraising campaign brought together contributions from the Hungarian and German high society in Braşov, local women's associations, as well as Romanian representatives, including Maria Baiulescu, president of the Union of Romanian Women in Hungary. The sum raised, over 3,600 crowns, was distributed to all the city's hospitals for the wounded, to purchase symbolic gifts intended to alleviate the suffering of those hospitalized, regardless of nationality.[40] In Făgăraş, on the occasion of Christmas 1914, the Augusta Relief Society brought together all the local women's associations to provide winter clothing for all the needy children in the town. The initiative was also joined by the Association of Romanian Greek Catholic Women, which contributed clothing and food for children whose fathers had been conscripted to the front. Such episodes are intended to show that, in times of crisis, interethnic cooperation became an increasingly common reality. Referring to this, Széll Jozsefné, president of the Augusta Society, said at the time: "The school of war has taught us to feel all pains together, to share all suffering, to strive to wipe away all tears, and to brighten the furrowed brows."[41] No less significant is the case of the Association of Romanian Women in Miercurea Sibiului, which, as early as August 1914, was working closely with the local Association of German Women to organize collections of clothing and food for the wounded in the local hospital.[42] Although fragile, these collaborations forged functional links between Romanians, Hungarians, and Saxons. Within this framework, women's associations established themselves not merely as distinct ethnic organizations, but as social actors capable of mobilizing the resources of Transylvanian society when circumstances demanded it.

Managing Suffering: Food, Labor, and Care in the Cities of Transylvania

During the years of the Great War, of the nearly one hundred associations of Romanian women in Transylvania, the most visible and active were those in urban and religious centers such as Braşov, Sibiu, Hunedoara, Lugoj, Turda, or Blaj.[43] Their activities were constantly encouraged and publicized by the newspapers of the time, which gave them greater visibility in the public consciousness. The initiatives and projects undertaken were adapted to the pace of the war and its progression, taking shape across several complementary directions, closely linked to the social and emotional transformations brought about by the conflict.

In an initial phase, limited to the summer and autumn of 1914, the mobilization aimed to replace the male workforce sent to the front. Women's associations responded to this pressure through public appeals for community solidarity. A relevant model was provided by the German communities, which, benefiting from a pre-existing network of associations and an experience already accumulated in the past, had rapidly mobilized schoolchildren, students, and intellectuals for agricultural work within their own communities. Inspired by this example, the Romanian women's groups sought to mobilize similar resources, adapting them to their own social contexts. For example, the newspaper *Olteanul*, published in Făgăraş, ran a series of appeals in the autumn of 1914 under the title "How to Help Ourselves," explicitly inspired by the initiatives and measures of the Transylvanian Saxon communities. The appeals were aimed particularly at the women, children, and elderly left on the home front, urging them to support one another in harvesting the crops and to exercise prudence in managing their resources.[44]

Support was not limited to farm work alone; they also backed the initiatives of local authorities. For instance, young Romanian women worked alongside Hungarian and Saxon women in labor distribution centers, helping to integrate those left at home into a war economy undergoing constant reorganization. A telling example is the appeal launched by Maria Baiulescu, president of the Union of Romanian Women in Hungary, on 15 August 1914, announcing the establishment in Braşov, by the city authorities, of a multiethnic women's committee. Its aim was to facilitate access to employment in a context marked by limited supply and a rapid increase in demand.[45] The significance of this initiative is highlighted by statistics from the committee's first days of operation, which reveal that 92 people were seeking work, the majority of whom were women. Ethnically, 44 were Hungarian, 27 German, 10 Romanian, 10 Jewish, and one of Polish origin. The social profile of the applicants was equally diverse: young people with no professional experience, schoolchildren forced by family hardship to work, as well as skilled workers who had lost their jobs—from commerce, administration, construction, or the services. Beyond the numbers, these data accurately capture the early social restructuring of the home front and the pressure exerted by the war economy on the urban population.

At the same time, women's participation in charity courses contributed to the professionalization of the aid provided and to the consolidation of a public female identity associated with competence, care, and social utility. Zoiţa Preda, Maria Hermel, Virgilia Branişte, and Countess Grete of Reigersberg remained enduring figures in the memory of the wounded hospitalized in Braşov during the war.[46]

From the autumn of 1914, women's groups were also actively involved in running the soup kitchens, organized by the city authorities and intended for those most affected by the food shortages that had gradually set in, particularly in the cities. Soup kitchens were not a phenomenon exclusive to the war years. In some urban centers, they were already in operation before 1914, as part of a wider range of philanthropic initiatives dedicated to disadvantaged social groups. The case of Sibiu is illustrative in this regard. Here, the Romanian Women's Association had been running, even in peacetime, social welfare schemes such as the students' canteen and the "people's kitchen," intended for the city's poor, particularly during the winter. With the outbreak of the war, these institutions were adapted to the new realities. Despite the pressures of mobilization and the food shortages, the "people's kitchen" continued to operate during the winters of 1914–1915 and 1915–1916, providing food to all those in need, regardless of their ethnic background.[47] The direct involvement of members of the Romanian Women's Association of Sibiu in the daily running of the kitchen demonstrates the continuity of a practice of care, transformed and intensified in the context of the war, but grounded in previous experiences of organization and social solidarity.

As already indicated, the organization of urban soup kitchens was not confined to Sibiu, but can be identified, from the very first months of the war, in other towns across Transylvania as well. In centers such as Braşov, Bistriţa, and other towns, such food aid institutions were rapidly organized in the context of the general mobilization, building on existing charitable practices and solidarity networks. In the case of Braşov, the operation of municipal soup kitchens can be traced back to the autumn of 1914.[48] There, following a collection organized by the city's Romanian Women's Association, 24,000 crowns were raised, with which the city council established two soup kitchens and a nursery.[49] Initially planned as a response to the social difficulties caused by mobilization, these soon became permanent food distribution centers,[50] supported by the municipal authorities and supplied by donations from the local population.[51] They provided hot meals and basic provisions to families in need, regardless of religion or ethnicity, which transformed the soup kitchens into tangible spaces of social coexistence at a time of profound crisis, such as the war. A provisional assessment carried out in mid-1915 indicated that, in the space of a single year, over 300 Romanian families had received a hot meal every day through these soup kitchens.[52] The continued donations in the following years, including 1916, suggest that these initiatives were not short-lived, but rather part of a sustained effort at urban social protection.[53] A comparable initiative is also reported in the autumn of 1914 in Bistriţa. There, the local Association of Romanian Women played a key role in organizing aid for the families of those who had been called up.

Alongside the distribution of financial support, the opening of a soup kitchen was seen as a practical solution to ensure affordable food for the destitute. Collaboration with the town authorities and the direct involvement of women from the community demonstrate the existence of a form of local crisis management, in which every day solidarity and women's organizational skills were put in the service of urban survival.[54] Viewed as a whole, these examples show that the soup kitchens in Transylvania were not merely improvised reactions to the outbreak of the war, but adaptations of already functioning support mechanisms. In the context of the war economy, they became institutions of social continuity, in which women's care, invisible labor, and organizational capacity played a fundamental role in managing urban vulnerability.

Some women's associations went further, ceding or even selling properties under their administration for the needs of the war. The case of the Association of Romanian Women in Sibiu is emblematic in this regard, illustrating how the associations' assets were put in the service of the collective emergency. In the autumn of 1914, the building of the School of Home Economics and Domestic Industry, owned by the Association, was ceded to the local branch of the Red Cross to be converted into a reserve hospital for the care of the wounded. Two years later, another building in the city, belonging to the Romanian Women's Association, was handed over to the Orthodox Archdiocesan Consistory, with the aim of establishing an orphanage for children left without support.[55] These spaces, whose purpose was altered during the war—successively transformed into a hospital and an orphanage—illustrate how women's associative heritage became a direct instrument of social intervention in times of crisis. The same occurred in other towns. As the number of wounded rose, cities underwent a visible transformation of their urban space. Civilian buildings, meeting places, and community spaces were converted into war hospitals. This rapid and comprehensive process directly involved the women's organizations, particularly in centers such as Braşov, Sibiu, Cluj, Blaj, and many others. For example, in Blaj, St. George's Hospital, inaugurated just a few months before the outbreak of the war as the first permanent Romanian hospital in Transylvania, was rapidly adapted to the new medical requirements and provided care to the war wounded. Although it operated under the direction of its founder, Archdiocesan Doctor Hâncu, the hospital's day-to-day running was decisively supported by the Blaj Association of Romanian Women. The local women's organization provided not only material support but also a constant presence in the administration and operation of the hospital, taking on essential tasks related to food, hygiene, record-keeping, and care.[56] This mobilization of women illustrates how domestic and charitable skills were transferred into the institutional sphere of wartime medicine.

Fig. 3. St. George's Hospital in Blaj.
Nurses assisting Dr. Hâncu in dressing a wounded man
Source: *Cozînzeana* 5, 4 (31 January 1915): 32.

Whilst in Blaj the mobilization of women centered on a newly established hospital, which was rapidly integrated into the wartime medical network, other urban centers saw more complex forms of organization, resulting from the interplay of charitable, institutional, and financial initiatives. In these contexts, the war hospital was no longer merely a space adapted to the emergency situation, but the result of a cooperation between various structures of the Romanian urban society. Cluj offers such an example, where women's involvement took place within a framework that was both denser and more fragile, marked by inter-institutional coordination, the specialization of charitable work, and severe economic constraints. Here, the Greek Catholic Society of St. Mary played a central role in the establishment and operation of a Romanian hospital known as the Petran Ambulance. The initiative stood at the intersection of several charitable and institutional efforts, bringing together the support of cultural organizations, the Romanian financial sector,[57] and local medical authorities. The premises for the hospital were made available through the donation of private properties, while medical management was provided by the Romanian doctor, Dr. B. Başiotă, closely assisted by members of the Greek Catholic Society of St. Mary.[58] The involvement of women was not limited to an auxiliary role, but was organized into distinct departments—for the care of the wounded, for hygiene, and for housekeeping—each coordinated by members of the society, which indicates a high degree of professionalization of charitable work in a wartime context.

Although the Petran Ambulance was conceived as a small-scale medical unit, intended to provide free treatment and dressings to the wounded, the activities of Saint Mary's Society extended beyond the confines of this hospital, spreading to other medical facilities in the city. However, the hospital's operation was fragile and heavily dependent on the financial resources of the time. Rising food prices, high maintenance costs, and the limitations of public fundraising led, in the autumn of 1915, to the closure of the Petran Ambulance, despite the support received from the Red Cross.[59] Although short-lived, the Cluj experience thus illustrates not only the capacity of women's organizations to make a decisive contribution to the wartime medical effort, but also the vulnerability of such initiatives in an economy marked by imbalances and scarcity.

The three cases discussed so far are part of a broader process through which almost all the towns of Transylvania were drawn into the wartime medical effort. This confirms the widespread presence of war hospitals in Transylvania and the significant role played by women involved in caring for the wounded.

War Relief and the Economy of Care: Collections, Orphans, and the Wounded

The reshaping of urban space, through the conversion of buildings into military hospitals and orphanages, was accompanied by a profound reconfiguration of the community's social functions, with women becoming central figures in the management of public suffering. In this context, one of the main foci of Romanian women's mobilization was the material and financial support of those affected by the war: the poor, the orphans, and the wounded. Collections of money, clothing, and food became regular practices, integrated both into daily life and into the symbolic and religious rhythms of the community. The experience of Braşov illustrates how this form of solidarity was organized and adapted from the very first months of the war. The Association of Romanian Women in the city consistently supported poor schoolgirls through material donations, which regularly intensified around major religious holidays.[60] Christmas and Easter became special occasions for community mobilization, during which helping children took on a public and ritualized character, through the distribution of clothes and shoes. These events took place in prominent venues across the city, attended by representatives of the Association, the Church, and the local elite. A second major category targeted by collections was that of orphans. In this case, women's involvement went beyond occasional assistance and took on institutionalized forms, through the integration of children left without family support into educational and care facilities administered by women's associations. In Braşov, the boarding school of the Romanian Women's Association became a key venue for this policy of care, adapting its operations to the new realities imposed by the conflict. For example, during the war years, girls orphaned by the war were explicitly admitted to the boarding school, where they were provided with schooling and upkeep in the medium and long term.[61]

Fundraising campaigns for the wounded, however, were the most widespread, consistent, and visible form of women's charity during the Great War. Such collections were organized, without exception, in all the towns of Transylvania where women's groups were active. An analysis of the sources indicates that these collections were not sporadic initiatives, but rather organized, recurring, and coordinated efforts, carried out through well-structured women's networks, in collaboration with the Red Cross and local religious institutions.[62] Support for the wounded consistently centered on major religious festivals, when aid took on a ritualized, public, and ceremonial character. The collections organized in Braşov for the city's entire hospital network and the distribution of gifts through women's committees responsible for each medical unit were replicated in numerous other Transylvanian centers such as Sibiu, Cluj, Făgăraş,[63] Turda, Aiud, and Bistriţa.[64] Wherever there were military or reserve hospitals, women's meetings were also involved, confirming the widespread and almost standardized nature of this form of mobilization.

Women's associations did not limit themselves to the actual collection of donations, but also organized distribution centers, managed the flow of goods and funds, ensured the transparency of contributions, and maintained functional links between towns and villages.[65] From this perspective, collections for the wounded can be interpreted as the backbone of women's charitable mobilization and the primary language of solidarity in wartime, through which individual suffering was integrated into a framework of collective responsibility, and women became essential mediators between the front and civil society.

The collections also functioned as public rituals of donation and recognition. The lists of names published in the press, detailing the sums and items donated,[66] created forms of positive pressure and a sense of community belonging. The praise of female donors as moral role models played an educational role, transforming individual examples into a collective norm. As noted above, the main beneficiaries were orphans, widows, and the wounded in hospitals. For the latter, not only food and clothing were collected, but also items with a strong symbolic significance: prayer books, clean linen, stockings, gloves, sweets, or small gifts. These items offered physical protection, comfort, and spiritual consolation. They embodied empathy and transformed care into a tangible presence. Much of this mobilization relied on domestic work, transformed into civic action. Spinning, sewing, and knitting became forms of "home industry" intended for the front and hospitals. Homes were transformed into community workshops, and the boundary between private and public space became permeable. Through this invisible yet essential work, women provided both logistical and symbolic support for the war effort. The movement of goods followed well-established routes: village—parish or community center—town—hospital or military unit. Packing, inventorying, and transport required an infrastructure of care, often coordinated by priests' wives, schoolteachers, and women from the local elite.[67] They acted as links between the community, institutions, and beneficiaries. In all these activities, the women's associations in Transylvania operated in different ways, depending on their organizational capacity and available resources. What united them, however, was their role as moral agents of the community. In the absence of the mobilized men, they managed collective empathy and maintained social cohesion. Compassion, care, and duty were transformed into coherent social practices. In this sense, women's associations can be understood as central actors in an economy of emotions, in which material aid and emotional mobilization supported one another.

Conclusions

This analysis has highlighted how associations of Romanian women in Transylvania became, in the early years of the Great War, central actors in the social and emotional management of the crisis, articulating coherent responses to the profound transformations generated by the conflict. Their actions and initiatives were supported by a pre-existing associative infrastructure, adapted to the new demands of the war and intensified through public mobilization, the press, and institutional cooperation.

A preliminary finding of the research shows that women's associations functioned as complex relational networks, with a radial organization and strong urban nodes, capable of connecting the centers (Sibiu, Braşov, Cluj) with smaller towns and rural areas. The case study on the Romanian Women's Association in Sibiu reveals a well-structured organization, in which the members' social, professional, and religious capital was transformed into effective resources for action. This networked functioning enabled not only the circulation of goods and funds, but also of information, models of intervention, and charitable practices.

Secondly, this analysis shows that women's mobilization was part of a broader process of reshaping the urban space and its social functions. The conversion of buildings into military hospitals, orphanages, and welfare centers was accompanied by a reconfiguration of the community's emotional functions. Women became essential mediators of public suffering, transferring skills traditionally associated with the domestic sphere—care, the organization of daily life, invisible labor—into the institutional frameworks of medicine, social welfare, and the war economy.

A central focus of this mobilization was the war relief effort, chiefly consisting of collections for the poor, orphans, and the wounded. Carried out systematically in many towns and villages across Transylvania, these collections functioned not only as mechanisms for providing material aid, but also as public rituals of solidarity, integrated into the religious calendar and the spiritual life of the community. By ensuring the transparency of donations, publishing lists of contributors, and promoting moral examples, women's associations created frameworks for collective participation and social responsibility. The results also show that these practices were not ad hoc improvisations, but adaptations of assistance mechanisms that already existed prior to 1914. Soup kitchens, boarding schools for girls, nursing classes, and the work of the Sisters of Charity demonstrate the continuity of a culture of care, intensified and professionalized in the context of the war.

Another relevant aspect highlighted by this analysis is the interethnic cooperation facilitated by the relatively neutral nature of philanthropy and the pressure exerted by the war on all urban communities. Although it did not operate as a general rule, the collaboration between associations of Romanian, Hungarian, and German women became more frequent during the years of the conflict, particularly around healthcare institutions and the collections for the wounded. These episodes indicate the existence of spaces for social coexistence and practical solidarity, in which ethnic differences were temporarily suspended.

Overall, this study proposes an approach that analyses women's associations as central actors in an economy of care and emotions, in which material aid and emotional mobilization mutually reinforced one another. In the absence of the men mobilized to the front, women managed collective empathy, maintained community cohesion, and gave meaning to the everyday experience of the war. This analysis shows that the Transylvanian experience fits into a broader European pattern of female mobilization during the Great War, but also exhibits local specificities: the density of associative networks, the role of religion, the multiethnic character of the towns, and the mediating function of women. In this sense, women's associations can be understood not merely as auxiliaries to the war effort, but as active historical agents who contributed decisively to the management of the social crisis and the redefinition of the boundaries between the private and the public spheres in a Europe of total war.

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40. *Gazeta Transilvaniei* 79, 1 (1/14 January 1916): 2.
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42. *AUFRU* 2, 1 (1915): 16.
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44. *AUFRU* 6, 44 (2/15 November 1914): 3; 6, 46 (16/29 November 1914): 2–3; 6, 47 (25 November/6 December 1914): 3.
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63. *Protocolul Reuniunei femeilor române greco-catolice din Făgăraşiu* 1880 (*Minutes*), manuscript in the "Document" collection of the "Valer Literat" Museum of the Făgăraş Region, inv. no. I1-2. 299, unnumbered.
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65. See the activities of the Association of Romanian Women in Deva during the first year of the war, AUFRU 2, 1 (1915): 13; *Gazeta Transilvaniei* 77, 275 (14/27 December 1914): 3.
66. *Gazeta Transilvaniei* 77, 272 (11/24 December 1914): 2; *Olteanul* 8, 1 (3/16 January 1916): 2–3; *Unirea* 26, 20 (29 February 1916): 3.
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Abstract

Networks of Care: Women's Solidarity, Emotional Economies, and War Relief on the Transylvanian Home Front (1914–1916)

This article examines the networks of care and solidarity mobilized by Romanian women's associations in Transylvania during the first years of the First World War (1914–1916), situating their activities within the broader framework of total war and the social transformations it entailed on the home front. Moving beyond a descriptive account of charitable practices, the study proposes an interpretative approach that conceptualizes women's associations as functional networks of care, capable of connecting urban centers and rural communities, institutions and households, material relief and emotional mobilization. Drawing on a wide range of primary sources, such as association yearbooks, the contemporary press, institutional reports, and archive documents, the analysis focuses on the organizational structures, social profiles, and geographic reach of these women's networks, with particular attention given to the Romanian Women's Association of Sibiu. Methodologically, the article is deliberately confined to the period preceding Romania's entry into the war, when Romanian women's organizations operated within the legal and institutional framework of Dualist Hungary and actively participated in the war effort of the Central Powers. The study demonstrates that women's associations played a crucial role in managing the social consequences of mobilization by organizing fundraising campaigns, soup kitchens, relief for the wounded and orphans, and by supporting wartime medical institutions. These practices relied on pre-existing cultures of philanthropy and associational life, yet were intensified, professionalized, and reconfigured under the pressure of the war. Women emerged as key mediators of public suffering, transferring skills traditionally associated with the domestic sphere into the institutional domains of welfare, medicine, and urban governance. By engaging explicitly with major strands of international historiography on women, war, humanitarianism, and the moral economy of care, this article argues that Romanian women's associations in Transylvania functioned not merely as auxiliary charitable bodies, but as essential structures of social solidarity. Their actions contributed decisively to maintaining community cohesion, managing collective emotions, and redefining the boundaries between private and public spheres in a multi-ethnic society subjected to the strain of total war.

Keywords
women's associations, war relief, economy of care, home front, Transylvania during the First World War

An Illicit Trial
Property Litigation Between Nicholas of Ocna Sibiului and Peter of Bogata

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The experience of the nobleman of Bogata, which exemplifies the exercise of power in contravention of legal principles, was not an isolated occurrence.

At the beginning of 1446, the nobles of the Voivodeship of Transylvania convened at Turda for a general congregation presided over by the Vice-voivodes Nicholas of Ocna Sibiului (1439–1446, 1462–1465) and George Bodo. During this assembly, the participants articulated their grievances—predominantly patrimonial—seeking both equitable adjudication and favorable judicial outcomes.

On this occasion, the vice-voivodes examined and resolved a complaint submitted by Abbot Anton of Cluj-Mănăştur. Acting on behalf of his familiar, Elie of Comşeşti, the abbot alleged that Andrew of Mănăstireni was unlawfully in possession of certain

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estate portions to which Elie held legitimate title. Following deliberation, the vice-voivodes, in agreement with the sworn assessors, decreed the restitution of the disputed properties to Elie.[1]

Although the vice-voivode, by virtue of his office and the authority attached to it, was expected to uphold the law and the customary legal order of the country, contemporary documents also record allegations of judicial abuse. One such violation was reported during the aforementioned general congregation, according to a complaint submitted by Peter, the son of Emeric of Bogata. Several days after the congregation at Turda, the nobleman presented himself before the convent of Cluj-Mănăştur, claiming that the Transylvanian vice-voivode, Nicholas of Ocna Sibiului, had induced the assembled nobles, together with whom he exercised judicial competence, to require Peter to present the charter confirming his right of ownership over certain *predium*[2] in Alba County, namely, Kacz and Makotelke.[3]

The judgment of the vice-voivode was also contested by Peter's son, Ladislaus, who, being a minor at the time, sought through a legal representative to express his dissatisfaction before the same place of authentication.[4] The objection submitted to the convent of Cluj-Mănăştur was insufficient to halt the vice-voivode's interference in the possession of the estates held by the noble of Bogata. Consequently, the injured party further submitted a complaint to the prelates and barons of the realm, informing them of the illicit proceedings.

The prelates learned that the Transylvanian vice-voivode had appeared in the proceedings on behalf of his daughter, Magdalena, as well as on behalf of Saal of Şăuleşti and his wife, in litigation against Peter of Bogata, compelling him to present the documents proving his ownership rights, even though the nobleman was not present at the congregation. Furthermore, Peter was required to present the documents at the octave of the feast of St. George without having been formally summoned to court. Given that the Transylvanian vice-voivode, Nicholas of Ocna Sibiului, acted in the same proceedings in the dual capacity of plaintiff and judge, and considering that Peter of Bogata had not been duly notified of the litigation in which he was implicated, the law and the customary legal order of the country had thereby been infringed upon. Consequently, the prelates and barons of the Kingdom of Hungary annulled the judgment issued by the Transylvanian vice-voivode and ordered that the presentation of the documents be postponed until the octave of St. James, without causing any prejudice to Peter.[5] It remains uncertain whether the examination of the documents attesting the nobleman of Bogata's right of possession over the estates in Alba County was carried out at the appointed term. Nevertheless, the extant documents indicate that the dispute between the Transylvanian vice-voivode and the nobles of Bogata had begun long before the noble congregation held at Turda.

At the end of the fourteenth century, the nobles of Totoiu and those of Bogata had reached an agreement concerning the partition and boundary delimitation of the estates of Kacz and Makotelke, which were held in common by the two families. Subsequently, toward the middle of the fifteenth century, the nobles of Totoiu, Nicholas and George, intended to alienate their share of the aforementioned estates by selling it to Peter of Bogata. The transaction was challenged by the Transylvanian vice-voivode, Nicholas of Ocna Sibiului, who, together with his wife and daughter, as well as the widow of Michael, son of Hedrych and the wife of Sal, filed an objection before the convent of Cluj-Mănăştur.[6] Despite the objection raised by the vice-voivode, Peter of Bogata took possession of the estates, although the surviving documentary evidence does not attest to any purchase of these properties by the nobleman.

Several months after the objection raised by Nicholas of Ocna Sibiului, Peter of Bogata obtained a charter of *nova donatio*[7] from the King of Hungary, Albert (1437–1439), as a reward for the loyalty he had demonstrated. The monarch ordered the convent of Cluj-Mănăştur to send a legal representative to formally put Peter of Bogata and his cousin, John of Bogata, in possession of the estates of Makothelke, Kach, and other estates in Alba and Turda counties.[8] The place of authentication complied with the royal mandate by sending George, the canon of Cluj-Mănăştur, who, accompanied by the royal envoys Gregory of Sâncel and Demetrius of Ciuci,[9] proceeded on the feast of Apostle Matthew to the site of the aforementioned estates. In the presence of the neighboring landholders, they formally put Peter of Bogata and his cousin, John in possession of the properties, no objections being raised during the procedure.[10] Peter of Bogata continued to hold the estates until the end of his life. Toward the end of 1452, anticipating his impending death, the nobleman placed his wife, Agnes, together with his daughters, Elena and Doroteea, as well as all of his properties, under the protection of Nicholas of Ocna Sibiului and Benedict of Jucu, until his sons, Ladislau and Emeric, attained the legally prescribed age for the administration of the inheritance.[11] It remains unclear whether Nicholas of Ocna Sibiului can be identified with the vice-voivode of Transylvania. During that period, two individuals bearing the name Nicholas of Ocna Sibiului were active on the Transylvanian political scene. In order to distinguish between them, even among their contemporaries, they were referred to as Senior and Junior. The individual who subsequently occupied the office of vice-voivode of Transylvania was Nicholas Senior of Ocna Sibiului. By contrast, Nicholas Junior of Ocna Sibiului served as royal judge and was a collateral relative of Nicholas Senior, being his paternal nephew. Although, in light of the strained relations between Nicholas Senior of Ocna Sibiului, the vice-voivode of Transylvania, and Peter of Bogata, it may be hypothesized that the nobleman designated Nicholas Junior of Ocna Sibiului as his legal protector, the possibility that the vice-voivode himself administered Peter's estate cannot be excluded.

The estate of the nobleman of Bogata passed under the protection of Nicholas of Ocna Sibiului after the proprietor's death, which occurred between November 1452 and November 1453, by which latter date Peter's wife, Agnes, is documented as a widow. Nicholas of Ocna Sibiului exercised guardianship over the Bogata noble's family and property only for a limited period, as Peter's sons, Ladislau and Emeric, attained the legally prescribed age for inheriting their paternal property within a few years.[12] They not only enjoyed the protection of Nicholas Senior or Junior of Ocna Sibiului, but also established a familial alliance with them. Ladislau of Bogata contracted a marriage with Potenciana, the daughter of Nicholas Senior of Ocna Sibiului. In the genealogical table compiled by Engel Pál, Ladislau is listed as having had two wives: Potenciana of the Torockó family and Cristina.[13] It is highly probable that the nobleman was, in fact, married three times. A charter issued in 1466 records that Potenciana, the daughter of Nicholas Senior of Ocna Sibiului, with the consent of her husband, Ladislau of Bogata, transferred the entirety of the estate she had inherited from her father to Nicholas Junior of Ocna Sibiului.[14]

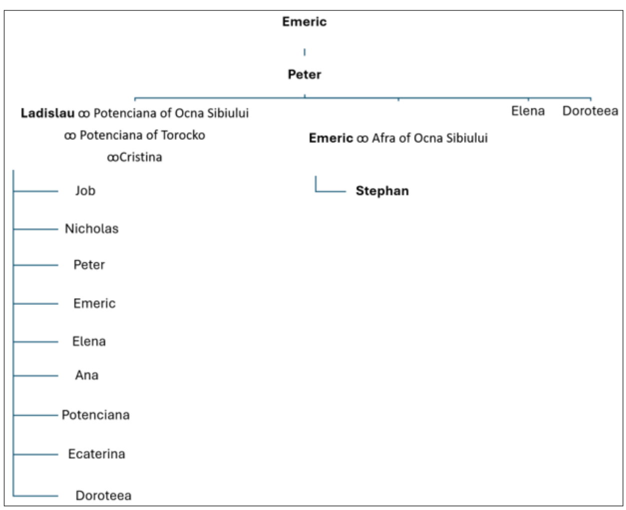

Fig. 1. The genealogical tree
* The genealogical tree includes just the individuals discussed in the study.

In the same chronological context, Ladislau is documented as having two sons, Job and Nicholas[15]; approximately a decade later, in 1476, two further children of the nobleman—Peter and Elena—are attested in the surviving records.[16] It is difficult to ascertain whether Potenciana of the Torockó family was the mother of the aforementioned children, since in 1474 she is recorded in the sources as still being a minor.[17] Raised by her paternal uncle, Ladislau of Torocko, following the death of her father,[18] Potenciana of the Torockó lineage later became the wife of Ladislau of Bogata, toward the end of the fifteenth century. During this period, the nobleman is attested as acting as her legal representative in several lawsuits involving members of her extended family.[19] Together with his second wife, Ladislau of Bogata most likely had two daughters, Anne and Potenciana, whom he attempted to provide with a dowry from their mother's patrimony, consisting of estates located in Alba County.[20] In the final years of his life, the nobleman of Bogata married Cristina, whose familial background remains unknown in the current state of research. With her, he had two daughters, Ecaterina and Doroteea, who were left fatherless at a young age in 1500 (fig. 1).

Ecaterina and Doroteea did not receive a substantial dowry from their father, since the estates located in Turda and Alba counties, which had been acquired by their grandfather, Peter of Bogata, were held in joint possession with Nicholas Junior of Ocna Sibiului and his descendants. Nicholas Junior obtained control over these lands through the marriage of his daughter, Afra, to Emeric of Bogata, the brother of Ladislau and the son of Peter of Bogata. Following the death of Nicholas Junior of Ocna Sibiului and after the demise of Emeric of Bogata, the estates originating from the Bogata domain came under the administration of Afra, who was Emeric's widow and the daughter of Nicholas Junior of Ocna Sibiului and Ecaterina of Hărănglab.[21] Afra subsequently entered into a second marriage with Thomas Althemberg, the mayor of Sibiu, yet continued to exercise control over the property inherited from her first husband, jointly with her son from that marriage, Stephen, the son of Emeric of Bogata. In 1489, the two were compelled to divide the possession of Mako and the forest of Anya with Ladislau of Bogata.[22] Three years later Stephen, the son of Emeric of Bogata, ceded to his widowed mother, Afra, all the estates located in Turda, Alba, and Târnava counties that he had inherited from his father. The properties were to be administrated jointly by Afra and her sons from her second marriage to Thomas Althemberg, in exchange for other estates in Alba and Târnava counties that had formerly been part of the estate of the Hărănglab family, from which Afra's mother, Ecaterina of Hărănglab, originated.[23] The exchange of estates between Stephen and his mother, Afra, was contested by Ladislau of Bogata. Finaly, the nobleman ultimately alienated his share of the estates located in Alba, Turda, and Târnava counties to Afra for the sum of 1,610 florins. The wife of Ladislau, Cristina, was permitted to retain possession of one half of the estates of Iernut and Deag even after her husband's death. Should she remarry, Afra and her sons were entitled to exclude her from the possession of the lands upon restitution of the dowry and the marital gifts.[24] In 1500, Cristina is recorded as a widow. She concluded an agreement with Afra stipulating that the latter would pay her 24 florins as dowry and nuptial gifts and would undertake the obligation to arrange a suitable marriage for the daughters of Cristina and Ladislau, Ecaterina and Doroteea, when they reached a suitable age. Within fifteen days, Cristina was required to transfer all the movable and immovable property of her deceased husband to Afra in exchange for a pledge of 200 florins.[25]

The history of the nobles of Bogata and their control over the estates in Alba County, as discussed above, illustrates the gradual resolution of the conflict that arose in the mid-fifteenth century between the Bogata family and the Transylvanian vice-voivode, Nicholas Senior of Ocna Sibiului, by the end of the same century. Although the vice-voivode is alleged, according to the complaint submitted by Peter of Bogata, to have attempted to obtain possession of the estates through irregular or abusive legal practices, the properties ultimately came under the control of the vice-voivode's lineage through marital alliances and purchase.

Despite his vigorous pursuit of justice, Peter of Bogata adopted a pragmatic stance toward the legal norms, seeking a strict observance of the law and customary practice when these operated in his favor. Conversely, when legal restrictions could be circumvented to secure economic benefit, he did not refrain from doing so. Thus, in 1452, the nobles of Sfăraş and Triteni submitted a complaint before the Transylvanian vice-voivode, George, the son of Rikalf of Tarcău (1451–1468), alleging that, although they had enjoyed immemorial possession of the fishpond and valley known as *Zwnyagos*, situated within the boundaries of the Triteni estate, Peter of Bogata had obtained a charter of *nova donatio* from John Hunyadi by claiming possession of the aforementioned properties. When Peter of Bogata was to be formally installed in possession of the fishpond and valley by the representative of the vice-voivode and the convent of Cluj-Mănăştur, he brought his own familiars to the site, who asserted that the properties lay within the boundaries of the estate of Luduş, which was under Peter's administration. Subsequently, the nobles of Sfăraş and Triteni lodged a complaint before the vice-voivode, arguing that the individuals present during the act of investiture did not constitute the legitimate neighboring landholders of the estate. Instead, Peter of Bogata had brought his own dependents, who offered testimony in support of his claim. The vice-voivode then questioned the legitimate neighboring landholders as to whether the fishpond and valley rightfully belonged to Peter of Bogata. The neighbors replied that the true proprietors were the nobles of Sfăraş and Triteni.[26] The testimony submitted by the familiars through which Peter of Bogata attempted to secure possession of certain properties by allegedly irregular means was ultimately acknowledged by the nobleman himself. Consequently, three months later, before the governor of the

Kingdom of Hungary, the two parties reached a settlement according to which the nobles of Sfăraş and Triteni retained control of the *Zwnyagos* valley, whereas the nobleman of Bogata was granted ownership of the *Bydestho* fishpond.[27]

This outcome underscores the extent to which the pursuit of justice was interwoven with considerations of economic interest. The nobles were evidently well acquainted with the legal norms and customary regulations governing land tenure; nevertheless, they resorted to these principles primarily when they proved advantageous to their material position. The legal challenge conducted by the nobles of Bogata in defense of their proprietary rights over the estates in Alba County highlights several noteworthy juridical features that merit closer examination for a more nuanced understanding of the historical and institutional context.

The facts presented so far suggest that the grievance of Peter of Bogata stemmed from what he regarded as an unjust judgement delivered by the Transylvanian vice-voivode, Nicholas of Ocna Sibiului, during the general congregation held at Turda. General congregations functioned as judicial assemblies presided over by the voivode or vice-voivode of Transylvania, and, on certain occasions, even by the King of Hungary himself, acting as institutional bodies for the adjudication of selected provincial legal disputes.[28] At the *congregatio generalis*, either the entire nobility of the Voivodeship of Transylvania or only the nobles from selected counties were summoned. In the presence of the voivode or vice-voivode of Transylvania, the nobles presented the disputes with which they were confronted, these matters relating chiefly to patrimonial and hereditary issues.[29] The voivode had jurisdiction over the litigations concerning landed property, exercising this authority in accordance with the royal decrees promulgated by the Hungarian monarchs. Accordingly, even nobles whose primary residence lay outside the Voivodeship of Transylvania were required to submit to the jurisdiction of the voivode's court if the disputed estates were located on Transylvanian territory.[30] General congregations were convened on a regular basis from the fourteenth century onward, particularly in the city of Turda, which also served as the venue for the assembly discussed above. In the initial phase, judicial hearings were held on the octaves of major religious feasts. Over time, however, the temporal framework of judicial proceedings was substantially modified and extended. Whereas earlier sessions were limited to eight-day terms, the royal decree of 1498 issued within the Kingdom of Hungary instituted four annual judicial periods: two sessions lasting forty days each, held on the feasts of the Epiphany and of St. James, and two sessions lasting twenty days each, observed on the feasts of St. George and St. Michael.[31] During this interval, individuals seeking judicial redress were required to appear before the voivode's court. The political ruler of Transylvania did not adjudicate cases independently but rendered judgements jointly with sworn assessors.[32] These assessors were selected from the seven noble counties under the voivode's jurisdiction, with six reputable men appointed from each county. In the litigation involving the noble of Bogata, it is likewise evident that Nicholas of Ocna Sibiului did not exercise judicial authority in isolation but deliberated together with the sworn assessors, whom he is reported to have influenced in order to secure a decision consistent with his desire. Consequently, the sworn assessors did not fulfill the judicial duty of rendering impartial justice, but instead acted in accordance with the voivode's directive. As the supreme judicial authority within his jurisdiction, the voivode was expected to function as a guardian of both royal decree and customary legal tradition.[33] In the litigation concerning the Bogata noble, however, personal interest appears to have predominated, since the voivode assumed the dual role of both party to the dispute and adjudicator within the same proceedings. Following the infringement of his property rights, the noble of Bogata exercised the right of appeal to the prelates of the realm, a procedure available to the Transylvanian nobility in cases of dissatisfaction with judgements delivered by the voivode.[34] Peter of Bogata lodged a complaint before the prelates of the Kingdom of Hungary, asserting that he had been compelled to present certain property charters despite not having been formally summoned to the court hearing. Although the prelates annulled the judgement rendered by the Transylvanian voivode, they nevertheless set a new procedural term by which Peter of Bogata was required to present the relevant documentary evidence. This situation highlights the central role of written legal instruments in substantiating property rights within the judicial practice of the period. Beginning with the reign of the Angevin dynasty in the Kingdom of Hungary, written documents constituted the principal and most authoritative proof in matters of land ownership.[35] Nevertheless, the issuance of such documents also relied upon the testimony of neighboring landholders and boundary neighbors, whose statements served either to confirm or to contest the identity of the legitimate possessor, as well as to delineate the territory of the estate. An on-site investigation was carried out by an envoy of the voivode and a representative of the place of authentication, whose responsibility was to formally put the nobleman in possession of the property in the presence of neighboring landholders or to record any objections that might arise. The allegedly unlawful installation of Peter of Bogata into possession of the fishpond and valley of *Zwnyagos* reflects the failure of the voivode's administration and the place of authentication to make a clear and reliable identification of the legitimate neighboring proprietors of the estate. Royal decrees and the customary law of the realm required that the names of the neighboring and boundary landholders present at the act of investiture be formally recorded.[36] In the case of Peter of Bogata, as in numerous other instances, these names are omitted from the extant documentation, a deficiency that could have served as a subtractive procedural ground for contesting the validity of the investiture.

The unjust judgment rendered by the Transylvanian vice-voivode, Nicholas of Ocna Sibiului, together with the legal struggle pursued by Peter of Bogata, illustrates, on the one hand, the instrumentalization of political authority for the purpose of securing a verdict aligned with personal interest, and, on the other, the level of economic capacity and juridical literacy required to challenge an unlawful decision. The case thus reflects both the material resources necessary to sustain extended litigation and the nobleman's familiarity with the operative legal framework governing landed property. The recourse to royal decree and customary norms was accepted by members of the nobility insofar as these reinforced their material prosperity; when such norms proved detrimental, however, they were liable to be circumvented. The experience of the nobleman of Bogata, which exemplifies the exercise of power in contravention of legal principles, was not an isolated occurrence. Comparable circumstances affected other nobles within the Voivodeship of Transylvania, both before secular judicial forums and ecclesiastical tribunals.[37] The story of Peter of Bogata thus marks the emergence of a conflict rooted in the vice-voivode's attempt to acquire certain properties through unlawful means, as well as its eventual resolution through the incorporation of those estates to the vice-voivode's family by way of marriage alliances and purchase.

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Notes

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32. Hajnik, *A magyar birósági szervezet*, 151–154; Andea, *Congregaţii palatinale*, 214–215; Bichicean, *Congregaţii generale*, 205–206.
33. Hajnik, *A magyar birósági szervezet*, 147–150.
34. Ibid., 421–428
35. Ibid., 372–377; Susana Andea, "Actul scris şi valoarea lui probatorie în practica judiciară din Transilvania (sec. XIII–XIV)," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie George Bariţiu Cluj-Napoca* 53 (2014): 202.
36. The decree of Sigismund of Luxemburg, King of Hungary, issued in 1435, stipulates that "Seisins of estates, examinations and inspections of boundaries ought not be done except with the neighbors and abutters legally summoned there, and to prevent fraud and cheating in such cases, the names of the neighbors and the abutters who were present at the time of the said proceeding must be fully included in the

reports issued by chapters and convents." János M. Bak, Pál Engel, and James Ross Sweeney, eds., *DRMH*, vol. II, *1301–1457* (Salt Lake, 1992), 69, 8 March 1435:9.

37. Following the execution of Michael of Jucu, who had been sentenced to death by the King of Hungary, Matthias Corvinus, for his participation in the revolt against royal authority, the nobleman's estates were confiscated by the Crown and subsequently granted to one of the king's loyal supporters. The donation was contested by Michael's widow and her children. Their legal efforts, however, were obstructed when the *littera prohibitoria* issued by the convent of Cluj-Mănăştur was unlawfully appropriated by the vice-voivode of Transylvania, John Rédey. Only after prolonged litigation were Michael's descendants able to regain possession of the confiscated estates. The case constitutes a further illustration of the instrumentalization of political authority in the pursuit of material advantage by officeholders of their affiliates. National Archives of Romania, Cluj County Branch, Coll. Suky Family, Series 1 – Medieval Charters, no. 93. Another example: DL 37558, Aurel Răduţiu et al., *Documenta Romaniae Historica, C. Transilvania*, vol. XIV, *1371–1375* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2002), no. 316, 458–459.

Abstract
An Illicit Trial: Property Litigation Between Nicholas of Ocna Sibiului and Peter of Bogata

The present study analyses an inequitable judgement rendered by the Transylvanian vice-voivode, Nicholas of Ocna Sibiului, during a general congregation held in 1446, against the nobleman Peter of Bogata. The case illustrates, on the one hand, the instrumentalization of political authority for the purpose of securing a verdict aligned with personal interest, and, on the other, the level of economic capacity and juridical literacy required to challenge an unlawful decision. The recourse to royal decrees and customary norms was accepted by the nobles insofar as they reinforced their material prosperity; when such norms proved detrimental, however, they were liable to be circumvented. The story of Peter of Bogata thus marks the emergence of a conflict rooted in the vice-voivode's attempt to acquire certain properties through unlawful means, as well as its eventual resolution through the incorporation of those estates to the vice-voivode's family by way of marriage alliances and purchase.

Keywords
illegal trial, appeal, nobility, Congregatio Generalis, Medieval Transylvania

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Hans Bergel on Freedom and Attachment to Transylvania

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Introduction

The Transylvanian Saxon anti-communist dissident Hans Bergel (1925–2022) is a multifaceted intellectual figure—author, journalist, athlete, and musician. This study examines Bergel's cultural and affective attachment to his native region following his imprisonment as a political detainee in socialist Romania. After his emigration to the Federal Republic of Germany in the late 1960s, Bergel emerged as a prominent advo-

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cate for human rights, particularly concerning the German minority living under the communist regime in Romania. Simultaneously, he persistently reflected upon his sense of belonging to Transylvania and, in a broader sense, to Romania as a homeland.

The central premise of this research posits that Bergel's reflections on his personal experiences and on the fate of the German community in Romania provide a crucial interpretive framework for the role of place attachment in shaping the Germans' decisions to either remain in or emigrate from Romania before and after 1989. A corpus of texts authored by or related to Hans Bergel serves as the empirical basis for this investigation. The research methodology involves an initial thematic content analysis to identify prevailing recurrent motifs, followed by a qualitative discourse analysis of the selected narrative materials.

Political Persecution of the Transylvanian German Community After 1918

TO GAIN a clearer understanding of the circumstances that led to the large-scale emigration of Romania's German minority during the 1980s and 1990s, we start with a short overview of some major historical and political events which ultimately contributed to this exodus.

The dismantling of the Königsboden (Royal Land) and the loss of their autonomy in 1867 did not lessen the desire for self-determination for the largest German community of Transylvania, the Saxons. As the restoration of their public-law-based autonomy was no longer a realistic prospect, the Saxons were compelled to create alternative structures that allowed for independent decision-making in the most vital spheres of their national life, making strategic use of the opportunities available within the civil legal framework.[1] Throughout the four decades of the Dual Monarchy, the primary objective of the Transylvanian Saxon elite was to develop the institutional infrastructure necessary to sustain this autonomy, while simultaneously countering the Hungarian government's measures aimed—explicitly or implicitly—at Magyarization.[2] From 1890 onwards, a shift toward reconciliation with the prevailing legal and political order took place. The Saxons agreed to cooperate with the Hungarian authorities, while placing nation-building and the modernization of Saxon society at the heart of their national program.[3]

After the First World War, seeing an opportunity to achieve their goals of reinforcing self-determination, the German ethnic group in Transylvania supported the unification with Romania.[4] Although the principle of "full national freedom for all cohabiting peoples" was proclaimed among other pillars in the formation of the new Romanian state, its practical implementation often encountered difficulties that, in many cases, seemed insurmountable.[5] The newly unified Romanian state did not fulfil all the promises made to the minorities. Hence, instead of regaining the long-sought self-determination, the Saxon community experienced numerous severe losses as well. During the agrarian reform in Romania, initiated in 1921, the National Saxon University and the Evangelical Church lost a significant part of the lands they owned.[6] Their multi-layered urban cultural and industrial heritage was deteriorated by the new urban population and the newly appointed non-German public officials and their modernization measures carried out in cities.[7]

Thus, after centuries of autonomy and self-determination, political developments that emerged in the mid–19th century on the European stage led to the restriction of their rights, and the German ethnic group in Transylvania faced various forms of repression across a wide range of areas and intensities. However, the oppressive policies of the years following the Second World War, and the persecutions experienced throughout the ensuing four decades of communism, marked a new level of intensity and gravity.[8]

Several studies have explored this topic in an effort to explain the massive emigration of the German community from Transylvania, focusing on key historical events that significantly shaped their fate. Among the most consequential were the disciplinary measures imposed on them after Romania changed sides during the war,[9] and the widespread seizure of their land and properties beginning in 1945, which severely affected their livelihood—especially given that most of them were peasants.[10] The expropriation was followed by the nationalization of industry and finance.[11] Other research highlights the climate of intimidation, abuse, and terror they endured at the hands of both authorities and segments of the civilian population.[12] The deportations to forced labor camps in the Soviet Union as part of the war reparations,[13] as well as the forced relocation to the Bărăgan Plain in the 1950s[14] further exemplify the hostile policies directed against the German minority.

These oppressive policies are often explained by the collective guilt ascribed to the German community based solely on their ethnic affiliation, holding them responsible for events, losses, and damages incurred during the Second World War.[15] The historical catastrophes of national-socialism and of communism impacted in multiple negative ways the German ethnics in Romania.[16] As targets of the Romanian government's anti-Nazi policy, the German minority lost its civil rights[17] and was stripped of its recognition and rights as a national minority.[18]

After the extremely hostile policies of the 1940s, the institutional, economic, and cultural situation of the German minority began to gradually normalize from the 1950s onward—albeit under communist auspices.[19] In December

1948 the German minority regained its legal status, and a few years later, the right to vote and to political representation. They were also allowed to publish their own newspapers and periodicals, although these functioned as instruments of the Communist Party, and books or the theatre were subject to censorship.[20]

The intellectual elite—regardless of ethnicity—who did not align with the new ideology or fought against it, were harassed, arrested, and sent to prison or forced labor camps. Many members of the German community were among those affected by these repressive measures throughout the four decades of the communist regime.[21] The pressure on minorities increased after the Hungarian uprising of 1956, and in 1958/59 major political trials against the Germans/Saxons took place, the more publicized ones being the Black Church Trial and the Trial of the German Writers (including Hans Bergel).

During the 1970s, Romania's political climate was marked by an intolerant and repressive policy aimed at the forced assimilation of ethnic minorities.[22] The resumption of diplomatic relations between Romania and what was at that time the Federal Republic of Germany, known also as West Germany, in 1969 led to an increase in the number of citizens granted permission to emigrate.[23] Individuals who expressed a desire to emigrate were subjected to various forms of harassment by the authorities.[24] Those who left the country illegally faced even harsher consequences: not only were all their possessions confiscated, but their relatives who remained behind were also subjected to severe abuse. Several historical studies tackle these topics, applying oral history in addressing the perception of local Romanian communities[25] regarding the experiences of their neighbors in the 1940s and 1950s, and the collective memory of the decimated German communities.[26] The events of the 1940s are a sensitive topic for both the Romanian and the German population of Transylvania. Most are cautious when speaking about the war, the political orientation during the interwar period, the relations with the other ethnic groups, and their behavior during the events right after World War II.[27] Published recollections are a significant source,[28] alongside the Securitate Archives.[29]

The exodus of Romania's German ethnic group did not cease after 1989, either.[30] The traumatic experiences following World War II—including forced relocations and deportations—undermined the social fabric of the community and significantly contributed to its disintegration. The confiscation of property and assets, political repression, and the separation of countless families after World War II[31] further accelerated the departure. The erosion of economic and social stability, coupled with a deep loss of trust in the Romanian government, fueled large-scale emigration to West Germany.[32] Even after 1989, feelings of fear, isolation, and mistrust persisted,[33] making what Göckler-Timoşenco described as the "exit of the Germans from Romanian history" an irreversible reality.[34]

"The Fundamental Theme of My Life: Freedom"

Hans Bergel's turbulent life exemplifies the turmoil of Central and Eastern Europe in the 20th century: minority status, political oppression, forced labor and exile—and above all the endurance of personal convictions, literature, confident identity, and the pursuit of freedom despite all hardships. If we regard Hans Bergel as a lens through which to examine the relationship with, and the fate of, the German community in Romania, we must consider the principles of freedom and humanity, which underpin his approach to culture, writing, and life:

> *[Freedom] is the first condition for a person's cultural capacity, which they understand as a permanent and inevitable challenge . . .*[35]
> *Freedom—not to be confused with lack of attachment!—is the alpha and omega of every culture. In the 20th century, we had to learn from the great dictatorships—communism and national socialism—what kind of illusions a forcibly imposed concept of culture can produce.*[36]

The topic of freedom in the life and work of Hans Bergel cannot be fully examined without reference to the short story *The Prince and the Minstrel*. While the student Bergel had previously demonstrated acts of defiance—both against the educational demands of the German Youth between 1942 and 1944, and against deportation to the Soviet Union (through evasion and concealment)—in this narrative, published in 1957, he recounts the minstrel's resistance to Prince Gabriel Báthory. Although the plot unfolds in the 17th century (complete title: *The Prince and the Minstrel: A Tale from 17th-Century Transylvania/Fürst und Lautenschläger: Eine Erzählung aus dem Siebenbürgen des 17. Jahrhunderts*) the notion of defiance is transposed into Bergel's stance toward socialism. The minstrel refuses to glorify the prince, and upon the prince's retreat from besieged Braşov, he sings the lied "Et såß e klie wäld Vijjeltchen"/ "Es saß ein klein wild Vögelein"/ "There once was a little wild bird," where the little bird is the fleeting image of freedom itself.[37] The meaning of this short story was disclosed to the Securitate by Eginald Schlattner, leading to Bergel's imprisonment—ironically, for a story that had initially received an award.[38]

Freedom is considered by Bergel the highest value and the golden thread of his life: freedom for the man he was and for the writer,[39] and this creed influences his emotional link during communist Romania: "Since they took our freedom, they destroyed our connection with the homeland."[40]

He observes that communist thinking is foreign to the notion of freedom and of humanism. Bergel's personal narratives emphasize this idea:

> *What could an ethnic minority . . . a small one of about 250,000 Germans in Transylvania, a bit more in Banat, do other than adapt to the dictatorship? Of course, there were people who opposed it.*[41]
>
> *This story expresses the fundamental theme of my life: freedom—sometimes, with all the dramatic consequences for the course of my life.*[42]

His understanding of freedom is within a hierarchy where security is not really appreciated. On the contrary: "Fundamentally, Aristotle's clear statement still holds true: He who prefers security over freedom makes himself a slave."[43]

In a society changed by censorship and political repression, Bergel is a defender of his fellow citizens' shared memory. Bergel felt that the lack of economic, political, and cultural freedom threatened to erase ethnic and personal identities. Heritage was suppressed or rewritten, as required by ideology, under the authoritarian communist regimes of Romania. In his historical fiction, he criticizes the communist regime, and uses writing as a survival mechanism and to outline his personal trauma. Narratives bring back treasured memories of the good days, but also the trauma inflicted by political persecution. His fiction is both a refuge and resistance against ideological control and a life under the harsh reality of surveillance, because the surveillance system of the Securitate (secret police) infiltrated every layer of life.

In the same vein, he ponders about the role of individual agency versus ethnic (i.e., the ethnic Other) or regional origin. According to Bergel, personal choice is not dependent on culture and ethnicity:

> *I have come to understand, once and for all, that in a borderline situation the decision always lies with the individual. One's origin means nothing.*[44]
>
> *It was my personal decision to oppose communism. It was a decision—though I only later fully realized it—that was deeply connected to my sense of dignity and pride.*[45]

According to Bergel, dictatorship shapes people's lives as a dance in chains, and this can create solidarity based on humanism—valuing people for themselves as supreme values—and the hope for freedom and a dignified life. Freedom opposes communist terror and its cold cruelty. He sees communism as a system of lies, an ideology that crushes the individual, their choices and hopes. Bergel fought against dictatorship and against the idea that there is communism with a human face, the very reason for his imprisonment: "I was condemned and imprisoned due to my inability to appreciate communism as the ideal solution to human problems and as . . . heaven on earth."[46]

He also mentioned his awareness of the internal distortion of the human being inflicted by communism. Bergel reflects upon his fear that dictatorship could deform him internally and assesses the significance of inner freedom for those who lost their external freedom.[47] He distinguishes between these types of freedom and places them into a hierarchy according to which he led his life:

Of course, the loss of physical freedom is a substantial change in a person's life. But the one who does not allow his inner, spiritual, and moral freedom to be taken away becomes intangible. He will always be the one who, for the sake of freedom, also has the courage to revolt. In communism, among the political prisoners from all professions and social classes, I encountered this capacity for inner freedom.[48]

Against this background, he fought for freedom and human dignity and felt that Transylvania belonged to its people and history. Bergel tries to find historical reasons for valuing freedom: "a geographical space of transition, invasions, and conquests like no other in Europe, with freedom becoming the most precious good in the consciousness of its inhabitants."[49]

For Bergel, freedom also means rejecting any type of ideology. Bergel perceives the feeling of freedom and the rhetoric of freedom as a universal language which transcends any identity peculiarities and ideologies. According to Bergel, while ideologies are exclusionary, freedom offers a very humane, complex, and inclusive vision of life:

Every ideology, at some point, forces people to disconnect their conscience, feelings, and sense of humanity. How can you have a meaningful conversation with such people? To every argument, they will respond with prefabricated ideological theses.[50]

He identifies a way to maintain one's freedom, and we thus come to understand his rejection of any ideology: "A person must use their own reason in every circumstance; only by doing so can they preserve their freedom."[51]

Bergel underlines that the direct personal experience of history should not be questioned, but rather trusted, which he complains is difficult for those who gave up their freedom of thought for love of an ideology. The truthfulness of personal experience is emphasized by Bergel against the knowledge or expertise of those who claim to know without any direct experience. This idea is brought up by Bergel especially when he writes about the communist dictatorship and his emigration experience:

During visits in 1968 to the editorial offices of West German media, I was shocked by the lack of information and, even more so, by the know-it-all attitude; both literally left me speechless. I won't name names, but even a writer who at the time was famous beyond Germany tried to explain to me, in a long one-on-one conversation in Berlin,

> *the "socialism" of the Eastern countries—even though, unlike me, he had not experienced a single half hour of it in body or spirit.*[52]
>
> *The cultural affairs officer of a major German city . . . let me know—in a tone of bewilderment—that he did not quite understand the reason behind my stance in the East and my politically motivated imprisonments under the communist regime—he himself, on appropriate occasions, had advocated for certain communist principles.*[53]
>
> *Others will write in more detail and more accurately about these things. Without having been there. Informing themselves from books and documents. They will know better, without our tangled and disturbing testimony.*[54]

He describes childhood as the age of freedom, made visible through play, devoid of any ideology:

> *Playing involves discipline, self-control, teamwork, reaction speed, a wealth of creative ideas, the joy of acting, courage, and balance. Above all, however, games protect against any ideology and, consequently, any radicalism. Because games, by their nature, cannot be ideologized. Thus, they are the expression of that freedom which seeks to be the testimony of the highest proof of responsibility, through the respect of rules.*[55]

Freedom has been won through sacrifice and is thus invaluable to Romanian democracy. Bergel feels responsible for Romania, despite his mixed feelings, showing thus his attachment to the place:

> *But could I feel contentment toward a country with which I share a painful love? No, I rather feel sorrow when I see the wounds communism inflicted upon this land. I wish I could help.*[56]
>
> *You can't play with democracy. It's such a serious thing that . . . you have to take it seriously. You have to take seriously this way of coexisting, because we don't have a better one.*[57]
>
> *And when I see the developments in Romania today, I am horrified by how politicians are mocking this democratic system . . . earned with so many sacrifices, with so much suffering. And you've made it . . . you've escaped the dictatorship, and then to do such things with the freedom you won or regained, it's a tragedy . . . I can't sleep when I think about these things.*[58]

Bergel criticizes the loyalty to any kind of ideology because it means suspending individual rationality. According to him, ideological extremes led to fear, moral compromise, and even collapse; they ignored the moral complexity of people and their universal desire for individual freedom. He criticizes communism for the use of violence in order to cause internal deformities to individuals, according to its ideology.

"I Have Always Been Forced to Write in Order to Survive"

The pursuit of freedom is powerfully expressed in Hans Bergel's writing, which, in itself, constitutes an act of freedom[59] and a form of catharsis, and therefore the highest value he holds. Writing helped him cope with a harsh or unfair reality:

> *My intent was one: to express in words my revolt against tyranny so as not to suffocate, to give voice to my anger against the oppressors so as not to collapse morally.*[60]

Bergel draws on an ethnic minority experience within the Romanian communist regime. His writings ignored socialist realism, and had a deeply humanist approach to themes like moral courage and spiritual freedom. He had multiple identities that were reflected in his writing: Transylvanian Saxon, Romanian German-language writer, and political dissident under the Soviet occupation and the Romanian communist regimes of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Nicolae Ceauşescu, with their repressive political and cultural apparatus.

In communist Romania, he felt that he was internally exiled. As a form of rebellion, he wrote and spoke against ideological conformity and against any system of control. To break through censorship and fear, Bergel used historical settings and criticized the communist regime. Also, in many of his writings, the style is autobiographical, thus answering his wish to write with honesty, based on personal experience. Bergel reflects on the role that freedom and resistance through writing had in his life and in defining his personality and identity:

> *I am, above all, the product of a natural predisposition, but at the same time, the result of a rebellion against any form of dictatorship. I have remained this way until today, even in the so-called "free society" that, in its own way, promotes the spiritual elimination of those who think differently.*[61]
>
> *For me, it was decisive during that period that I met people willing to pay the highest price for freedom; never before had I encountered such people.*[62]

Through writing, Bergel makes sense of his place in the world. His description of the relationship with his writing shows that this activity was a tool for survival: "I have always been forced to write in order to survive: my life is my writing—or it is nothing."[63]

Bergel's novels have an autobiographical source of inspiration; therefore, he feels open, honest, and confident in his writing. Bergel himself comments on his literary work, as it emphasizes his focus on the Transylvanian region: "I am the author with the most Transylvanian-themed works. My most passionate political and essayistic writings have addressed Transylvanian issues."[64]

His resistance literature is influenced by his values, convictions, and personality:

> *Writing against one's knowledge and conscience is something I have always considered despicable and disgraceful. If a confrontation was necessary, I rarely avoided it. Forced by political realities and my own moral convictions, I stood, regardless of personal consequences, against one of the two major totalitarian systems of the 20th century—communism.*[65]

In his literature, Bergel describes the complex feelings he has for his homeland, due to his experience of dictatorship and imprisonment:

> *Now I want to be in that place, where they sought to crush my pride and tear me apart from myself, where they stole and then destroyed my attachment to the land of my childhood, the sense of my roots, the first dreams and fascinations, the first satisfactions and revelations. Where I was expelled, like every one of those like me, from everything we were—without being allowed to leave. Where they sank their fangs into us like vampires and where they forced us to see with what sadism they strangled our love, with every breath, everything we had planted with the strength of our lives in our native soil and what we once were . . . And I want to look them in the eye, in the place where for years they tried to kill my soul and mind, through stone catacombs and swampy camps.*[66]

Bergel's Emotional Attachment to Places: "I Am Where I Am Not. Not Where I Am"

Hans Bergel's attachment to Transylvania and Romania entails both geographical and emotional landscapes. Among the elements engendering bonds to places, Bergel mentions the importance of the nature and landscapes of Transylvania, of the family material assets and its genealogy as proof of his roots in the region, and of his multiple cultural belonging. Our findings are in line with previous research that showed that territorial identities at the local and regional levels are maintained through place attachment practices (i.e., of remembering and permanently constructing representations about places and regions), and these reinforce individual feelings of belonging, and also strengthen place and regional identities themselves.[67]

"My Heart Melts When I See the Făgăraş Mountains"

Childhood and life in the countryside meant learning to love nature: "years of communion with nature and its creatures, years I wouldn't trade for anything in the world."[68] Transylvania is both the place of the golden age of childhood and the wound of the later years of his youth and adulthood. Most of all, his nostalgia is built on the memories of his childhood and youth, of the place where his children were born. Childhood and youth in Transylvania, the cultural and spiritual geography of the region, shaped him and Bergel felt that his roots and home were in that region:[69]

> *If you ask me: Where is your homeland? I wouldn't say Munich, or Gröbenzell, or Transylvania, or Bucharest . . . I'd say the Făgăraş Mountains. That's where I'm at home. There isn't . . . let me exaggerate a little . . . a rock that I don't know, even to this day. Every time I pass through there . . . This July, I was in Braşov again, a splendid day from Sibiu airport to Braşov . . . My heart melts when I see the Făgăraş Mountains. I would move right now to a cabin there. I knew all the cabin keepers, I knew absolutely everything, every peak, every valley, the forests, I knew it all.*[70]

His love for the country transpires from a discussion he has with his mother, and he writes about it:

> *in a state of helplessness, I asked my mother if she could tell me what beauty is. She looked at me thoughtfully and said: "Beauty is what a person looks at with love, and the things we do with love become beautiful as well."*[71]

Family Material Heritage and Roots: "Time Is Our Ultimate Judge"

Writing about emigration, Hans Bergel remembers his attachment to an object that symbolized all material things that had been lost during his family's history in Transylvania: the Viennese pendulum clock, a material proof of his origins:

> *In our family, I was the first to manage to emigrate from our unfortunate country and reach the West. One by one, the others came as well, until, around 1970, we were able to celebrate the reunification of the family in Munich. The only thing missing from our circle was the pendulum clock from the year 1821.*[72]
>
> *The clock was the only item from my childhood that survived the following decades, the socialist dispossessions, and the general impoverishment . . . The law had prevented it from being taken out of the country, because it was, as my sister ex-*

plained to me, "national heritage," even though a distant ancestor had bought it privately in Vienna, without any state involvement, and had brought it as a gift to his wife in the Grand Principality of Transylvania.[73]

As a protest against the communist dictatorship, he remembers his wish to have the pendulum clock and his mother's efforts to eventually get it out of Romania:

I had lost everything, but everything in the country in the southeast, devastated by dictatorship, which is why my desire to once again have nearby at least a pendulum clock meant a delayed protest against the humiliations to which we were subjected.[74]

This object is not only a symbol of time and its power over people's lives, but also a reminder of a childhood that Bergel perceives as his golden age:

Whenever I stand in front of it, it teaches me that time is our ultimate judge. And its unshakable balance restores to me something of the security that a person only has in childhood.[75]

Family Genealogy and Roots: "Didn't My Ancestors Live on These Lands?"

Pondering about his roots, Hans Bergel considers that his yearly visits are palpable proof of his enduring connection:

my deep roots in the Romanian lands to this day. And I go there every year once, twice, three times.[76]
I can't detach myself from Romania, because that is where my roots are.[77]

His place attachment is based on family roots: "And I ask myself: didn't my ancestors live on these lands? Aren't their graves found in the soil of these territories? And haven't my three children been born here?"[78]

Home is where his roots are. Thus, genealogy—or historical identification through house/home, family, and community—means an "extension of the self":[79]

During some of these journeys, I have felt an almost painful longing to put down roots, to belong somewhere. Perhaps that is a form of searching for home—a consequence of losing a homeland that can never truly be regained. As I understand it, a person can only have a limited number of true homelands. I did not leave Transylvania voluntarily. But has anyone in this century ever asked us about the vulnerability of our sense of home?[80]

Bergel even self-identifies as a writer in exile, clarifying what this means for him home and away, and the reasons for feeling at home when in Transylvania:

All my life, I will carry within me the songs and dances, the languages, the tears and the laughter, the history and the faces of these people, even though I no longer live among them. From this perspective, I am a writer in exile.[81]

Many times, I miss Romania—it is still the homeland of my soul.[82]

My heart is bound to Romania.[83]

Moreover, he felt the Romanian Revolution was also his revolution and travelled to Romania to participate in that event:

I left Munich for Bucharest without stopping, only twice to get gas . . . Why am I telling you this? It's a symptom of the depth of my connection to the places I come from. With this behavior, with this act of revolution, I must go, because it's also my revolution. I could have said: "What do I care? Let them kill each other." The fact is that something pushed me! I couldn't stop![84]

This sense of his roots, which Bergel holds to, is strong in locals; it gives them a rooted sense of place and topophilia,[85] based on multiple material and symbolic ties that bind them to a certain area which is significant for their personal identity.[86]

Bergel's Humanism and His Multiple Cultural Belonging: "I Am a Cultural Border Crosser"

His multifaceted cultural affiliations and strong sense of identity enable Hans Bergel to conceive of European identity as a highly significant marker of people's cultural identity, without overshadowing or diminishing their regional peculiarities and attachment. Both levels of this hierarchy of territorial attachment and identity can exist simultaneously.

Because I realized early on that evaluating people based on nationality is nonsense, even a lie, I became a European. But never would it occur to me to forget that I am German. One can very well be a citizen of the world without giving up one's national identity and heritage.[87]

The national region offers a unique color, but not the substantial human background, which is transregional.[88]

Does the love of Brașovians for their hometown of Brașov and the Transylvanian region have different emotional roots than that of Bretons for their homeland in the *peninsula made of granite, schist, and sandstone, or of the Italians from Puglia for their native land, consisting of the 600 km-long Adriatic coast and the limestone terraces known as the "murge"?*[89]

When Bergel writes about his roots, about what makes him come back again and again to his homeland, he acknowledges his belonging to two cultures: he is both a German ethnic and a Transylvanian Saxon. Bergel lives in-between these two cultures. His cultural heritage is not a cage, but a gift, a lens through which he sees and understands the world. Thus, his place attachment is a cultural one, to Romania:

Despite more than 30 years of absence and all my decades of travels around the world, my roots are and will remain firmly planted in the lands to the north and south of the Carpathians, by the Danube, the Black Sea, and in Moldova. My personality is and will remain marked, until the end of my life, by the cultural imprint of these regions. I want to clarify that I only realized these things once I was already far from Romania and, as I grow older, I become more and more aware of this.[90]

This does not change the fact that, by birth, by my mother tongue, by my education and culture, I am German. I have long been aware of that, in this regard, I represent a special case. Day by day, I face the dilemmas of this double cultural belonging and, equally, the creative tensions that arise from it.[91]

Bergel also explains why he is not emotionally attached to Western Europe, to its places and culture:

The idea is that we are—roughly—young enough to change internally until about the age of 40, still capable of taking root in a new environment, flexible enough to experience a new homeland . . . So I came to the new land of Central/Western Europe too late. Of course, I adapted at an intellectual level. But to detach myself emotionally from the life I had lived until then—I hesitated, and ultimately, the more I got to know my new surroundings, the less I wanted to.[92]

In the same vein, Bergel does not feel a part of Germany, but rather an outsider:

I am a child of a centuries-long historical experience, which I am not at all willing or inclined to forget for the sake of Western naivety, because in these matters, I do not float as an individual in an airless and bloodless space of supposedly tolerant ideologies, but I rather think and speak from experience in dealing with brutal realities. And so it happens—and I am not the only one!—that although I hold a German passport, in this regard, I live as a stranger among Germans.[93]

Nevertheless, developing a new attachment was possible. However, it was not to Germany, but to his family (to his second wife):

> *I can imagine it. But practically speaking, it is impossible. In the nearly 30 years I have lived in Germany, bonds and roots have developed that not only bind me, but for which I am also grateful.*[94]

The past haunts Bergel with both its bright memories and dark wounds, a reason why he feels he is always wandering between two worlds. Bergel acts as a bridge between his Transylvanian Saxon ethnic identity and the national one (i.e., Romanian), between the Romanian and the German culture, between the oppressed Romanian society and the free one of West Germany. He used fiction to mediate between all these.

> *I am a cultural border crosser, moving between Western and Southeastern European cultures. I carry both within me, I am deeply connected to both, and at the same time, I am able to observe and understand both from an external perspective. I could not function in any other way.*[95]

Bergel feels as the "son of two countries":

> *Alongside my German culture, I lived and grew up with Romanian culture. And I never saw, at any moment in my life, due to my parental home, the Romanian culture as an adversary or a threat. I saw it as an addition, an annex, a corrective to the culture I was born into, being German.*[96]

Cultural belonging is nuanced and enriching for Bergel:

> *Day by day, I face the dilemma of this double cultural belonging.*[97]
>
> *I have never perceived the German and Romanian identities as contradictory, but rather as two different facets of the same cultural will: as European forms of our shared cultural existence.*[98]

Having multiple cultural roots, Bergel feels fortunate and accomplished: "With a strong, genuine connection to the German language, I see myself as a Southeastern European."[99]

As a result, Bergel embodies cultural hybridity, but emphasizes that his homeland is where his heart lingers, what he longs for, not the place of his exile: "I am / where I am not. / Not / where I am."[100] Thus, his place attachment, due to a profound understanding of European and Romanian culture, is even stronger, making Bergel a humanist:

> *it is quite possible that, from the outside, but with deep roots embedded in these regions, I may be more aware of this than many Romanians. Romania's European vocation makes me feel even closer to its people and landscapes.*[101]
>
> *Culture is a spiritual space of cohabitation, whose gems require our lucid creative spirit, our dedication, and care: it is the guarantee of our humanity, if we don't want to lose ourselves entirely in inhumanity.*[102]

Both his writing and life are characterized by permanent crossings of cultural borders. Beside rejecting ideological absolutism, Bergel challenges cultural essentialism. He is ready to embrace the complexity of mixed cultural identities, due to his experience of living in varied cultural, political, and economic contexts. He perceives his engagement with different and multiple cultural worlds as enriching and transformative, enabling his cultural and emotional openness and fluency. His neither-here-nor-there emphasizes the complex grammar of his plural belonging, as his identity is a relational one, not one featuring purity. He perceives his hybridity as a strength and his exile as a space of creation, open to new attachment, not only loss.

He fights against any dehumanization that comes with nationalist and ideological totalizing systems. Advocating for a humanist approach to life, Bergel resists the communist regime. He sets humanity before communist ideology and narrow nationalism. His voicing of humanist values is a subversive act against totalitarianism. Setting the dignity and value of the human being above any type of dogma is a radical act. Thus, his humanism appears dangerous, subversive, and elitist because it puts the individual above the state. Such a humanist defiance transpires from Bergel's writing: "Mature cultures culminate and always meet in the idea of humanity; everything else is provincialism."[103]

The communist world was a fractured one, shaped by authoritarianism and trauma. This authoritarian system refuses to practice empathy towards the Other and to acknowledge the complexity of the human being and of the world. Bergel defies such ideological certainty. Under totalitarianism, he is bearing witness to how ideology makes both victims and collaborators. Through writing, he creates alternative meaningful spaces of survival under oppression. This way, Bergel resists political oppression and totalitarian simplification. For him, language is a space of free expression. He is committed to moral responsibility and to freedom, both in the way he lives and in his writing. Later, by remembering and keeping alive the memory of communist repression, he continues his resistance.

For Bergel, humanism is a significant European value. Moreover, due to this, in his writings he recognizes the whole in a part of it, Europe in any region, and thus also in Transylvania. The places and the people of Transylvania represent the continent through their culture and affective relationships with other places due to similar or common historical experiences. Therefore, Bergel feels emotionally connected to both Europe and its regions, through direct physical experiences, and especially through culture:

> *I see Europe as a shared protective umbrella under which we all—Romanians, Germans, Irish, and others—are guaranteed the freedom to live and preserve what we have inherited from our history, culture, and language. The greatness of European cultures lies in their richness of regional expressions and diversity. To blend them into a uniform mass would mean the spiritual death of Europe and the end of the Europe in which, despite everything, we still feel at home.*[104]

As such, for Bergel, the homeland is a material place, as much as an internal experience. His personal identity, given by culture and space, conditions his attachment:

> *According to birth, mother tongue, and education, I am of course German. But the older I get, the stronger I hear from within the voice of my Transylvanian roots.*[105] *I left Transylvania when I was 43 years old. And by "bond," I mean that degree of imprinting by one's origins that becomes a part of one's personality.*[106]

The unique cultural diversity of Transylvania is colored by his experiences. This multicultural region presented itself as an advantage in the shaping of Hans Bergel, it influenced in a positive way his interactions within Romania and other countries: "From Transylvania, I took with me, first and foremost, the ability—learned over centuries—to perceive other peoples and cultures."[107] The Transylvania of his golden age is one of ethnic tolerance:

> *As I grow older, I ask myself: "Am I German? Was my education German?" However, I realize that I am radically different from the Germans who live here, in Germany. So, what am I? I only know that I come from a place where multiculturalism was something natural. I would go out into the street, and my neighbor was Romanian. A few houses away, there lived a Hungarian family. I won't even mention the Roma, there were quite a few of them on the outskirts of the village. This multicultural, multiethnic space meant—looking back—a gain for me, a wealth of inspiration. I believe that this is precisely why I never had problems encountering other cultures, different from my own.*[108]

His cultural background is determined by his upbringing in a multicultural environment:

> *The multi-faceted cultural and ethnic conglomerate in which I lived until I was 43 shaped a spirituality in me that, alongside my German upbringing, was also*

> *influenced by elements of Latin culture from the Romanians, as well as Slavic and Hungarian ways of being. The religious culture of the Jews in the spirit of the Torah and several other influences also played a role.*[109]

Longing for Transylvanian Experiences: "I Can Return and Relive the Feeling That I Have a Homeland"

Bergel values his cultural in-betweenness as a gift, while multiple belonging and the tension it creates only adds to his personal drama and is a source of creativity in writing. His internal crisis is steeped in his attachment to places and a homeland, and in the related emotional turmoil and grief. He recognizes and reflects on the depth of his attachment to Transylvania and Romania, and understands what triggered his feelings for places, this region, and for the homeland. However, amid personal suffering, Bergel sees the larger historical drama of the Transylvanian Saxons and of Romanians under communism. Through writing, he can contain part of his personal distress. This transition from feelings to reflective lucidity has a therapeutic role, as Bergel comes to terms with the complexity of his emotions.

His oscillation between two worlds (Germany and Romania) is marked by feelings of happiness each time he visits Romania.[110] Through travelling and experiencing formerly significant places, the emotional bonds are reinforced.[111] The reasons for his visits, quite frequent after 1989, are his fascination with Transylvania, its culture that is part of his identity, and his memories that make Bergel prone to longing for more direct and sensory experiences of the native region:

> *The fascination of meeting the Other in a multinational space like Transylvania—the old Terra Ultrasilvana—a fascination that has followed me since childhood.*[112]
>
> *I can imagine the historical dimension of the meeting land, Transylvania, in a profoundly sensory and direct manner.*[113]
>
> *Of course, it's not just the writer's thirst for knowledge that constantly draws me to the subject of Transylvania. Absolutely not. At least as intensely, I feel the nostalgic moment of the emotional connection with a land from which I come—my deep affection, my love for this land and its people. Is there anyone in the world who can completely detach themselves from their origins, so that they no longer mean anything to them? I personally cannot, and do not want such a thing. What happens in Transylvania continues to be at least a part of my inner fate.*[114]

He is happy when in Transylvania and wants to repeat the experience as often as possible. However, despite the joy of returning during visits, he made no firm decision to return to Romania:

> *The most important thing seems to me—if I may be sentimental—my emotional connection with the country, a connection that justifies me in considering it, without any doubt, my own country.*[115]
>
> *The Romanians alongside whom I grew up here and who embrace me whenever we meet again make me feel an indescribable happiness, as they prove to me that after the three political trials and imprisonments in cells and camps, after being expelled from this country, I can return and relive the feeling that I have a homeland.*[116]

Considering his bonds to nature, family, objects, and cultures, his attachment to the homeland is first a regional attachment:

> *A writer who left his native land, Transylvania, more than three decades ago—because freedom was more important to him than anything else—continues to turn his gaze upon his former homeland, its present, its historical situations, its people and its places. Why is that? One possible answer to this question is, without a doubt, the following: there, "out in the wide world," he made the discovery that the world is, in fact, everywhere, within everyone.*[117]
>
> *Since I was allowed, starting in 1989–1990, to cross the border again into Southeastern Europe, Transylvania has revealed itself to me in all its glory and suffering during my annual journeys, as honest with its past and present as it once was. And I cannot imagine my life without immersing myself in the mysteries of this land.*[118]

Conclusions

The findings indicate that Hans Bergel embodies the complex and ambivalent emotional landscape characteristic of emigrants and exiles who experience a conflicted relationship with both their homeland and their adoptive country. His experience of cultural rupture, induced by the communist ideology and political persecution, transforms the notion of "home" into a paradoxical space of both attachment and suffering. In exile, Romania and Transylvania persist not as lost geographies but as enduring presences within memory and longing, which Bergel reconfigures through his literary and journalistic production. Furthermore, his conception of humanism transcends cultural boundaries, embracing diversity and the complexity of human experience. For Bergel, humanism constitutes a lived ethical practice, expressed through his resistance to all forms of dehumanization, particularly those arising from ideological coercion or the reduction of individual emotional complexity.

❑

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87. Drotleff, "Grenzgänger zwischen Kulturen," 89.
88. Hans Bergel, "Interferenţe edificatoare: Recurs la românitate în opera unui neamţ," in *Aprecieri în răspăr cu timpul*, 51.
89. Hans Bergel, "Misterul unui ţinut: Provincia şi lumea largă," in *Aprecieri în răspăr cu timpul*, 12.
90. Bergel, "Întâlnirea mea cu spiritualitatea română," 15.
91. Ibid.
92. Széll, *Vom Abenteuer des Schreibens*, 173.
93. Ibid., 80.
94. Drotleff, "Grenzgänger zwischen Kulturen," 92.
95. Ibid., 83.
96. Budeancă, *Hans Bergel*, 111–112.
97. Bojoga, "Interviu cu Hans Bergel," 41.
98. Ibid., 53.
99. Széll, *Vom Abenteuer des Schreibens*, 224.

100. Hans Bergel, "Sfinxul," in *Scriitorul Hans Bergel*, 73.
101. Bergel, "Întâlnirea mea cu spiritualitatea română," 19.
102. Bergel, "Teoria culturii la Friedrich Schiller," 38.
103. Bojoga, "Interviu cu Hans Bergel," 54.
104. Drotleff, "Grenzgänger zwischen Kulturen," 89.
105. Nistea, "'Şi monştrii au ceva sensibil de om în ei,'" 171.
106. Drotleff, "Grenzgänger zwischen Kulturen," 82.
107. Ibid., 83.
108. Bojoga, "Interviu cu Hans Bergel," 41.
109. Széll, *Vom Abenteuer des Schreibens*, 222.
110. Cf. also Maria Luise Roth-Höppner, "Experienţa emigrării şi reîntoarcerii," *Convergenţe Transilvane* 2 (1994): 52–65.
111. Low, "Symbolic Ties that Bind," 283.
112. Bergel, "Misterul unui ţinut," 12.
113. Ibid., 13.
114. Ibid., 13–14.
115. Bergel, "Întâlnirea mea cu spiritualitatea română," 15, emphasis in the original.
116. Ibid., 18.
117. Bergel, "Misterul unui ţinut," 11.
118. Ibid., 14.

Abstract

Hans Bergel on Freedom and Attachment to Transylvania

The Transylvanian Saxon anti-communist dissident Hans Bergel was a genuine polymath—writer, journalist, athlete, and musician. This study investigates Bergel's cultural and emotional relationship with his native region after he was a political detainee in socialist Romania. Following emigration to Federal Republic of Germany in the late 1960s, he acted as a defender of human rights for the German minority in communist Romania. At the same time, the writer continued to discuss his sense of belonging to Transylvania—and, more broadly, to Romania as a homeland. The central hypothesis of our research posits that Hans Bergel's perspective on matters concerning his life and that of the German ethnic group in Romania constitutes a key framework for interpreting the role of person–place bonds in the Germans' decision to remain or leave the country before and after 1989. A corpus of texts written by or concerning Hans Bergel was examined. Thematic content analysis was first conducted to identify dominant recurrent themes, followed by a qualitative discourse analysis of these narrative materials. The results reveal that Hans Bergel personifies the multifaceted and contradictory emotional landscape characteristic of expatriates and exiles who navigate a complex attachment to both their native homeland and their adoptive country.

Keywords

Transylvanian Saxons, Romania, home, belonging, emigration

Royalty and Elites in the Countries of the Crown of Saint Stephen
Medieval Solidarities and Identities in the 11th–14th Centuries

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The Holy Crown of Hungary (Crown of Saint Stephen).

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The developments that determined the transformation of the power structure founded by the Hungarian clans settled in the Middle Danube region in the context of the second wave of the great migrations,[1] in a kingdom under the spiritual governance of the Holy See and claiming an apostolic vocation, are both a turning point in the history of Central and Eastern Europe and a demonstration of inclusivity on the part of medieval Christian civilization. The sedentarization of these clans irreversibly changed the old Slavic–German power condominium through the abolition of Great Moravia and called into question the missionary initiatives of German episcopates.[2] The conversion of the Hungarians to Christianity and the consecration of their kingdom through the coronation of King Saint Stephen (997–1038) under the auspices of the conjoint forces involved in leading the Christian mission into the East and North marked, in terms of identity symbolism, the end of the moral crisis manifested in the collective mind through eschatological fear and the onset of the systematic efforts of the Christian Church to restore social order by imposing a norm in relation to arbitrariness.[3] These developments highlighted by historical writings concerned with the Middle Ages and with the genesis of nations marked the evolution of the ethnic communities involved. The dynamics of the changes initially targeted the behavior of the holders of military power and subsequently the cultural background and political strategies of the old pagan elite, which, through the gradual assumption of the Western or Byzantine social-cultural paradigm, became the core component of the social scaffolding of the new states.

The case of the Kingdom of Hungary stands out among the string of accomplishments of the Christian mission due to a series of traits that the otherwise few written sources and chronicles highlight in the immediate succession of events. The conversion of the Slavs to Christianity was the result of the initiatives of contiguous Carolingian and Byzantine power structures, which ensured their partial legitimation and provided them with the opportunity to organize their own ecclesiastical institutions or to participate in disputes regarding the Empire.[4] The relationship between the Hungarians and the two forces that competed for imperial succession consisted of conflicts generated by the Hungarians' plundering campaigns, successfully thwarted from the mid–10th century onwards. This state of affairs impacted historiographic tradition as well, in the sense that a tradition specific to Hungarian antiquity emerged, different from the paradigms of a Trojan origin developed by Western medieval chronicles.[5] Historiography sought the origins of these choices to reach out to the Scythian and Hunnish enemies of the *orbis Romanus* in the readings embraced *expressis verbis* by the authors of the first Hungarian chronicles,[6] who favored the incorporation of the ancient past of Pannonia into the identity heritage of the region's new inhabitants. A potential facilitating circumstance for the adoption of a past that privileged the uniqueness of the Hungarians resides, among others, in the specific singularities of their integration into *christianitas* and in the developments of the new kingdom's first century of existence. The decision to adopt the faith of their former enemies is seen as an expression of the pragmatism of Hungarian leaders, motivated by the defeat they had suffered at Lechfeld in 955,[7] while the diplomatic proceedings to that effect involved negotiations with all the Christian centers engaged in leading the mission: the Byzantine Empire, the Holy See, and the Duchy of Poland, recently converted to Christianity in 966. The difficulty of reconciling the latter three's jurisdictional interests and the divisions among the elites of the Hungarian clans over accepting Latin Christianity as promoted by Duke Géza through means whose brutality was remarkable even to the chronicles of the time interfered with the founding of Hungary's first ecclesiastical structures, consecrated by the Holy See thanks to the missionary enterprise of Saint Adalbert of Prague, the future martyr of the Prussian Kingdom.[8] This polycentric mission illustrates the manner in which Central-European aristocracy had undergone a certain type of deep Christianization through agents subsequently canonized, yet the records of the chronicles inspired by the Bavarian episcopates in the proximity of Hungary mainly credit the contribution of the German entourage of Duke Vajk, who, once baptized, became King Stephen I. The chronicle of Ulrich von Reichenau stresses the piety of Queen Gisela and her contribution to the support offered by the king to the first monastic foundations.[9] The contribution of strangers to saving Hungarian Christianity during the confrontation with the rebellion of the pagan Duke Koppány of Somogy, who claimed primacy within the Hungarian dynasty based on the principle of seniority, was placed in opposition to the Chistian tradition of primogeniture. The victory of the Christian forces led by Vecelin von Werzeburg, of German origin and supported by Bavarian contingents, was considered a Teutonic success against the Hungarians.[10] The xenophilic choices of Hungary's first Christian sovereign are even recorded by the aulic chronicles of the 14th century, which mention the inclusion among the nobility of guests from the principalities of the Empire and from the Latin kingdoms.[11] Modern historiography is still debating the authenticity of such royal tolerance, which is difficult to reconcile with medieval paradigms[12]—yet it may have been the result of the kingdom's institutional vulnerabilities—and with its choices targeting an active foreign policy. Hungary's involvement in the litigations that divided neighboring Christian states required the creation of long-term or circumstantial alliances with holders of power or dissident factions, thus incorporating, among others, a certain social and demographic mobility. Furthermore, this stage is associated with a certain trajectory of internal policy, namely, that of confronting insurgent regional centers, which was done out of loyalty to the Holy See, as was the case with the duchies of Banat and Transylvania.[13] The restoration of royal authority along Hungary's eastern borders coincided with the campaigns of Emperor Basil II (976–1025) against the Bulgarian Empire,[14] as well as with the recognition by the Holy See of the spiritual authority of the Ecumenical Patriarchate within its own sphere. The convergence of the interests of the new monarchy with those of the papacy and the former's insistence on placing the Archbishopric of Esztergom (Strigonium) under the direct authority of the Pope set the stage for a decisively impactful move for the evolution of Christian Hungary, namely, the placement of the kingdom under the protection of the Supreme Pontiff.[15] Such privileged relations conceal deeper significations than feudalvassal affiliations, volatile to the extreme within *christianitas*, emerging as a successful experiment within the Church efforts to take on the mandate of restoring legal order among the states and peoples under its spiritual governance.[16] The inclusion of Hungary among the papal fiefs was spiritually justified by the missionary nature of that kingdom, located close to the Ponto-Caspian steppes inhabited by pagan populations, as well as to the borders of the two competitors for imperial succession. From a legal perspective, the Pope's position was a consequence of Pannonia being a part of the *orbis Romanus*, which was under papal authority by virtue of a maximalist interpretation of the Donation of Constantine. Such developments were difficult to anticipate in the mid–11th century, yet those prelates inspired by the agenda of the Cluniac Reforms would seek to turn this desideratum into an actual reality.

Such innovations that laid the ground for a historiographic discourse partial to the *avant la lettre* tolerance postulated by Hungarian royalty were offset by the first manifestations of the aristocratic elite's distrust in the sovereign's foreign collaborators, associated with the presence of Queen Gisela and with the king's nephew and successor, Peter I Orseolo.[17] Latin-Hungarian chronicles blame the latter two's influence on the final years of King Stephen's reign and hold them responsible for the mutilation of Vazul, an alleged heir to the throne, as well as for the exile of his sons.[18] The rebellion against King Peter is the result of the behavior of Latin and German officials who, under the inspiration of *furor Teutonicus*, would defile the wives and daughters of Hungarian nobles.[19] The abuse committed by the foreign king's entourage turned into an indirect justification for the insurgency of certain noble factions, followed by the dethronement of the legitimate sovereign and the pagan uprising of 1046. The emergence of a new Árpádian ruler, the martyrdom of certain high prelates, and the intervention of Emperor Henry III in support of King Peter called into question the existence of the apostolic kingdom, yet the mobilization of the local elite around the new king, Andrew I the Catholic (1046–1060), who had returned from his exile in Kyiv, ensured the restauration of internal order and paved the way for a kind of power condominium between the sovereign and the Hungarian aristocracy. The new king's religious devotion ensured the survival of local ecclesiastical institutions and the support of the Holy See against the interference of the German emperor, yet the ruler was compelled to resort to the so-called *servientes regis*, whose loyalty was disputed by his brother, Duke Béla.[20] The preservation of internal peace required the division of the kingdom and the devolution of some authority to the younger king, yet another solution that became an instrument of maintaining internal peace, while the true restoration of royal power coincided with the rule of Holy King Ladislaus (1077–1099), who was the embodiment of the ideal Hungarian medieval sovereign. His initiatives were aligned with his image as the protector of his country and subjects against the Pecheneg raids,[21] while the hieratic dimension of his power was strengthened by the canonization of King Saint Stephen (1080). Royal primacy in relation to its vassals materialized into foreign policy initiatives with decisive consequences for Christian Hungary, which consisted in the initiation of the incorporation of the Kingdom of Croatia, by virtue of the family alliance that united the Árpád dynasty with the last Croatian kings.[22] The annexation of an old Christian kingdom with its own specific institutional profile engaged the kingdom into a constant confrontation with the local nobility seeking to secure its traditional privileges. On the other hand, Hungarian claims encroached upon the jurisdiction of the Holy See, which led the Hungarian king to cultivate a closer relationship with Emperor Henry IV (1053–1106), who was himself at odds with the papacy on the matter of ecclesiastical investiture. The reign of King Coloman the Learned (1099–1116) marked the restoration of good relations with the Holy See, as well as the institutionalization of the particular status of Croatia within the Holy Crown through the issuing of the famous *Pacta Conventa* in favor of the Croatian nobility in 1102. The reignition of disputes within the royal family led to the return of aristocratic factions in the actual race for power, facilitated, among other factors, by the emergence of new challenges threatening the stability of the kingdom, brought about by the passage of the crusaders on their way to liberate the Holy Land. The abuse committed by the latter against the locals and the king's intervention stirred hostile reactions on both sides, which continued throughout the following century.[23] In the long run, due to the migration of large groups of people, this time from the West, which was in full economic swing and experiencing demographic growth, towards the border regions of *christianitas*, inhabited by lesser-known communities enshrouded in negative prejudices by the chronicles of the time, yet rich in opportunities,[24] the Kingdom of Hungary was faced with the challenge of adapting to the reality of such guests, which could potentially change the kingdom's internal social hierarchy. The vulnerabilities of royal power in the first decades of the 11th century became manifest in the form of an increased importance attributed to officials of the Court, where a significant role was granted to the relatives of foreign queens. Their real or presumed influence turned them into the object of chroniclers' hostility. Queen Euphemia of Kyiv, banished by King Coloman, and her illegitimate son, Boris Árpád, in particular, are considered responsible for the confrontations which devastated Hungary during the early years of the reign of King Béla II (1131–1141),[25] while Queen Helena, the daughter of a Serbian dynast, was seen as the one who inspired the massacre of certain nobles suspected of having suggested the mutilation of the king. Patronage over royal power, legitimized by ethical rationales and by a concern for the protection of the kingdom, forced royalty to return to the xenophilic measures intended to lay the foundations of the military power required by an active foreign policy. The emergence of other communities that owed their status to their relationship with the king stirred the hostility of the aristocracy that dominated the royal counties and ecclesiastical institutions. The artisan of these innovations is considered to be King Géza II (1141–1162), who was involved in diplomatic and military enterprises during the conflict that pitted the Holy See against Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa (1154–1189), and who initiated the settling of German guests in certain Hungarian border regions.[26] The granting of privileges to the urban settlements founded by the newcomers is a feature shared with the neighboring Slavic states, but, as far as the internal social hierarchies were concerned, it implied the broadening of the pool of inhabitants enjoying free status and paved the way for that overlap between ethnic background and privilege,[27] thus setting the stage for the genesis of that ethnic and religious plurality of the countries belonging to the Crown of Saint Stephen, superficially identified with tolerance. The distrust in the foreigners' influence on the Hungarian royalty acquired new dimensions once Hungary became more deeply involved in diplomatic enterprises in the region, through matrimonial alliances with the Comnenus dynasty, interested in restoring their good relations with the Holy See and in a potential religious reconciliation.[28] The marriage of Duke Béla to a Byzantine princess, while seeming to open the path for the assumption of imperial dignity by a representative of the Árpád dynasty, turned out to be an obstacle in the way of the latter's coronation as king of Hungary in 1172, when Archbishop Lucas of Esztergom refused to perform the ceremony, under the pretext of the potential risk that Orthodox influence might call into question the kingdom's place within *christianitas*.[29] The attitude of that first prelate of Hungarian origin who became the Primate of Hungary was inspired by jurisdictional arguments concerning his relationship with the Holy See and the protection of the Church's property rights. Such a precedent is relevant for the views of the aristocracy—from whose ranks the high clergy originated—regarding the right to sanction dynastic succession. In terms of the horizontal solidarity within the legal society, this moment foreshadowed, a few decades before the Fourth Crusade, the abandonment of the integration policies of the first Árpádians and the adoption of an intransigent ecclesiastical discourse as to schismatics and pagans, in pursuit of an internal policy agenda and of the redistribution of certain economic resources in the regions inhabited by non-Catholic communities.

The political stability of the kingdom took a turn during the reigns of King Béla III's (1172–1196) immediate successors, Emeric I (1196–1204) and especially Andrew II (1205–1235). Loyalty to the king proved to be providential for the preservation of the principle of primogeniture challenged by the rebellion of the nobles in the south of the kingdom,[30] yet the premature disappearance of the king and of his underage son triggered a series of political and ethical crises that eventually came to nullify the innovative initiatives of King Andrew II, a worthy contemporary of Emperor Frederick II (1215–1250). His marriage to Gertrude of Merania, who belonged to a Bavarian family linked to the Hohenstauffen dynasty and involved in diplomatic actions on the confines of Slavic and German states, aroused the opposition of the aristocracy, vexed by the alienation of the Crown's possessions in favor of the queen's relatives. Disputes culminated with the queen's assassination in 1213, during the king's absence from the country.[31] That act, which met the criteria of a *nota infidelitatis*, remained unpunished, but distrust towards the attempts of German guests to ensure their ecclesiastical autonomy by organizing their own prepositures outside the authority of Hungarian dioceses became a leitmotif of the correspondence between the said dioceses and the Holy See. The opposition of the nobles proved to be strong enough to counteract the sovereign's foreign policy initiatives, in spite of their proactivity. His attempts to incorporate the western Russian knyazates resulted in a series of campaigns that ruined royal finances, while also paving the way for the kingdom's involvement in the expansion into regions suffering from a void of political authority. The title of *Rex Galiciae et Lodomeriae* now assumed by Árpádians became the grounds for legitimizing the Habsburg Monarchy's participation in the first division of Poland.

ANOTHER AVENUE pursued by the sovereign in his quest to offset the vulnerabilities of his internal position was his active involvement in the crusading initiatives aimed to protect the Eastern Latin Empire.[32] His marriage to Yolanda of Courtenay[33] created the opportunity of an imperial succession, while the daughter born of that marriage, honored by the Roman Church with the attributes of sanctity, Saint Violant of Hungary,[34] inaugurated the privileged relations between the Kingdom of Hungary and the states of the Iberian Peninsula under the auspices of a permanent crusade. The sovereign's ambitious foreign commitments were faced with the limitations of his institutional resources, which made him dependent on the ability to secure the loyalty of the high social classes. Hungary's participation in the Fifth Crusade (1217) dealt a decisive blow to the country's financial stability and forced it to turn to the king's Jewish and Muslim traders. The cessation of some of the Crown's properties in favor of those traders, combined with the protests of the nobility and the clergy, led to repeated interventions on the part of papal legates, culminating with the excommunication of the king. The need for a political solution imposed the adoption of the Golden Bull of 1225 in favor of the kingdom's nobles. Historical writings have sought to identify similarities between this piece of legislation and the *Magna Carta Libertatum*,[35] given the chronological coincidence and the more volatile nature of power relations in the border regions of *christianitas*. The corroboration of its provisions with those of other similar documents issued by lay and ecclesiastical power-holders testifies to a general desire to set the relationship between power and society within a legal framework, under the auspices of a reconciliation between the attributes of the state as embodied by the authority of the sovereign, on the one hand, and the privileges of the aristocratic elite and of free citizens, on the other. The privilege granted by King Andrew II, which became the keystone of the legal identity of the medieval Hungarian nation, is distinguished by the relationship between belonging to the said nation and the properties of the Crown, which could not be ceded to foreigners.[36] The legal guarantee of this new relationship between the aristocracy as a founder of the motherland and the patrimony of the Holy Crown was ensured by the famous *ius resistendi*, the nobility's right to oppose those of the king's or officials' measures that they deemed abusive, as well as by the universal nature of the privilege's provisions, which concerned all of the kingdom's nobles. This legal consecration of a state of things that resulted from the evolution of territorial institutions secured the monarchy's option to collaborate with categories of people at the bottom of the Hungarian privileged society, which were experiencing a degradation of their economic and social status in the competition against the members of the aristocracy, yet were enjoying sustained numerical growth thanks to military campaigns along all the borders, which Hungary was engaged in throughout the 13th century.[37] The availability of these dynamic social categories animated by solidarity, among which meritocracy tended to take precedence over material status, is illustrated by the development of advisory institutions at county level and in urban centers after 1250.

The importance of these new political forces proved to be decisive during the crisis that threatened the very survival of the apostolic kingdom, occasioned by the Mongolian invasion of 1241–1242. The destruction of the royal army at Mohy and the temporary withdrawal of King Béla IV (1235–1270), the former regent agreed upon by the noble factions opposing his father, put to the test the monarchy's capacity to ensure by its own means the safety of the kingdom's inhabitants in the face of this final offensive of the world of the steppes against the sedentarized Christian world. Faced with that twofold pressure, the Hungarian royalty carried out a new attempt at legitimizing its position as the defender of the borders of Christianity. In his address to the prelates gathered at the Second Council of Lyon, King Béla referred to Hungary as *finis christianitatis*[38] and called for the mobilization of crusading forces in its defense. The arguments of the Hungarian diplomacy capitalized on a certain tendency within

Roman Church ecclesiology, which had started in the second half of the 12th century, to prioritize the so-called Cismarine Crusade over fighting for the defense of Jerusalem, as a premise for preserving the purity of the doctrine of the Christian Church. The privileged position claimed by Hungary as the border of *christianitas* justified a certain amount of tolerance as to the king's relations to pagan or schismatic communities, such as his patronage of the Cumans and his dynastic alliances with the western Russian knyazes or the Lascaris dynasty. His recourse to the military resources of such allies aroused the mistrust of the Holy See, which found in the local noblemen an interlocutor more willing to embrace its choices in ecclesiastical policy, according to which the properties of non-Catholics became a potential target for the expansion of the nobility's possessions.[39] The resumption of an active foreign policy aimed at acquiring land along the western border of the Lands of the Crown in the context of the escheat of the Babenberg dynasty[40] and the opportunities brought about by the disintegration of the Vlach-Bulgarian Empire of the Asenids in the Balkans[41] generated further suspicion among the papal legates, who were concerned by the employment of contingents of Cumans, who were the former adversaries of the Latin crusaders in the Balkans and whose conversion was deemed uncertain, while the experienced failures triggered a new crisis among the Hungarian elite, this time in the form of an intergenerational conflict. The attempts at dividing power between the king and Crown Prince Stephen, the future Stephen V (1270–1272), by resorting to the old way of dividing the kingdom, set the stage for a series of civil wars[42] brought to an end through the mediation of the kingdom's high prelates, while the ascent of the young king hastened an open confrontation between the magnates who owned land in the northern and western parts of the kingdom, who requested support from Bohemia and the nobles of Styria, on the one hand, and the young magnates involved in the campaigns of former Duke Stefan of Bulgaria, who held fiefs along the northern and eastern borders of the Crown. The achievements of that short rule led to the realignment of the monarchy with the agenda of the Holy See through a dynastic alliance with the Angevin sovereigns of Naples, the papacy's lay partners in Italy, who were seeking to restore the Eastern Latin Empire.[43] The disappearance of the king under circumstances that were never fully clarified and the rule of his underage son, Ladislas IV the Cuman, delayed the restoration of royal power until the assumption of the crown by his Neapolitan relatives. The members of the nobility who had become the *de facto* deciders of kingdom policy proved to be efficient enough to preserve its unity and to successfully oppose a Mongolian invasion, as well as internal insurgencies stimulated by the vulnerability of the royal power.

The historiographic manifestation of such innovative dispositions consists of the significations incorporated in the Latin-Hungarian chronicles written during this period, where the protagonists of the history narrated by the authors are mainly members of aristocratic clans, invested *expressis verbis* by Simon of Kéza with the right to manage the public affairs of the Holy Crown.[44]

The political experiment embodied by the founding dynasty of the Kingdom of Hungary marked the completion of the integration of the Hungarian clans that settled in Pannonia in the late 9th century into the development frameworks of medieval civilization, while the choice to preserve the type of state typical for the preclassic Middle Ages entailed the sharing of power with certain categories of the privileged elite. This diarchy did not interfere with the functioning of the state thanks to a division of competences between the royal power and the *natio nobilium*, which, during this process, acquired a legal identity and outlined its own identity-related views in relation to the past and present, thus influencing the long-term development of the modern Hungarian nation.

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Notes

1. For an overview of the events and their impact on the post-Carolingian Christian world, see Lucien Musset, *Les invasions: le second assaut contre l'Europe chrétienne (VIIe–XIe siècles)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1969), passim.
2. Jenő Szűcs, "Questions of 'Origins' and National Consciousness," in *The Historical Construction of National Consciousness: Selected Writings*, ed. Gábor Klaniczay, Balázs Trencsényi, and Gábor Gyáni (Budapest: Central-European University Press, 2022), 296–332.
3. Nora Berend, "Introduction," in *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus', c. 900–1200*, ed. Nora Berend (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 6–10.
4. Mirela Ivanova, "Inventing and Ethnicising Slavonic in the Long Ninth Century," *Journal of Medieval History* 47, 4–5 (2021): 576–587.
5. Merovingian chronicles operated a spectacular innovation in comparison to their sources of inspiration. While Gregory of Tours referred to the founder of the Frankish dynasty as *quidam Francus*, Fredegarius Scolasticus associated the Frankish tribes with the Trojan refugees led by *Francio*. See Stelian Brezeanu, *Identităţi şi solidarităţi medievale: Controverse istorice* (Bucharest: Corint, 2002), 23–36.
6. For more on the genres cultivated by medieval historical writing, see Bernard Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique dans l'Occident médiéval* (Paris: Aubier–Montaigne, 1980), passim.
7. György Györffy, *King Saint Stephen of Hungary*, trans. Peter Doherty (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 27–30.
8. For details, see Cosmas Pragensis, *Chronica Boemorum*, ed. Bertold Bretholz and Wilhelm Weinberger (Berlin: Weidmann, 1955), 39–47.

9. János M. Bak, "Roles and Functions of Queens in Árpádian and Angevin Hungary (1000–1386 A.D.)," in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. John Carmi Parsons (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 13–24.
10. Pál Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen: A History of Medieval Hungary, 895–1526* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001), 26.
11. The same sources attribute to the king the remark that the rule of a single language (in the ethnical sense of the word) is weak. See *Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum*, ed. Emericus Szentpétery (Budapest, 1932), 1:137.
12. Nora Berend, *Stephen I, the First Christian King of Hungary: From Medieval Myth to Modern Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), passim.
13. See Alexandru Madgearu, *Expansiunea maghiară în Transilvania* (Târgovişte: Cetatea de Scaun, 2019), passim.
14. For details, see Paul Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier: A Political Study of the Northern Balkans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 38–44.
15. Şerban Turcuş, *Sinodul general de la Buda (1279)* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2001), 101–104.
16. For information on the dynamics of this process, see Georges Duby, *Arta şi societatea: 980–1420*, trans. Marina Rădulescu, with a preface by Răzvan Theodorescu (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1987), passim.
17. Györffy, *King Saint Stephen of Hungary*.
18. Simon of Kéza, *Gesta Hunorum et Hungarorum*, in *Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum*, ed. Emericus Szentpétery (Budapest, 1932), 1:68.
19. Simon of Kéza, *Gesta Hunorum et Hungarorum*, 1:71. The topic of assaults against women of noble status is a leitmotif of the chronicles of the time, even noted in the records of the Chronicle of Novgorod in relation to the Varangian allies of Knyaz Yaroslav the Wise. See *The Chronicle of Novgorod, 1016–1471*, trans. Robert Michell and Nevill Forbes (London: Royal Historical Society, 1914), 76.
20. For details, see *Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum*, 1:128–120.
21. The king's defeat of the Pechenegs at Kerlés and the legend of the rescuing of the bishop's daughter, whom they had kidnapped, became sources of Hungarian state propaganda in the mid–15th century, in the context of Emperor Frederick III's (1446–1493) claim to Saint Stephen's Crown, on the basis of family succession. See Johannes de Thurocz, *Chronica Hungarorum*, ed. Erzsébet Galántai and Gyula Kristó (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1985; repr., 1994), 47–49.
22. Danijel Džino, *Becoming Slav, Becoming Croat: Identity Transformations in Post-Roman and Early Medieval Dalmatia*, East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450, vol. 12 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 179–192.
23. The chronicle of Otto of Freising regretfully noted that Hungary was inhabited by monsters in human guise. See Ioan-Aurel Pop, *Geneza medievală a naţiunilor moderne (secolele XIII–XVI)* (Bucharest: Editura Fundaţiei Culturale Române, 1998), 71–73.
24. For the significations of medieval colonization, see Jacques Le Goff, *Civilizaţia Occidentului medieval*, trans. Maria Holban (Bucharest: Editura Ştiinţifică, 1970), 23–37.

25. According to the aulic chronicles, King Béla summoned a meeting of the kingdom's nobles that reconfirmed his legitimacy, rejecting the arguments of the supporters of the Ukrainian claimant. See *Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum*, 1:184.
26. According to Hungarian chronistic tradition, King Géza had in his service significant contingents of Muslim archers from Khorezm. See Thomas Nägler, *Aşezarea saşilor în Transilvania*, 2nd edition, trans. Anamaria Haldner (Bucharest: Kriterion, 1992), 32–47.
27. Nora Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom: Jews, Muslims and "Pagans" in Medieval Hungary, c.1000–c.1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 193–207.
28. Emperor Manuel Comnenus (1143–1180) had initiated a reconciliation with the Supreme Pontiff as a premise for the reestablishment of Byzantine positions in southern Italy, while the marriage of his daughter to Hungarian Duke Béla was going to ensure the stability of the empire's Balkan borders. See Warren T. Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 137–148.
29. László Kontler, *A History of Hungary: Millennium in Central Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 59–63.
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31. Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen*, 123–126.
32. For details on the evolution of the Latin states in the Balkans after 1204, see Filip Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio of Byzantium: The Empire of Constantinople (1204–1228)* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), passim.
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Abstract

Royalty and Elites in the Countries of the Crown of Saint Stephen:
Medieval Solidarities and Identities in the 11th–14th Centuries

Political stabilization, along with the onset of the economic revival of the late first millennium AD, entailed a double genesis, of both ethnic and institutional nature, characterized, in the case of Central-Eastern European states, by their integration into the Christian world. While the choices of the ruling elite of the Hungarian clans settled in Pannonia in the late 9th century ensured the survival of the nation in the long run, even through crises that challenged its institutional autonomy, the changes they brought about triggered an active dialogue between power and society, which led to the outlining of two parallel views among the actors competing for political power and for the discourse that legitimized it.

Keywords

kingdom, nobility, nation, Christendom, liberty

17th Century Jewish Presence in Ruse and Economic Relations with the Ottoman Empire

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Far from being marginal, Jewish actors were instrumental in the functioning of key imperial structures—especially in regions where logistical efficiency and fiscal stability were paramount.

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Introduction

Ruse, situated on the banks of the Danube River within Bulgaria, features a rich cultural tapestry, being home to Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities. Annexed into the Ottoman territories in 1417, Ruse initially functioned as a district under the jurisdiction of Chernovi before attaining the status of an autonomous administrative unit, referred to variably as Giurgiu, Rusçuk, and Ruse in Ottoman archival records.

The presence of a harbor and castle along the Danube rendered Ruse a focal point for trade and gave it strategic importance, contributing to its rapid growth after the conquest. Historical records from 1479 indicate a non-Muslim population of 1,200 individuals, comprising 239 households and 1 *bive* (widow) while the Muslim population numbered 20 individuals across

4 households. By 1530, both populations witnessed an increase, with non-Muslims totaling 2,179 individuals, including 385 households, 189 *mücerred* (single man) and 13 *bive*, while Muslims numbered 258 individuals across 50 households and 8 *mücerred*. By 1557, the population surged further, with 3,003 Muslims and 3,697 non-Muslims recorded. Muslim households numbered 463, including 286 *mücerred* and 7 exempts, while non-Muslim households comprised 628, with 402 *mücerred*, 10 *bive*, and 35 exempts. The neighborhood counts also expanded, from five Muslim and five non-Muslim neighborhoods in 1538 to seven and six, respectively, by 1557.[1]

Petar Bogdan Bakskev, who arrived in Ruse on 8 September 1640, writes that there were 200 Christian, 200 Armenian, and 300 Muslim houses in the city. He calculates the population as 1,000 Christians, 1,000 Armenians, and 1,500 Muslims, respectively. These numbers are consistent with the jizya records of 1656/57 and 1663.

Evliya Çelebi, who came to Ruse in 1651, states that there were no Jews except those who came to the city for trade. It is said that, by 1870, there were between 1,000 and 2,200 Jews in the city. According to the 1887 Bulgarian elections, there were 1,975 Jews, as seen in the official records.

Situated on the banks of the Danube, Ruse emerged as a pivotal hub within the Ottoman Empire during the 16th century, playing significant roles in transportation, trade, industry, and military affairs.[2] The establishment of the Ruse Shipyard further bolstered the city's development.[3] By the 17th century, Ruse became the focal point of the Danube navy, echoing its importance during Roman times. A notable historical event underscores Ruse's prominence: On *23 Cemaziyelevel 1109* (7 December 1697), Constantin Brâncoveanu, Prince of Wallachia, filed a complaint to Istanbul regarding the sale of salt at the piers of Nikopol, Silistra, and Ruse, citing significant losses incurred. This incident underscores the economic significance of Ruse's piers within the region.[4] On 4 June 1576, upon his arrival in Ruse, the French traveler Pierre Lescalopier depicted the city as affluent, vibrant, and densely populated, further highlighting its flourishing status during that era.[5] As the economic vitality of the city surged, Dubrovnik and Latin merchants began to frequent Ruse for trade.[6] Evliya Çelebi, who visited Ruse in 1651, reported the organization of a bustling bazaar in the city every week. He noted the presence of three inns, a Danube-side bathhouse, and three or more shops within the city. Çelebi also observed three distinct Christian neighborhoods, with Jews primarily engaged in trade, coming and going as merchants.[7] In a report dated 3 August 1666, Francesco Soimirovic, a Bulgarian Catholic clergyman and Bishop of Ohrid, described Ruse as a splendid cathedral city bustling with people of various nationalities, highlighting its cosmopolitan character. By the 18th century, the Jews had amassed considerable wealth, particularly from mining and leatherworking. Their affluence prompted a visiting merchant in 1864 to lament: "Crowds of Germans, Hungarians, Greeks, and *Cıfit* (a derogatory term for Jews) dominate the city's streets and control all its trade, while ours stand by hopelessly, engrossed in petty disputes." In the latter half of the 17th century, Jews, alongside numerous Christians, migrated to Ruse from neighboring villages, drawn by the city's burgeoning commercial prospects.

Four rooms of the inn, which was part of the Alanyalı Mustafa Pasha Mosque constructed in the 1850s and situated in the Bacanak neighborhood of Ruse, were leased by Jews for use as a place of worship. Bakardijeva's study, "Ruse," indicates that they formally requested permission from the Ottoman Empire to utilize the space for religious purposes, although no documentary evidence corroborates this claim.[8] However, a report by Ahmed Arif Hikmet Bey dating back to 1840 attests to the presence of Jews residing in the inn.[9] By 1870, Ruse boasted a Jewish population of approximately 1,000 individuals.[10] A report from 1897 notes the dilapidated state of the Dellâllar buildings and the Old Synagogue, indicating significant structural decay. The mosque itself met a similar fate, being entirely demolished in 1927.

In the 17th century, Ruse emerged as a bustling center frequented by merchants, predating its integration into the Ottoman Empire. Travelers from the 17th to the 19th centuries consistently depict the city as a thriving hub of commerce. However, the role and presence of Jews in Ruse during this period warrant further exploration.

Contrary to Evliya Çelebi's accounts, which suggest that Jews primarily engaged in transient trade activities in Ruse, archival records from the Ottoman Empire reveal a more nuanced picture. While Jews may not have been permanent residents of Ruse during the periods documented by Çelebi, they were indeed active participants in the city's commercial activities, often traveling for trade purposes.

The absence of Jewish residents in Ruse in the tahrir registers of 1479, 1538, and 1557 raises questions about their settlement patterns and relationship with the Ottoman Empire during that time. Historical records indicate that the Jews faced expulsion from Hungary starting in 1370, following the decree of King Louis I. Subsequently, Jewish communities dispersed, with some settling in the Vidin region after fleeing Bavaria in 1492. These diverse Jewish communities, known as *Yahudiyân-ı Budin*, *Yahudiyân-ı Alaman*, and *Yahudiyân-ı Frenk* in the Ottoman Empire, maintained connections with various Balkan cities, including Nikopol, Sofia, Pravadi, Chernovi, Tırova, Lofça, Vidin, Plovdiv, and Yanbolu, as documented in a book dated 1546. The mobility of Jews between Istanbul and Rumelia cities underscores their active involvement in regional trade networks. The 1538 tahrir record the arrival of a Jewish community from Istanbul, shedding light on the dynamic movement of Jewish populations within the Ottoman Empire during the 16th century. These historical insights prompt further inquiry into the evolving role and significance of Jews in Ruse's commercial and social fabric during the 17th century and beyond. Among the cities of Nikopol, Ruse, Shumen, and Hezargrad, referenced in the same ledger, Nikopol stands out as the only city where Jews were documented as settlers. In Nikopol, a total of 343 individuals, comprising 68 households and 32 *mücerred*, were recorded as Jews (Yahudiyân). Additionally, 52 individuals from 10 households and 2 *mücerred* were identified as Jews of Buda (Yahudiyân-ı Budin), while 153 individuals from 28 households and 13 *mücerred* were classified as Jews living with Latins (Yahudiyân maa Latiniyan).[11] It is evident that Jewish merchants visiting Ruse for commercial purposes during this period may also have resided in neighboring cities. Jews lived not only in the Nikopol sanjak but also in many regions of the Balkans and were actively involved in trade. One of these cities is Nišh.[12] This study seeks to address this gap by drawing on 21 distinct types of documents, including *Mühimme* (Important Registers), bond deeds, maps, archive and other types of documents. Furthermore, archival studies on the region have been incorporated. Notably, while the *Shar'iyye Sicilleri* (Sharia registry books) have received significant attention in previous studies, this research reveals that the Jewish refugees documented herein are not represented in the analyzed *Shar'iyye Sicilleri*. The documents under scrutiny indicate that Jews acquired the *mukataa* (tax farm) right of the Ruse region through tax farming and paid the jizya tax, underscoring their active engagement and presence in the area. Based on these studies, it is evident that the commercial interactions between the Ottoman Empire and the Jewish communities in the region commenced during this period. Notably, a decree issued in the early 18th century sheds light on the burgeoning trade dynamics. Christian and Jewish merchants, trading in gold, silver, and low-denomination coins, transported these commodities from the region to the capital through their partners based in cities across Rumelia, including Edirne, Sofia, Thessaloniki, Yenişehir, and the Peloponnese. However, interruptions in the flow of gold and silver prompted Sultan Mahmud I to issue a decree aimed at curbing the activities of bandits in the region, maintaining public order, and ensuring the safety of merchant caravans.[13] This decree, dispatched to the district centers, including the qadi of Ruse, underscores the presence and active participation of Jewish merchants in regional trade networks.

We notice that there were Jews in Ruse in the last quarter of the 17th century. This presence can be summarized in two points. Firstly, they could receive revenues through *mukataa* (i.e., the system of leasing of the annual income of the state in exchange for cash in advance in the Ottoman Economic System) and secondly, they were obliged to pay the jizya.

1. Jewish Tax Farmers

SINCE THE fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Jewish communities had been known to actively operate as refugees, often seeking shelter and opportunities in various cities.[14] They leveraged their presence in these urban centers, as well as in cities boasting developed trade and production networks, to participate in international trade as merchants.[15] Maintaining close ties with the government, Jewish merchants endeavored to generate income and expand their trade networks.[16] Avram Galanti, a traveler of the period, noted that "almost all of the customs were given to the Jewish tax farmers."[17] In numerous locations such as Thessaloniki, Bursa, Istanbul, Izmir, and Ankara, among others, Jewish merchants acquired *mukataas* through tax farming, enabling them to exercise control over various aspects of trade and revenue collection.

In the analyzed sources, a notable aspect of the tax farming practice in the region is the involvement of Muslim refugees. The 1656 *Shar'iyye* (Sharia registry) marks the first instance where Recep Ağa received revenues from the *has* lands belonging to Beyhan Sultan in the vicinity of Tutrakan and Kula, amounting to 165,000 *akçe* (Ottoman silver coin). Furthermore, the Kantar and Bozahane in Ruse were granted to İbrahim Beşe and Recep Beşe for 70,000 *akçe*. Geographical considerations and local activities contributed to the fish caught in lakes and the Danube becoming subject to tax farming. Evliya Çelebi documented the presence of 40–50 types of fish from the waters of the Lom.[18] Maksud Ağa, who held rights over a quarter of the fish caught from lakes near the villages of Ismil, Berişlan, and Karsu in Ruse, as well as from the Danube in his own *mukataa*, lodged complaints with Istanbul regarding the perceived injustices and interference by the voivodes of *Havass-ı Humâyun*.[19]

The revenues of Chernovi and Zishtovi townships, along with their villages, were collectively granted to Hasan bin Abdullah for eighty *esedî kurus* (piasters), annually. Additionally, the crop revenues of the villages of Bergos and Yuvan in Ruse were assigned to Kara Mehmed Ağa, the Khan Chukadar, for 300 *kurus* per year. Subsequently, the revenues of these same villages for the year H. 1110/M., 1698–99, were transferred to Şaban Ağa for 1,000 *kurus* annually, while the excise taxes of Hezargrad and Ruse districts, alongside the village of Küçük Manastır, were bestowed upon Ali Ağa for 120 *kurus* yearly. Furthermore, a portion of the revenues from Ruse and Silistra was allocated to Hasan Ağa, a resident of Ruse, amounting to 480 *kurus* annually. Previously, Damad Efendi and Mehmed Ağa, a furrier, were among the refugees benefiting from similar arrangements. Additionally, it is noted that the livestock *ağnam* (sheep tax) of the village of Ablanova-yı Muslim was also collected as part of the tax farming.[20]

In the 17th century, records indicate that certain villages such as Brestovica under Ali Ağa and Küçük Manastır under Ali Ağa, alongside the excise taxes from Hezargrad and Ruse districts under Ali Ağa, as well as a portion of the taxes from Ruse, Nikopol, and Silistra, were allocated to Hasan Ağa. This distribution of revenue, totaling 480 *kurus*, was previously managed by former refugees including Damad Mehmed Efendi and Kürkçübaşı Mehmed Ağa.[21]

In the 18th century (1734–1735), the ledger records eight refugees, all of whom were Muslims. This pattern also holds true for previous refugees. Among them, Mustafa Pasha, the captain of the Danube River, and his son, who received the one-year revenues of Rahova in the Ruse district, stand out. Additionally, Seyyid Mehmed Ağa, Halil Ağa, Ahmed Ağa, Ali Ağa, and Elhac Ahmed Ağa were granted portions of the revenues from Nikopol and Ruse.[22]

An important detail concerning the Jews in the aforementioned book is the mention of 137 and a half *kurus* per *hane-i Yahudi* (Jewish household). While the book indicates that the tax was imposed in three groups as *ala* (top tier), *evsat* (middle tier), and *edna* (bottom tier), the specific amount levied per household remains unclear.[23] However, this situation corroborates the presence of a Jewish population in the city immediately following the period under study, indicating that they resided in the city as taxable residents.

In the context of the economic activities carried out by Jews within the Ottoman Empire, it is essential to discuss the tax farming system whereby private individuals undertook the collection of tax revenues on behalf of the state in exchange for an annual fee. The Jews played an active role in Ottoman society as tax farmers, particularly since the 15th century. Questions arise as to whether their commercial ventures contributed to their active involvement, whether they received favorable treatment from the Ottomans, and whether their rights were adequately protected. An illustrative document dated *14 Shawwal 1025* (25 October 1616) concerning Jewish refugees in Ruse sheds light on these dynamics. In this document, two Jews named Baruh and Arslan were given land grants for piers along the Danube coast in the region, entitling them to the income from the piers in Vidin, Nikopol, Ruse, and Silistra. They paid an annual sum of 4,000 *gurre/gourre* (kurus) to the Prince of Wallachia, with the total income from the piers amounting to 6,600,000 *akçes*. The primary issue arose when a group of Jewish refugees lodged a complaint against Baruh and Arslan. In their grievance, they demanded the granting of wharves in Nikopol, Ziştovi, Rahova, Vidin, Ruse, Tutrakan, and Silistra. Three Jews named Yasef, Mayer, and Salamon accused Baruh and Arslan of unfair practices and applied for licenses for these locations. Their requests were ultimately granted, indicating a complex interplay of economic interests and negotiations within the Jewish community and between Jews and the Ottoman authorities.[24]

The granting of income from the *mukataa* of Nikopol and Ruse to a Jew named Arslan, earmarked for the soldiers serving in the Özi guard, underscores the protection of Jewish rights within the Ottoman Empire. This grant, apparently bestowed by Vizier Hasan Pasha, one of the Özi commanders, stipulated that neither other Jews, nor other individuals should interfere with the *mukataa*. This indicates a commitment to upholding the rights of the Jews and maintaining existing arrangements. In the context of tax farming, the state demonstrated a preference for preserving the established order rather than replacing old refugees with new ones. Agreements were made, promises upheld, quid pro quo arrangements fulfilled, intermediaries identified, and order established. However, if during the term of the agreement, barring natural conditions such as climatic or health-related factors, a tax farmer breached their promise, underpaid, or engaged in fraudulent practices, they were replaced by a new tax farmer. This system ensured stability, accountability, and fairness in the administration of tax revenues and concessions.[25] In cases where tax farmers were unable to fulfil their debt obligations to the state, or if the debt couldn't be satisfied from their assets, the state would turn to guarantors to recover its receivables.[26] The state, reluctant to address the problems left by the old tax farmers regarding the reassignment of revenues, faced challenges in finding new tax farmers. In fact, the difficulty of securing new tax farmers significantly influenced this process.[27] Moreover, if a new tax farmer assumed control over the revenues of the *mukataa*, the outgoing tax farmer would collect the final taxes of their term, preventing the new tax farmer from intervening in these revenues. This practice ensured the orderly transition of tax farming responsibilities and minimized disruptions in revenue administration.[28]

2. Jizya Revenues

In Islamic states, the jizya tax imposed on the active male population with the status of dhimmi emerged as one of the most significant revenue sources for the state, particularly following the 1691 reform.[29] A substantial portion of jizya revenues originated from the Rumelia region, given its dense non-Muslim population. These jizya revenues collected from the region were allocated to various areas and utilized to support state expenditures and infrastructure development.

In the 17th-century Ottoman fiscal system, the jizya (poll tax imposed on non-Muslim adult males) emerged not only as a marker of the dhimmi status but also as a reliable and flexible financial instrument—particularly in Rumelia, where non-Muslim populations were densely concentrated. Within this context, the city of Ruse, situated on the banks of the Danube, played a significant role as a multicultural commercial hub where Christian and Jewish communities were actively taxed and economically engaged.

The case of Ruse reveals that jizya revenues collected from gebrân and Jewish communities were not merely passive income streams transferred to the imperial center; rather, they were strategically deployed for regional and state expenditures. Ottoman archival documents from 1692 to 1702 show that these revenues were systematically directed toward multiple state functions, including military provisioning, fortress maintenance, logistical supply for *Sefer-i Hümâyun* (imperial campaigns), and even the operational costs of the *Istabl-ı Âmire* (imperial stables).

What distinguishes the case of Ruse is the level of specificity and consistency in the allocation of jizya revenues. For example, a 1698 decree records the use of 108,224 *akçe* from Ruse's jizya to fund *nan* (bread) and *gusht* (meat) rations for 103 artillerymen stationed in Kerş and Taman.[30] Another document from 1699 shows that 30,709 *akçe* was allocated to cover the daily salaries of azeban guards in Belgradcık Palanka.[31] Most notably, in 1701, a payment of 171,902 *akçe* was made for the wages of 7 *sipahis* and 62 *silahdars*, reflecting the differentiated pay scales within the Ottoman military hierarchy.[32]

The fiscal architecture in Ruse also reflects the increasing involvement of Jewish mültezims (tax farmers), who not only collected taxes but were also contractually obligated to allocate portions of the revenue to military salaries—sometimes under direct imperial mandate. Such arrangements were part of the broader *mukataa* system, whereby tax farms were leased out in return for up-front payments, and income was earmarked for specific state functions. The leasing of jizya revenues, particularly to Jewish financiers like Arslan, who was entrusted with funding garrisons such as Özi, illustrates how the state ensured financial continuity while accommodating minority participation in economic governance.[33]

Therefore, the administration of the jizya in 17^{th}-century Ruse exemplifies the Ottoman Empire's capacity to integrate its religiously diverse population into a rationalized system of fiscal-military governance. The jizya functioned as a cornerstone of public finance, enabling the state to fund its institutions without overburdening central treasuries. This multifaceted use of the tax—covering everything from military payrolls to logistical needs—reaffirms the jizya's role as a dynamic, rather than merely symbolic, pillar of Ottoman statecraft.

The jizya revenues received from Jews alone cannot be determined solely based on the available documents. Jizya collected from both Christians and Jews, termed as *gebran maa Yahudiyân*, was allocated to various regions and diverse needs. In this regard, the expenditures of jizya revenues collected from the Ruse region can be categorized into three main groups. These categories include:

- Covering the expenses incurred for the *Sefer-i Hümâyun* (imperial campaign);
- meeting the expenditures made for *Istabl-ı Amire* (imperial stables);
- the provision of salaries of officials, which include the salaries of civil servants in Istanbul, the salaries of soldiers such as janissaries, low-ranking garrison soldiers (*azeban*), artillerymen working in fortresses, and the salaries of fortress commanders.

2.1. Covering the Expenses Incurred for the *Sefer-i Hümâyun* (Imperial Campaign)

THE DOCUMENT dated 7 January 1696 (Gurre-i Cemaziyelahir 1107) states that the freight fee for the *zahire* (grain) and the ship arriving at the Ruse pier, to be purchased for the *Sefer-i Hümâyun*, was to be covered from the compulsory services and levies (gebran) and the Jewish poll tax (jizya). A total of four loads (400,000 akçe) and one thousand four hundred and sixty gourdes were paid from the jizya revenues for this purpose.[34] Another document dated 22 February 1698 (11 Şaban 1109) stipulates the allocation of funds from the Jewish and *gebran* (Christian group) jizya for the *Sefer-i Hümâyun*. Specifically, the cost of 800 *kurus*, representing the expenses of agricultural goods to be shipped from Demirkapı and Tahtalı to Belgrade pier, was requested to be collected from this source.[35] Furthermore, in the document dated 26 February 1698 (15 Şaban 1109), it is specified that the expenses of the zahire to be shipped to Belgrade piers for the *Sefer-i Hümâyun* should be paid from the jizya revenues of Ruse and Kavacık, which included contributions from Jews and Christians.[36]

2.2. Meeting the Expenses Incurred for *Istabl-ı Âmire*

ON 9 May 1701 (Gurre-i Zilhice 1112), an amount of 230,000 kurus was collected from the jizya of the Jews and *gebran* (Christian group) of Ruse for the expenses of *Istabl-ı Âmire-i Bozork*.[37]

2.3. Provision of Salaries of Officials

TO pay the salaries of certain troops, the jizya revenues from Giurgiu, Shumen, Hezargrad, and Ruse districts were collected for the years 1004–5–6 (corresponding to 1692–3–4). Danube Captain Ali Pasha received a total of 22,742 gourds from Giurgiu, 3,500.5 gourds from Shumen, and 47,094.5 gourds from Ruse's jizya revenues.[38]

On 22 March 1698 (10 Ramadan 1109), a total of 108,224 gourds was collected from the jizya revenues of Ruse, Giurgiu compulsory labor (gebran), and Jews. These funds were allocated for the payment of *nan* (bread) and *gusht* (meat) expenses of the Dergâh-ı Ali artillerymen under the command of Vizier Abdulbaki in the Kerş and Taman region. This amount was intended to cover the salaries and kitchen rations for 103 soldiers.[39] On 19 March 1699 (Ramadan 1110), the salaries of the *azaben* officials of the Belgradcık Palanca *azaben* in Vidin were funded from the jizya of Ruse *gebran* and Jewish communities. The salaries were set at 347 *akçe* per day for 30 individuals. A total of 30,709 *akçe* was collected for this purpose.[40] The document dated 9 May 1701 (Gurre-i Zilhijce 1112) provides a detailed breakdown of the salaries for *sipahi* (cavalrymen) and *silahdar* (men-at-arms). A total of 69 individuals were accounted for, including 7 *sipahi* and 62 *silahdar*. The total amount collected from the jizya of Ruse *gebran* and Jewish communities amounted to 171,902 *akçe*. Specifically, 166 *akçe* was allocated for each *sipahi*, totaling 12,900 *akçe*, while 1,988 *akçe* was designated for each *silahdar*, totaling 159,002 *akçe*.[41]

TABLE 1. JIZYA REVENUES

Date	Region	Cizyedâr (Jizya Collector)	Place of allowance	Total
Gurre-i Muharram year 1104/ 12 September 1692	Nikopol, Ruse, and Shumen pier tax farm (mukataa) revenues and Jewish jizya	Danube Captain Ali Pasha		22,742[42]
Gurre-i Rajab 1106/15 February 1695	Jizya revenues from Nikopol, Ruse, Giurgiu, Silistra	Ahmet Ağa		
Gurre-i Muharram 1107/ 12 August 1695	Jewish and gebran jizya revenues from Ruse and Giurgiu	Ali Pasha (Captain of the Danube River)	Salaries of the mustahfızan, artillery, farisan, and azeban in the castle of Fethül-islam	1,288.5 kurus ve 11 pare[43]
14 Muharram 1107/ 25 August 1695	Jewish and gebran jizya in Ruse district	Hüseyin Ağa (serbevvabin-i Dergâh-ı Âlî)	For the salaries of the Janissaries of Babadagi and the guards of Kalamanica Castle	600,000 akçe[44]
Gurre-i Cemaziyelevvel 1107/ 7 January 1696	Ruse gebran and Jewish jizyah	Hüseyin Ağa (serbevvabin-i dergâh-ı ali-i cizyedar)	Salaries of the Rikab-ı Hümâyun Ağas	8,550 kurus[45]

Continued on next page

Table—*Continued*

Date	Region	Cizyedâr (Jizya Collector)	Place of allowance	Total
17 Zilkade 1107/ 18 June 1696	Nikopol, Giurgiu, Ruse, Hezargrad and Tırgovişte (Eskicuma) gebran and Jewish jizya	Silistra dealer Ismail Ağa	Mevacibs of Babadagi serdengeçdiyan sipahi	2,750 kurus[46]
29 Dhu al-Hijjah 1108/ 19 July 1697	Ruse gebran and Jewish jizya	Danube Captain Ali Pasha		2,921,159 akçe[47]
1 Shaaban 1109/ 12 February 1698	Ruse, Giurgiu gebran and Jewish jizya	Mehmet ağa Mirahur-ı evvel-i sabık	Expenses for nan and gusht rations of Babadagi janissaries	1,112,262 akçe[48]
1 Shaaban 1109/ 12 February 1698	Ruse and Giurgiu gebran and Jewish jizya	Mehmet Ağa Mirahur-ı evvel-i sabık	Salaries of Babadagi janissaries and expenses for nan and gusht rations	6 yük (600,000) akçe 25,044 kurus[49]
Gurre-i Shaaban 1109/ 12 February 1698	Ruse, Giurgiu gebran and Jewish jizya	Mehmet Ağa Mirahur-ı evvel-i sabık	Salaries of the janissaries of Babadagi and expenses of nan and gusht	6,951.5 kurus[50]
10 Ramadan 1109/ 22 March 1698	Nikopol, Ruse and Shumen pier mukataa (tax farm) revenues and Jewish jizya	Mehmet Ağa Mirahur-ı evvel-i sabık	Nan and gusht expenses of the Dergâh-ı Âlî artillerymen appointed under the command of Vizier Abdulbaki in Kerş and Taman region	108,224 (103 nefer)[51]
17 Ramadan 1110/ 19 Mart 1699	Ruse gebran and Jewish jizya		Salaries of the azaben officials of the Belgradecık Palanca in Vidin	30,709 akçe[52] (nefer 30, yevmî 347)
Gurre-i Zilhicce 1112/ 9 May 1701	Ruse gebran and Jewish jizya		Salaries of sipahi and silahdar	171,902[53]
10 Shaaban 1113/ 10 January 1702	Ruse gebran and Yahudiyân (Jewish) jizya		Masar and Recec salaries of the janissaries in charge of the Kefe guard in the year 1113 (1701)	1,057,397[54]
29 Ramadan 1113/ 27 February 1702	Ruse gebran and Yahudiyân (Jewish) jizya		Salary of Koca Mehmet Pasha, one of the former guards of Özi Castle	100,000[55]

When collecting the jizya tax, the revenues of more than one district were collected at the same time. In the bond dated 29 Dhu al-Hijjah 1108/ 19 July

1697, the jizya tax collected from Nikopol, Silistra, Ruse, Giurgiu, Hezargrad, Tırgovişte, Çardak, and Novibazar is 2,754,000, and the jizya tax collected from Nikopol, Giurgiu, Ruse, Hezargrad, and Târgovişte is 2,921,159 *akçe*. The collected amount was delivered to Ismail Ağa, the Silistra trader, as the price of agricultural products.[56]

The allocation of jizya revenues in 17th-century Ruse illustrates a deeply integrated fiscal-military structure within the Ottoman Empire, whereby taxes collected from non-Muslim subjects—both Christians and Jews—were not only a source of imperial income but a strategic financial tool for sustaining frontier defense and bureaucratic functions. The consistent redirection of these revenues toward the payment of janissaries, azebs, sipahis, and other officials reflects the state's dependence on diversified tax bases for maintaining military readiness and administrative continuity. Furthermore, the involvement of Jewish tax farmers, who secured contracts stipulating the use of tax-farm revenues for military salaries, underscores the collaborative—yet hierarchical—nature of Ottoman fiscal governance. Thus, the provisioning of salaries in Ruse was not merely a local or logistical matter; it was part of a broader imperial strategy that combined religious pluralism, financial pragmatism, and military necessity into a cohesive system of statecraft.

Conclusions

From the latter half of the 17th century onward, particularly with the burgeoning commercial activity in Ruse, Jewish settlers began to migrate to the region at an accelerated pace. This trend is distinctly evident in the historical records of subsequent periods. Situated on the banks of the Danube near the Lom, Ruse steadily ascended in the realm of commerce. The presence of a harbor further catalyzed trade and beckoned merchants from various places. Given their active involvement in trade, it is conceivable that Jews increasingly gravitated toward the burgeoning city of Ruse. According to available documents, there is no evidence of Jewish settlement in the 16th century. Nevertheless, it is plausible that Jews residing in Nikopol, another city along the Danube, frequented Ruse for trading purposes. Those Jews who chose Nikopol as their place of residence likely persisted in their commercial endeavors there, as Ruse gained traction. The onset of Ottoman–Jewish commercial activities in the region can be traced back to the *mukataas*, or tax farms, jointly operated by Jewish refugees known as Arslan and Baruh, aligning with historical accounts of Jewish refugees settling in numerous cities. Although not explicitly reflected in the jizya records, the consistent notation of "Jew" in documents related to jizya collections, along with phrases such as "compulsory service alongside Jews" (*gebran maa Yahudiyân*) prevalent in jizya collection documents exclusively from Ruse, unequivocally underscores the presence of Jews in the region. While the scope of Jewish activity in Ruse during the 17th century appears relatively limited, their presence becomes more pronounced in subsequent periods, marking the establishment of Jewish communities during this era. Although precise figures are elusive, it is evident that the Jewish presence in Ruse continued to grow over the ensuing centuries. By the 18th century, the designation of rooms within an inn for Jewish use as a place of worship signifies their integration into social life by this time. The Jews remained actively entrenched in the city of Ruse, maintaining vibrant commercial ties with the Ottoman Empire.

Ruse, strategically situated on the right bank of the Danube, played a critical role as a military, commercial, and administrative center. Its harbor and castle, its shipyard for the imperial navy, and its position on the Istanbul–Bucharest route enabled the city to flourish as a transregional hub. This infrastructure attracted not only Muslims and Christians, but also mobile Jewish merchant networks—initially transient but increasingly rooted in the region's economic and fiscal fabric. Though not always documented in population censuses (*tahrir*), Jewish actors appear consistently in fiscal registers, court records, and imperial decrees—especially those related to tax farming (*iltizam*) and revenue allocation.

One of the central findings of this study is the active role played by Jews in the Ottoman *mukataa* (tax farm) system. As *mültezims* (tax farmers), individuals such as Arslan and Baruh secured contracts over the piers and customs posts of Vidin, Silistra, Nikopol, and Ruse, thereby participating in the empire's revenue collection apparatus. In several cases, these contracts explicitly stipulated that the revenue collected was to be directed toward military salaries, especially for garrisons stationed at strategic fortresses such as Özi and Babadagi. This practice not only reflects the trust placed in Jewish financiers but also the empire's reliance on their liquidity and regional commercial expertise.

Moreover, the jizya revenues collected from Jews and Christians (*gebrân maa Yahudiyân*) in the Ruse region provide an even more tangible picture of this interdependence. As documented in imperial financial records from the 1690s and early 1700s, these revenues were not simply hoarded or rerouted to Istanbul, but were used in real time to fund the costs of military logistics (e.g., bread and meat rations), *Sefer-i Hümâyun* (imperial campaigns), fortress maintenance, and the salaries of a wide spectrum of military personnel—from janissaries to artillerymen, *azeb* to *silahdar*. The precise sums, wage scales, and allocations (e.g., 171,902 akçe for 7 *sipahi* and 62 *silahdar* in 1701) demonstrate not only the granularity of Ottoman fiscal administration but also the embeddedness of Jewish communities in its daily operation.

This dynamic challenges traditional binaries between Muslim and non-Muslim subjects in the Ottoman world. While legal hierarchies and social limitations undeniably shaped Jewish life, the practical needs of the state—especially on the frontier—often created opportunities for economic participation and institutional recognition. The fact that Jewish tax farmers were protected by imperial decrees from interference, and that contracts emphasized continuity and the non-disruption of fiscal duties, suggests a reciprocal arrangement between Jewish financiers and the Ottoman elite, one governed by trust, performance, and mutual benefit.

The presence of Jews in the fiscal and economic records of Ruse also invites a reconsideration of Ottoman provincial life. While Istanbul, Thessaloniki, and Izmir often dominate narratives of Jewish economic activity, smaller and more peripheral cities such as Ruse emerge as key sites of mobility, negotiation, and adaptive integration. In these places, Jews operated not in isolation, but within overlapping networks that included Christian merchants, Muslim notables, and provincial administrators. This entanglement points to a form of "functional inclusion"—wherein religious minorities, while socially peripheral, were economically central to the Ottoman enterprise.

Furthermore, the gradual expansion of Jewish activity in Ruse—as evidenced by increasing mentions in court records, communal petitions, and contracts—coincides with broader shifts in Ottoman economic policy. The late 17th century was marked by prolonged military conflict, fiscal decentralization, and the expansion of *malikâne* contracts. In this volatile context, Jewish commercial expertise and credit capacity provided crucial support to imperial finance. Their ability to move across borders, manage risk, and cultivate long-term relations with the state made them indispensable agents of economic stability.

By the 18th century, the Jewish presence in Ruse becomes more visible in architectural, institutional, and communal terms. The leasing of rooms in an inn for use as a synagogue, as well as the continued participation in trade and tax collection, signals a deeper social integration. Although their population remained modest compared to other urban groups, their economic impact was disproportionately large—underscoring a broader Ottoman pattern where demographic size did not necessarily correlate with fiscal significance.

In conclusion, the 17th-century experience of Jews in Ruse exemplifies the Ottoman state's adaptive governance model, one that pragmatically incorporated diverse religious and ethnic groups into its administrative, fiscal, and commercial systems. Far from being marginal, Jewish actors were instrumental in the functioning of key imperial structures—especially in regions where logistical efficiency and fiscal stability were paramount. Through tax farming, jizya contributions, and trade networks, the Jews in Ruse helped sustain the empire's frontier presence while simultaneously carving out spaces of mobility, negotiation, and influence. Their story contributes to a more nuanced understanding of Ottoman pluralism—not as mere coexistence, but as an active, negotiated, and economically embedded phenomenon.

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Notes

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Abstract

17th Century Jewish Presence in Ruse and Economic Relations with the Ottoman Empire

Ruse is a significant city in Bulgaria, situated on the right bank of the Danube River, at the mouth of the river Lom, approximately 12.5 miles east of Nikopol and 13.5 miles west of Silistra, along the road from Istanbul to Bucharest (66 miles away from Bucharest). It fell under the rule of Murad I in 1388, during the Balkan conquests of the Ottoman Empire. Following the conquest, Turkmens from Anatolia were settled here, marking the beginning of the city's transformation. Initially part of the Chernovi district of the Nikopol sanjak in the 15th century, Ruse underwent significant development and became a district center by the mid–16th century. The shipyard in the region, known as the Danube Shipyard, played a pivotal role in the construction of the Ottoman navy vessels along the Danube, enhancing the region's strategic and economic significance. The city's population, comprising Christians, Muslims, and Jewish traders, contributed to its economic prosperity, as noted by the French traveler Pierre Lescalopier, who visited Ruse in 1579 and described it in his travelogue as a thriving urban center with a large population. In summary, Ruse experienced rapid development due to its location on the Bucharest–Istanbul road, the presence of a shipyard, a strategically important castle, and its position at the crossroads of both land and water routes. In terms of significance, it came to rival other important cities along the Danube, such as Silistra and Nikopol.

Keywords

Ruse, Jew, multazim/tax farmer, tax farming, jizya

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Earthquake Diplomacy in the Turkic World
From Past to Present

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The major Turkestan earthquake of 3 January 1911 and the 6 February 2023 Kahramanmaraş-centered earthquakes in Türkiye have been recorded as major disasters with significant loss of life and property in this region.

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Introduction

Turkestan, located in a key region of Central Asia, has a long and distinguished history. Starting with the Saka people in the 5th century BC and continuing with the Huns, this region has been a major location for crucial events in Turkish history, as noted by those who have passed through it. Positioned in the heart of Central Asia, its location on the historic Silk Road has always made it crucial for trade and cultural interaction, giving it great strategic importance. Turkestan, where various Turkish tribes emerged on the historical stage and established great civilizations, has also stood out for its cultural and social dynamism.

However, if we look at today's world maps, the name "Turkestan" does not appear as the name of any country or region. This concept started to be banned in 1920 and was completely eradicated by 1924 (Abazov 2005, 155; İpek and Güler 2023, 143). This process was a result of policies implemented by the Soviet Union to solidify its dominance over Central

Asia and to eliminate regional identities. The Soviet administration created new administrative divisions and names to suppress the ethnic and cultural identities of the region, leading to the erasure of Turkestan's historical identity.

In this historically examined geography, various aspects such as the histories of Turkish states, the first regions they inhabited, their ways of life, cultures, arts, political and social lives have captivated the interest of researchers, leading to numerous studies in the field. Each research endeavor has shed light on the obscure aspects of Turkestan, enabling a better understanding of the region. These studies not only cover historical events but also reveal the socio-economic and cultural dynamics of the area. This study serves such a purpose and highlights the solidarity between two peoples with a shared past, by way of a specific event.

The Turkestan earthquake of 1911, which occurred in the Kemin region of present-day Kyrgyzstan, was a significant event due to its impact, resonating worldwide given the circumstances of the time. The manner in which such an event was received in the region and by neighboring states, and the nature of their responses, naturally differs from today's standards. Despite the limitations in communications and transportation of that era, the Ottoman Empire's effort to extend a helping hand to their brothers in Turkestan illustrates the spirit of the time and the Ottoman Empire's penchant for international solidarity. The Ottoman Empire closely monitored the event and promptly initiated aid campaigns upon receiving the news. These aid campaigns comprised not only financial assistance but also messages of encouragement and support.

Similarly, it was observed that the Turkic states in the Turkestan region did not remain indifferent to the 2023 earthquake in Türkiye. Countries such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan demonstrated their solidarity with Türkiye by sending search and rescue teams and humanitarian aid. This study examines Turkish solidarity in the context of these two major earthquakes, which occurred more than a century apart. The echoes of two earthquakes that occurred in different geographies at different times are analyzed within the cultures that share a common history.

The primary reason for using the concept of Turkestan in this study is that, although the earthquake in Turkestan in 1911 occurred in what is now Kyrgyzstan, at that time the countries had not yet separated, and the region was considered as a whole. In this context, the main aim of the study is to analyze how the relationships between the Turkestan region and the Ottoman Empire and later the Republic of Türkiye have evolved during times of natural disaster. The findings indicate that, during natural disasters, the relationships between the Ottoman Empire, Türkiye, and Turkestan went beyond the customary ones between two different societies or states, being instead defined by a spirit of brotherhood.

This research highlights not only the political and economic aspects of the relationships between Turkestan and the Ottoman Empire-Türkiye, but also the human and cultural solidarity, emphasizing the depth and importance of the brotherhood bonds extending from the past to the present. In this context, it can be said that this solidarity, present since the past and continuing today, is a solid foundation for future relationships. Furthermore, recent geopolitical shifts in Central Asia, as well as Türkiye's expanding contacts with this region, have helped revive the concept of Turkestan. The growing cooperation and solidarity among Turkish states on platforms such as the Turkic Council and other international forums demonstrates the strength of these historical links.

In this regard, the historical significance and the modern strategic role of Turkestan hold great meaning for the efforts to preserve the common identity and cultural heritage of the Turkic world. Turkestan emerges not only as a part of the past but also as a symbol of future cooperation and strategic partnerships. Therefore, the historical and cultural heritage of Turkestan is considered a significant reference point in contemporary relationships and for future strategic planning.

Ottoman–Turkestan Relations in Historical Perspective

TURKESTAN, LOCATED in the heart of Asia, the largest continent on Earth, extends from Iran's Khorasan region, including northern Afghanistan, to the northern slopes of the Pamir and Hindu Kush-Kunlun Mountains, reaching China's Tun-Huang region, and stretching westward to Manchuria, encompassing all of Mongolia and southern Siberia. Historically, the name Turkestan was first used by the Iranians to describe the regions inhabited by the Turks (Taşağıl 2012, 556).

Due to the presence of Turkish and Mongolian nomads in this region, Turkestan has been referred to as Central Asia and Inner Asia in different cultures. Its location in the center of Asia has endowed it with special geopolitical significance. Serving as a commercial hub between China in the east and the countries situated in the west, it facilitated trade along the historic Silk Road. The Seljuks, Karakhanids, and Ghaznavids, prominent states that emerged in Turkestan, were societies aware of the region's geopolitical importance (Togan 1981, 1: 95–101).

Historically, the Ottoman Empire, which shared the same origins and beliefs as the people of Turkestan, maintained multifaceted relations with this region and its inhabitants. The first contact dates back to the 14th century, although the data on these early relations are limited. When the Turks in this region came under the control of the Timurid Empire, their relations with the Ottoman Empire also fell under this state's influence. Relations between the Timurid Empire and the Ottoman Empire remained tense until the Battle of Ankara of 1402, but they began to improve by the late 16th century. During this period, Iran played a crucial role in shaping bilateral relations. Whenever the Ottoman Empire took steps to regulate its relations with Iran, it distanced itself from Turkestan and its khanates; conversely, it sought allies against Iran when relations with Iran deteriorated. Despite this, the khanates consistently aligned themselves with the Ottoman Empire, reinforcing their loyalty. For instance, the Treaty of Istanbul, signed between the Ottoman Empire and Iran in 1590, was realized largely due to the efforts of the Uzbek Khanate in Turkestan (Andican 2009, 140–141; Macit 2009).

After the 16th century, the growth of the Moscow Principality into the Russian Tsardom posed a threat to Central Asia. The Russians began expanding into the relatively weaker Turkestan khanates during this period. This expansionist policy threatened and put significant pressure on the local khanates of Central Asia. In response to Russia's expansionist efforts, the khanates in Turkestan sent letters through envoys to the Ottoman Empire, seeking protection against the Russian pressure. During this period, Sultan Selim II of the Ottoman Empire did not ignore these requests from the Turkestan khanates. He assured them that he would take steps to allay their concerns by countering Russian incursions into the Turkestan region (İnalcık 1948, 363–380).

By the 17th century, the Ottoman Empire's relations with the khanates in the Turkestan region were largely driven by the search for alliances against a rising Iran. This pursuit of anti-Iranian alliances began with Sultan Mehmed III and continued under Sultans Ahmed I and Osman II, as the Ottomans sought to protect the interests of the khanates in the region (Andican 2009, 163–164). The attempts of Shah Abbas of Iran to reclaim territories lost following the Treaty of Ferhad Pasha reignited the Ottoman–Iranian conflict. In this context, Sultan Murad IV sent letters to the Khan of Bukhara, proposing joint action against Iran before his campaigns to Revan and Baghdad. As can be seen, under various sultans, the Ottoman Empire's alliance policies with the Turkestan khanates remained consistent. Relations continued amicably, with the khans expressing their loyalty through envoys and letters sent to Istanbul (Saray 1994, 9–11).

In the 18th century, the focus of these relationships shifted from Iran to the emerging threat of Russia. The Russian Tsardom had already subdued the Kazan and Astrakhan khanates in the 16th century and was seeking to capture the Crimean Khanate, advancing towards the Black Sea. At that time, the Crimean Khanate was under the protection of the Ottoman Empire. Russia initiated the

Ottoman-Russian War of 1768–1774 to seize the region, inflicting a heavy defeat on the Ottoman Empire. The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, signed after the war, rendered Crimea independent from the Ottoman Empire. Subsequently, Russia installed its ally Şahin Giray as Khan, effectively taking control of Crimea (Roux 2015, 422). This situation signaled that Russia's presence north of the Black Sea would become a significant threat to the Ottoman Empire. Consequently, the Ottomans sought allies to address this issue and turned to the Turkestan khanates, with which they had close relations. During the reigns of Sultan Abdul Hamid I and Sultan Selim III, envoys were sent to the khanates in Turkestan to seek support against Russia (Saray 1994, 21–29).

From the beginning of the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire, facing difficulties against Russia, began to handle both its general policy and its relations with the Turkestan khanates with caution. Throughout the first half of this century, the Turkestan khanates were engaged in internal struggles against each other. The internal conflicts among the khanates, indifferent to the Russian invasions just beyond their borders, were the greatest misfortune for the Turkestan region. The clashes between Bukhara and Kokand led to the depletion and weakening of the khanates, thereby facilitating the Russian conquest of the region (Macit 2009, 71–72).

After the Crimean War and the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1856, Russia had to abandon its ambitions in the Black Sea and the Balkans, turning its attention to western Turkestan (Kurat 1987, 346–347). In addition, the disregard for regional sovereignty shown by England and China, driven by their own interests, led to a significant expansionist movement. In response to this situation, the Turkestan khanates, unwilling to lose their territories to foreign powers, once again sent envoys to Istanbul to seek help from the Ottoman Empire. In their letters to the Ottoman Empire, the khanates requested military and diplomatic support, expecting the Ottoman Empire, as the leader of the Islamic world, to intervene on their behalf. However, due to internal economic difficulties and diplomatic concerns, the Ottoman Empire was unable to respond to these requests (Saray 1999, 575).

During this period, the Ottoman Empire's economic hardships were greatly exacerbated by domestic debt and the financial dependence on foreign states. Additionally, the Ottoman Empire's engagement on multiple fronts against various enemies strained its military resources. Diplomatic concerns also made a direct intervention in Turkestan challenging for the Ottoman Empire. The delicate balance with the European states was a significant factor that prevented the Ottomans from undertaking any military action in the region.

As we have seen, Ottoman–Turkestan relations in the 19th century largely consisted of official letters sent by the khanates of the Turkestan region to the

Ottoman Empire seeking assistance. The khans, troubled by Russian activities and attacks in the region, sought the sultan's protection and requested help due to his status as the caliph of Islam. However, as mentioned earlier, the internal and external problems faced by the Ottoman Empire limited its ability to support the khanates in Turkestan.

In the early years of the 20th century, Turkestan held a significant place in the foreign policy of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, although this issue was not considered independently of the Russian factor. The Ottoman Empire's major interests were in conflict with those of the Russian Tsardom, which led to the need for careful and strategic policymaking. Sultan Abdul Hamid sought to reinforce his claim as the protector of Islam, and the khanates of Turkestan requesting protection and support from the Ottoman caliph strengthened this position. Despite the financial strain it placed on the state, the budgets allocated to support Muslims in need helped solidify his influence and credibility as a caliph (Eraslan 1992, 334–336). During Sultan Abdul Hamid's reign, the Ottoman Empire extended a helping hand to everyone in need across the Islamic lands, with a particular emphasis on Turkestan. The sultan took serious steps to establish multifaceted relations, demonstrating a high level of commitment to supporting the region and fostering strong ties.

The Turkestan Earthquake and the Attitude of the Ottoman Empire

Central Asia has been one of the world's most significant regions due to both its human and geological history. In the past century, important discoveries in the social and natural sciences have made it easier to study historical geological events. Turkestan, historically considered the homeland of the Turks, is noteworthy not only for the events on its surface but also for the intriguing geological activities beneath it.

The climate in Turkestan varies from north to south but generally features a harsh continental climate. This results in significant temperature differences between day and night, with very severe winters and hot summers (Kayabalı and Arslanoğlu 1978, 16). Geographically, one of Turkestan's most important mountain ranges is the Tien Shan and Altai Mountains. Although these mountains appear to be isolated, there is a route connecting them known as the Dzungarian Gate. Turkestan's borders, which include these mountain ranges, begin in the Urals and extend eastward through the Akmola Plateau, then northward to the Greater Khingan Mountains in southern Siberia. From there, the border extends south across the Gobi Desert and across the Tibetan Plateau. Turkestan thus comprises both large sandy steppes and rich pastures. Because of its geopolitical location, Turkestan has been home to numerous civilizations and adopted as a homeland by various tribes throughout history. Its strategic location, proximity to trade routes, and availability of natural resources have increased its relevance. Turkestan's historical and cultural richness allows us to better grasp its role and significance in human history.

Turkestan is divided north-south by the Tien Shan Mountains, which are a key element of its topography. This separation has allowed numerous peoples to dwell and build different civilizations, while also aiding the progression of commercial and military routes from east to west. Southern Turkestan is largely a trade route that runs from China in the east to Syria and Anatolia. The northern Turkestan route, on the other hand, begins and ends at a single site in the Orkhon region and is largely used for military purposes (Gökalp 1973, 5–6).

The Turkestan region, while providing various advantages to its inhabitants, has also posed significant challenges due to its geological and meteorological features, which are conducive to natural disasters. The most notable natural disaster in this area is the major earthquake of 1911.

Although there is no consensus on the exact date of the 1911 Turkestan earthquake, later research suggests that it occurred on 3 January. The earthquake, which struck at around 04:26 AM (Caddick and Ball 2016, 147–160) along the Chon-Kemin-Chilik fault zone, had a magnitude of 8.2. Surface ruptures occurred over approximately 190 km, along the Kazakhstan platform and the Tien Shan fold belt, causing tens of millions of cubic meters of landslides and rock avalanches. This earthquake was part of a series of powerful quakes in the region, following the 7.3 Verny earthquake near Alma-Ata in 1887, the 8.3 Chilik earthquake in 1889, and preceding the Kemin-Chu earthquakes of 1938. Therefore, the 1911 Kemin earthquake, which is the focus of this study, is one of the most significant seismic disasters in the Trans-Ili Alatau Mountain range between 1887 and 1938. Surface ruptures occurred along various fault segments, leading to significant events such as landslides, rockfalls, and debris flows.

Reports indicate that 452 people lost their lives, and 740 were injured due to this powerful earthquake. The relatively low number of casualties can be attributed to the fact that the earthquake primarily affected the mountainous areas between Issyk-Kul Lake and Alma-Ata (formerly Verny), specifically the Dzungarian Alatau and Trans-Ili Alatau Mountain ranges (Delvaux et al. 2001, 1583).

This event in the geography of Turkestan was closely followed by the Ottoman public, primarily through the foreign media. The magazine *Sırat-ı Müstakim* played a significant role domestically, first reporting on the event under the headline "Turkestan Earthquake" in its issue dated 12 January 1911 (Yılmaz and Atar 2021, 34–37). Following this initial report, the magazine continued to cover the geological changes, tremors, and the casualties and property losses caused by this major earthquake, calling for public assistance. As the reports were being drawn up, special emphasis was laid on the fact that the victims of the disaster were religious brothers and Turks, in an attempt to secure more aid for this region. *Sırat-ı Müstakim* made considerable efforts to publicize the aid campaigns and gather support from the public (Yılmaz and Atar 2021, 38–41).

Regarding the response of the authorities, the Ottoman Empire aimed to assist the people affected by the earthquake in Turkestan as soon as the news reached it. The Iane Commission (Relief Commission) established in the Bâb-ı Meşihat (Sheikh al-Islam's office) began collecting donations from state institution employees both domestically and abroad through official channels. This can be tracked in the archival records. For instance, a document dated 3 May 1911 shows that tickets printed on behalf of the Iane Commission for the Turkestan earthquake victims were sold to employees at the Grand Vizier's office, raising a significant amount of aid. Specifically, fifteen tickets of 100 *kuruş* (penny), one hundred sixty-four tickets of 20 *kuruş*, one hundred twenty tickets of 5 *kuruş*, and six tickets of 50 *kuruş* were sold, totaling 5680 *kuruş*. Including cash donations, around seven thousand *kuruş* were collected from this department (BOA, BEO. 3889/291634, n.d.).

The Iane Commission sought to increase the contributions by distributing the printed tickets to different institutions. A document dated 12 March 1911 indicates that tickets worth a total of 1745 *kuruş* were sent to the Directorate of Darülmuallimin to be distributed to the employees, with the proceeds to be collected accordingly (BOA. MF. MKT. 1168-1, n.d.). In the following week, letters were sent to the Directorates of the Leyli and Nehari Girls' Industrial Schools, the Istanbul Provincial Directorate of Education, the Ottoman University and School of Civil Service Directorate, the Ottoman Museum Directorate, and the Medical School Presidency. These letters requested donations for the Turkestan victims in exchange for the tickets sent. The amounts were as follows: 1941 *kuruş* for the Leyli and Nehari Girls' Industrial Schools Directorate, 3315 *kuruş* for the Istanbul Provincial Directorate of Education, 2855 *kuruş* for the Ottoman University and School of Civil Service Directorate, 1944 *kuruş* for the Ottoman Museum Directorate, and 1740 *kuruş* for the Medical School Presidency. However, the archival records do not provide information on the actual amount collected from these institutions. The Iane Commission extended its efforts beyond domestic institutions by reaching out to embassies and consulates abroad through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The aim was to sell tickets printed for the earthquake victims in Turkestan at these foreign missions to garner more support. For instance, a letter dated 22 March 1911, sent to the London Embassy, indicated that tickets for Turkestan victims were being dispatched to the embassy, urging the staff to support this campaign. It was also requested that the matter be communicated to the consulates associated with the embassy to broaden the scope of the assistance (BOA. HR. SFR.3.. 650-12, n.d.). Similarly, on 24 March 1911, a letter was sent to the Varna Consulate, reiterating the need for aid for the Turkestan earthquake victims (BOA. HR. SFR.04.. 852-49, n.d.). A document dated 27 March 1911 features a letter to the Vidin Consulate, asking how much the consulate would contribute to the campaign and stressing that the aid be sent along with a note (BOA. HR. SFR.04.. 372-91, n.d.). Responses from some consulates are documented in the archives. For example, the Ruse (Rusçuk) Consulate replied on 28 March 1911, confirming a donation of thirty francs for the Turkestan earthquake victims (BOA. HR. SFR.04.. 624-14, n.d.). Additionally, the Sofia Embassy, in response to the aid request, donated ten francs and noted that the Islamic Youth Club in the city had also participated in the assistance effort (BOA. HR. SFR.04.. 402-75, n.d.). Therefore, the Iane Commission, established within the Bâb-ı Meşihat, conducted fundraising campaigns both domestically and internationally to mitigate the impact of this tragic event. The funds raised were directly allocated to the affected region to aid the victims.

The Earthquake of 6 February and Kyrgyzstan's Response

Earthquakes are among the natural disasters frequently occurring worldwide, often causing significant devastation. Particularly, the Anatolian region has experienced many large-scale earthquakes throughout history. These earthquakes frequently occur due to the region's geological structure and fault lines.

The earthquakes centered in Kahramanmaraş on 6 February 2023 caused great destruction and sorrow in the region. Two main tremors occurred at 04:17 AM and 1:24 PM local Turkish time, centered in the Pazarcık and Elbistan districts, respectively. The magnitudes of the earthquakes were measured at 7.7 and 7.6 (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Strateji ve Bütçe Başkanlığı 2023, 25), classifying them as extremely powerful and destructive earthquakes. According to AFAD data, the earthquakes were severely felt in cities across the Southeastern Anatolia Region. Cities such as Şanlıurfa, Diyarbakır, Hatay, Gaziantep, Kahramanmaraş, Osmaniye, Kilis, Adıyaman, Malatya, Adana, and Elazığ (AFAD

2023, 1) experienced significant panic and damage. Collapsed buildings, damaged infrastructure, and loss of life deeply affected the region.

The Kahramanmaraş-centered earthquakes of 6 February 2023 caused a major disaster in the region. The earthquakes affected a wide area and a large number of people, with utterly painful outcomes. Compared to the largest recorded earthquake in the region since 1900, with a magnitude of 6.8, the earthquakes of 6 February 2023 were exceptionally destructive. The earthquakes on 6 February 2023, centered in Kahramanmaraş, affected a large area, of 110,000 square kilometers, directly impacting approximately 13.5 million citizens across eleven neighboring provinces. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜIK), the number stands at 14,013,196, accounting for about 16.4% of Türkiye's population, highlighting the wide impact of the earthquake (TMMOB Mimarlar Odası 2023, 5).

The earthquakes also displaced nearly 3 million people, aggravating the region's displacement and migration-related concerns—BM İnsani Yardım Koordinasyon Ofisi (UNOCHA) 2023, 1. Humanitarian aid and reconstruction activities are critical in helping the impacted populace rebuild their life. National and international aid campaigns were already underway to help the community heal from the calamity and rebuild. The overall number of buildings in the impacted cities was around 2.6 million. Of these, 90% were used as homes, 6% as workplaces, and 3% as government offices. The overall number of residents in the impacted cities was around 5.6 million (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Strateji ve Bütçe Başkanlığı 2023, 6). These data demonstrate the scale of the devastation and the pressing need for homes.

The earthquakes killed 50,783 people and injured 115,353 (AFAD 2023, 1). These figures emphasize the earthquakes' destructive force and the urgent need for help in the region. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), 9.1 million people were directly affected by the earthquakes that struck Kahramanmaraş on 6 February. Many of these individuals were left homeless and struggled to meet their basic needs.

Following the earthquakes, many buildings were either destroyed or severely damaged, deepening the housing crisis in the region. Although temporary housing solutions were quickly implemented, long-term reconstruction and permanent housing projects became a major priority. Additionally, the destruction or inaccessibility of workplaces has severely disrupted economic activities in the region.

The collapse of government offices and public buildings has hindered public services and complicated coordination and relief efforts. Consequently, both local and international efforts have been intensively mobilized to address the aftermath of the earthquake. Aid campaigns, donations, and reconstruction projects are vital for helping those affected rebuild their lives.

Given all these numerical data, following the earthquakes of 6 February, which caused severe damage in all aspects, "National Mourning" was declared in Türkiye. Immediately after the earthquake, urgent aid poured in from all over the world.

Focusing on the aid and solidarity messages directed towards Türkiye's earthquake disaster from the Eurasian region, it can be said that both the governments and the people of these countries, as well as the Turkish citizens living there, mobilized in response. Firstly, the highest authorities in all countries in the region sent messages of support and condolences to Türkiye, and Turkish embassies and consulates in these countries were visited to convey solidarity messages. Additionally, public institutions, organizations, and civil society groups did not hesitate to express their support through their representatives. High-level support and solidarity visits were made to earthquake zones and to Ankara from various countries, particularly Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Greece (Turgunov 2023).

Albania and Macedonia declared public mourning in their own countries to show their solidarity with Türkiye. Besides the financial support provided by states, various aid campaigns raised more than 70 million dollars from Central Asia, Russia, and the Balkans. Additionally, over five thousand tons of in-kind aid, including tents, blankets, and heaters, were sent from these regions. Support campaigns were also conducted by numerous other countries. Among the search and rescue teams that came to the earthquake zone from all over the world, countries like Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Russia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Albania, and Hungary stood out with their intensive performance. These countries deployed approximately three thousand search and rescue personnel to the disaster sites. They also urgently sent 7,135 tents to Türkiye, addressing the most immediate needs in the severely affected areas (Turgunov 2023).

The Organization of Turkic States (OTS) immediately contacted personnel and institutions in Türkiye and swiftly organized search and rescue teams from member countries. Due to Türkiye's declaration of national mourning, the OTS also flew the flags of member countries at half-mast. Additionally, the Secretary-General of the OTS, Kubanychbek Omuraliev, visited Kahramanmaraş and handed over the prepared aid to AFAD (Türk Devletleri Teşkilatı 2023). The aid campaigns led by public institutions and civil society organizations in Turkic state were increasing daily.

Among the foreign aid sent to the earthquake zone, those from the Turkic republics constitute a significant portion. Aid from Kyrgyzstan amounted to approximately three tons. Coordinated by Kyrgyzstan's Minister of Interior, Ulan

Niyazbekov, the aid included items such as tents, beds, sleeping bags, heaters, and blankets. The six-ton aid collected at collection centers by Türkiye's embassy in Bishkek was transported to the earthquake zone via Pegasus and Turkish Airlines. Primary needs such as winter clothing, diapers, cleaning supplies, and food items comprised the majority of the aid. Additionally, 124 tents were sent and set up in the region (Anadolu Ajansı 2023).

All these support and solidarity messages not only alleviated Türkiye's pain but also contributed to strengthening regional relations. This process once again highlighted the importance of humanitarian values and solidarity. Kyrgyzstan's people and government demonstrated strong unity and cooperation in coordinating this relief. Kyrgyzstan's contribution was critical in satisfying the earthquake victims' immediate needs and proved the great links of brotherhood with Türkiye.

This assistance demonstrated the depth of Kyrgyzstan and Türkiye's friendship and their desire to help each other in times of need. Kyrgyzstan's efforts not only offered material support, but also improved the morale and motivation of earthquake sufferers. The aid supplied during the chilly winter days improved the living circumstances of the inhabitants in the affected region and gave them the sense that Kyrgyzstan stood with Türkiye throughout difficult times.

Financial donations to the relief account established by the Kyrgyz Ministry of Finance played an important role in Kyrgyzstan's aid. As of 6 March 2023, a total of 117,000 dollars had been transferred to this account (Anadolu Ajansı 2023). Contributions to this relief account came from officials and employees of the Kyrgyzstan Presidency, Batken Governorship, Batken Municipality, the Kyrgyzstan State Radio and Television Corporation (UTRK), Bishkek Municipality, Bishkek district municipalities, and officials and employees of the Bishkek Provincial Health Directorate.

This financial aid provided substantial support in meeting the urgent needs of the earthquake victims. The monetary assistance from Kyrgyzstan demonstrated not only the solidarity of the government and institutions but also the strong sense of unity among the people. The collected funds were transferred to the earthquake zone to be used for shelter, food, healthcare, and other urgent needs of the earthquake victims in Türkiye.

Additionally, the Friendship Health, Education, and Solidarity Foundation, established by the Ahıska Turks living in Bishkek, organized a special night where the Quran was recited, and prayers were said for those who had lost their lives in the earthquakes of 6 February. Representatives from the Turkish Embassy in Bishkek, the TIKA Bishkek Program Coordination Office, Kyrgyzstan-Türkiye Manas University, and the Kyrgyzstan Ahıska Turks Association came together on this special night. The collected monetary and in-kind donations were sent directly to the earthquake region (Tayfur 2023).

Conclusions

The Asian region, where a significant portion of Türkiye is located, lies on a seismic belt due to its geological position, and for centuries, earthquakes here have caused significant material and moral destruction. The major Turkestan earthquake of 3 January 1911 and the 6 February 2023 Kahramanmaraş-centered earthquakes in Türkiye have been recorded as major disasters with significant loss of life and property in this region.

The 1911 Turkestan earthquake occurred at 04:26 on 3 January, along the Chon-Kemin-Chilik fault line, and caused massive destruction with a magnitude of 8.2. This earthquake led to surface displacements over approximately 190 km, landslides, and rockfalls totaling tens of millions of cubic meters. This disaster, which resulted in 452 deaths and 740 injuries, was recorded as one of the strongest seismic events in the Trans-Ili Alatau range between 1887 and 1938. The Ottoman public closely followed this event, with the magazine *Sırat-ı Müstakim* publishing news about it under the title "Turkestan Earthquake" on 12 January 1911, with a plea for public assistance. The Ottoman Empire, through the İane Commission, coordinated local and international relief initiatives to assist victims of the disaster.

Newspapers, which were an important mode of communication at the time, kept the people informed within the empire's borders, while the state organized financial aid for earthquake victims through relief and assistance commissions established both domestically and internationally. Even during difficult times, the Ottoman Empire demonstrated its dedication to its ancestral homeland by actively assisting the affected provinces. The great Turkestan earthquake of 3 January 1911 had a magnitude of 8.2, causing severe destruction and loss of life in the region. The Ottoman public closely followed this event, and magazines like *Sırat-ı Müstakim* pleaded for public assistance. The Ottoman Empire, through the İane Commission established within the Bab-ı Meşihat, organized relief campaigns domestically and internationally and directly transferred the collected aid to the region.

Similarly, the earthquakes that occurred in Kahramanmaraş, Türkiye, on 6 February 2023, caused significant destruction. These earthquakes, with magnitudes of 7.7 and 7.6, struck at 04:17 and 13:24 local time, respectively, with epicenters in the Pazarcık and Elbistan districts. They directly affected 11 provinces, impacting approximately 14 million people. According to Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) data, this figure represents about 16.4% of Türkiye's population. Data from the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) confirm that the earthquakes were severely felt in Şanlıurfa, Diyarbakır, Hatay, Gaziantep, Kahramanmaraş, Osmaniye, Kilis, Adıyaman, Malatya, Adana, and Elazığ. As a result of these disasters, 50,783 people lost their lives, 115,353 were injured, and more than 3 million people were displaced. Immediately following the earthquake, national mourning was declared in Türkiye, and aid from around the world began to arrive.

The aid and solidarity messages in response to Türkiye's earthquake disaster were particularly noteworthy in Eurasia. The states and peoples of the region stood in solidarity with the earthquake victims in Türkiye. The aid from Kyrgyzstan is one example of this solidarity. The aid coordinated by Kyrgyzstan's Minister of Internal Affairs Ulan Niyazbekov included tents, beds, sleeping bags, heaters, and blankets. The aid collected at the gathering points of the Turkish Embassy in Bishkek was transferred to the earthquake zone via Pegasus and Turkish Airlines. Additionally, a relief account opened by the Kyrgyzstan Ministry of Finance received $117,000 in donations by 6 March 2023. Contributions to this relief account came from officials and employees of the Kyrgyzstan Presidency, Batken Governorship, Batken Municipality, Kyrgyzstan State Radio and Television Corporation (UTRK), Bishkek Municipality, Bishkek district municipalities, and officials and employees of the Bishkek Provincial Health Directorate.

The Friendship Health, Education, and Solidarity Foundation, established by Ahıska Turks living in Bishkek, organized a special night for those who had lost their lives in the earthquakes of 6 February. During this event, the Quran was recited, and prayers were offered. Representatives from the Turkish Embassy in Bishkek, the TIKA Bishkek Program Coordination Office, Kyrgyzstan-Türkiye Manas University, and the Kyrgyzstan Ahıska Turks Association gathered for this special night. The collected cash and in-kind donations were sent directly to the earthquake zone.

Like other Turkic republics, Kyrgyzstan mobilized all its institutions, providing both cash and in-kind assistance, reminiscent of the Ottoman Empire's past support, thereby fulfilling a debt of gratitude. From the first moments of the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes of 6 February, Kyrgyzstan sent a search and rescue team to the region and later contributed financially and logistically to help alleviate the impact of the disaster that affected millions.

Therefore, through these two events, experienced in different periods and geographies, we have seen that Turks, alongside the peoples and institutions of the states they have established, have always succeeded in acting in unity and solidarity in the most challenging times. These examples of aid and solidarity reflect the Turkish people's longstanding commitment to humanitarian duty throughout history.

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Abstract

Earthquake Diplomacy in the Turkic World: From Past to Present

This study seeks to examine the influence of earthquakes in two distinct periods and geographies within the Turkic world, separated by more than a century. The main contention of this study is that the relationships between the Ottoman Empire, Türkiye, and Turkestan evolved within the context of a fraternal link, with each side rushing to heal the wounds of the other, regardless of their own difficulties. In this perspective, the Ottoman Empire's response to the 1911 Turkestan earthquake, which included relief and support, demonstrates similar attitudes. Similarly, when it comes to the earthquakes in Türkiye in 2023, Turkestan countries responded faster than other cultures, indicating these continuing fraternal links. This study intends to provide a detailed approach based on the investigation of historical papers and archival information, analyzing the impact of earthquakes in two distinct periods and geographies of the Turkic world, separated by more than a century.

Keywords

Ottoman Empire, Türkiye, Turkestan, Kyrgyzstan, earthquake

CONCERTATIO

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The Atoms of Independence
Romania's Refusal to Import Soviet Nuclear Technology

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Romanian nuclear scientists opposed the import of Soviet nuclear technology from the outset, and political decision makers respected their scientific expertise.

Introduction

In the context of the Cold War, Romania's nuclear policy was one of the most significant instruments through which the Bucharest regime asserted its autonomy from Moscow. Far from being a strictly technical matter, the choice of civil nuclear technology reflected the tensions between formal loyalty to the socialist bloc and the Romanian leadership's obvious desire to define its own line in international relations. Starting in the mid–1960s, with Nicolae Ceauşescu's rise to power, Romania adopted a strategy of "balancing" between East and West, using the Soviet economic offer of civil nuclear technology as a diplomatic bargaining chip, but consistently refusing to actually accept it.

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For more than two decades, the Soviet Union tried to draw Romania into a joint civil nuclear development program, offering VVER reactors, technical assistance and integration into a scientific research and production system coordinated at CAER level. However, Bucharest's response was a calculated one: while maintaining a loyal discourse and avoiding direct confrontation, the Romanian leadership systematically postponed making a decision and invoked technical and economic arguments to reject the offer. In reality, the decision was eminently political: accepting Soviet technology would have meant not only technological dependence, but also strategic subordination in a field considered essential for the modernization of the Romanian energy system and for national prestige.

In this context, Romania explored several Western offers, and in 1977 it signed the agreement on the adoption of Canadian CANDU technology. This option represented more than a technology transfer: it was a political declaration of autonomy in a strategic field, which amplified tensions with Moscow but consolidated Romania's position as a distinct actor within the socialist bloc.

The aim of this study is to analyze in depth this long-term strategy, through which Romania managed a balancing act with the Soviet nuclear offer for over two decades. It highlights the diplomatic, technical, and political mechanisms that made this complex game possible: repeated negotiations with the USSR, the involvement of the Romanian scientific community, the tactic of ambiguous discourse, and, finally, the deliberate turn towards the West. Based on archival documents, diplomatic correspondence, and technical reports from Romanian and Soviet archives, the study contributes to the understanding of the relationship between science, technology, and politics in a communist regime that was semi-independent from Moscow.

Context

WHEN NICOLAE Ceauşescu[1] came to power in 1965, Romania had nuclear energy ambitions but a very small budget allocation for research. In 1964, only 0.88% of GDP was spent on research, while the USSR allocated 2.4% (1962), the USA 2.8% (1962), Great Britain 2.4% (1961), France 1.8% (1961), and Japan 1.4% of GDP (1961).[2] The number of researchers per 100,000 inhabitants was also unfavorable for Romania. There were only 51 researchers per 100,000 people, compared to 233 researchers in the USSR (1963). In the US, there were 170 researchers per 100,000 inhabitants (1962), while Great Britain invested so much in this field that in 1963 it reported 590 researchers per 100,000 people.[3]

A research institute in the field of atomic physics had been operating in Romania since 1949, but the road to implementing civil nuclear technology was winding and long. Young researchers took several years to train, the opportunities to specialize abroad were minimal, and even trips to the Joint Institute in Dubna, the stronghold of nuclear scientists in the communist countries of the Soviet political bloc, were a luxury. In addition, political interference in the administration of nuclear research was becoming increasingly frequent, and most jobs could only be obtained if you already had a party membership card. On top of all this, the Securitate, the Romanian state's secret police, exerted pressure under the guise of protecting state secrets, with many researchers being placed under surveillance on suspicion of spying for Western countries.

As for fissile material, Romania had exploited all its uranium mines from 1952 to 1965 serving the economic interests of the USSR. All the uranium ore had been sold to the Soviets at a price well below the world price, and the ore extracted after 1965 was of inferior quality. Romania did not have a uranium processing plant, and its attempts to build one were doomed to failure due to the opposition of decision-makers in Moscow to transfer technology and provide industrial support.

The Romanian–Soviet Nuclear Odyssey

At the 9th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party in July 1965, in the *Report on Energy Development over the Next Ten Years*, Chivu Stoica, President of the State Council of the RSR,[4] emphasized the importance of using nuclear energy for the production of electricity and heat. The aim was to ensure the energy balance, given that conventional fuel stocks were becoming insufficient for Romania's rapid industrial development. Uranium, which was no longer exported to the USSR, was to become one of the main sources of energy. The construction of nuclear power plants with a total capacity of 1,000 MW was considered fully feasible and justified, given that Romania had uranium deposits and that the price of nuclear energy was competitive with that of conventionally produced energy. Chivu Stoica spoke of two nuclear power plants that would be operational by 1975. For geological prospecting, which also included uranium deposits, the communists decided to allocate 16 billion lei for the next five years alone, 1966–1970.

Nicolae Ceauşescu, the new general secretary of the new Romanian Communist Party, also referred to Romania's future nuclear industry. In the party's Central Committee report, presented to the congress, he announced the use of nuclear energy for the production of electricity and heat in the coming years. Furthermore, Ceauşescu stated that the entire electricity production of 1938 would be achieved in 1970 in just 12 days, and in 1975 in less than a week.

In Romania, all scientific activity in nuclear physics was initially concentrated at the Institute of Atomic Physics, established in 1949 as the Institute of Physics of the Academy. The institute commissioned and developed the first large Romanian nuclear research facilities: the VVR-S nuclear reactor and the U-120 cyclotron,[5] in 1957–1958. Romania was the eighth country in the world to have scientific research reactors.[6] Given the advanced technology of the USSR and Moscow's political influence over Bucharest, it was only natural that the two essential components were Soviet-made and installed by specialists from the USSR and Romania.

Shortly after Nicolae Ceauşescu took office as the supreme leader of the PCR, discussions on the nuclear issue began with the Soviets. The high-level visit to Moscow on 3–11 September 1965 allowed for the first official discussion between Nicolae Ceauşescu and Leonid Brezhnev on the import of Soviet nuclear energy technology. The USSR leader offered the new general secretary of the Romanian communists assistance in the form of specialists who would travel to Romania to implement the technologies, process the enriched uranium needed for the power plant, and a 400 MWe (megawatt electrical) reactor.[7] It was the same type of reactor that Romania had requested two years earlier, but which had now passed safety tests. Brezhnev recalled that Czechoslovakia and other communist states had also requested to purchase this type of nuclear reactor from the USSR.

The issue of nuclear power plants had also been raised in August, when Alexandru Bîrlădeanu, Vice-President of the Council of Ministers, stated firmly in Moscow that Romania knew too little about Soviet nuclear technologies, while capitalist facilities could be visited and understood. He mentioned the visits of delegations to the United States, France, and Great Britain. Bîrlădeanu also complained that Romania had not been presented with a plan for Soviet technology transfer and, moreover, that the action had been postponed until 1970.

The Romanian–Soviet dialogue remained difficult and fruitless, as was the case on 12 November 1966, when N. S. Patolichev, the USSR's Minister of Foreign Trade, was received by Nicolae Ceauşescu. The Russian side was informed that Romania was building a metallurgical plant for the processing of uranium ore. Uranium enrichment was to be carried out jointly with the Soviet side. Patolichev expressed his support for the production of conventional electricity, although the Romanian side informed him of its decision that, by 1970, 13 per cent of the electricity produced by the national economy would be generated by the future nuclear power plant.[8] The discussions ended without any commitment, a sign that Patolichev's visit to Bucharest was merely a diplomatic gesture of goodwill on the occasion of the anniversary of the October Revolution in

Romania, and an opportunity to convey good wishes from Comrades Brezhnev and Kosygin. Nothing more than that.

On 17 and 18 March 1967, talks at the highest level took place again in Moscow. The discussions between Leonid Brezhnev and Nicolae Ceauşescu were also attended on the Romanian side by Ion Gheorghe Maurer,[9] President of the Council of Ministers, and Paul Niculescu-Mizil,[10] a member of the Executive Committee, of the Permanent Presidium, and Secretary of the CC of the PCR. Brezhnev was accompanied by the head of government, A. N. Kosygin, and A. A. Gromyko, a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR. The main topics of discussion were global nuclear armament, the prospect of signing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and the use of nuclear energy in civil technologies for the production of electricity.

On 31 October 1967, the Council of Ministers decided to set up and run an interdepartmental commission to coordinate the preparations for the construction of the first nuclear power plant in the Socialist Republic of Romania. The new body was tasked with handling and contracting projects, equipment, machinery, and other means necessary for the construction of the first nuclear power plant, the fuel element factory, the uranium ore concentration plant, and the heavy water factory. Plans were made for the gradual domestic manufacture of the equipment necessary for the nuclear industry and for the training and specialization of the necessary personnel.

Romania, which through Nicolae Ceauşescu's foreign policy was showing signs of economic rapprochement with the West, continued its parallel discussions with the US. Between 19 June and 8 July 1968, Alexandru Bîrlădeanu, Deputy Prime Minister and President of the National Council for Scientific Research, travelled to the United States at the head of a delegation that included six scientists. Among the institutions visited were the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center (California) and the Commonwealth Edison Company's group of nuclear power plants (Dresden, Illinois).[11] Discussions had also begun with the Canadian side, which promised funding for the Romanian nuclear project and put forward the idea of a 300 MWe unit. The commercial offer was to be presented in September 1968.

Following Soviet instructions, in 1968, ISCE Industrialimport requested a quote for a 400 MW enriched uranium-water nuclear power plant from the State Committee for Economic Relations (GKES) of the USSR. In June, ISCE Tehnoproexport USSR sent an offer for this type of reactor, similar to the one presented to other socialist countries. It referred to a power plant with two 400 MWe reactors. The negotiations were very complicated: the Romanian side requested fuel supplies for the entire lifetime of the power plant, without providing equivalent quantities of uranium concentrate in return. The Soviet side did not agree to supply enriched uranium under these conditions and demanded that Romania supply natural uranium in the corresponding quantities. Unlike CANDU technology (enriched uranium-heavy water), Soviet reactors, based on enriched uranium and ordinary water, consumed twice as much uranium. The Bucharest regime intended to commission the nuclear power plant in 1977, but the Soviets were delaying the supply of equipment, which meant that the first kilowatt of nuclear energy would be produced two years later than planned. Finally, there was a real financial problem: Romania requested a 15-year loan from the USSR at 2% interest, while the Soviets proposed payment in goods, in accordance with the bilateral agreement on the exchange of goods and payments. Under these conditions, the Russian side did not agree to send the technical documentation and manufacturing technology for the fuel elements and control rods.[12]

However, a year later, a decision by the Permanent Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Romania on 10 November 1969 called for the acceleration of negotiations for the purchase of such a power plant. An interdepartmental commission was to go to Moscow for discussions on technical, economic, and financial aspects, nuclear fuel supply, design, construction, staff training, and technical guarantees.[13]

On 13 May 1969, the Executive Committee of the CC of the PCR debated the draft national nuclear program for the period 1969–1980. The program, based on political guidelines, started from the framework idea that, by 1980, nuclear power plants in Romania would cover 65% of the country's energy needs. Realizing that such a development was practically impossible, Nicolae Ceauşescu said that it would be difficult to build one 300 MWe power plant and five 600 MWe power plants within this timeframe. The total cost would have been 43 billion lei, of which 11 billion would have been for imports. He therefore proposed something more "realistic:" four power plants, one 300 MWe and three 600 MWe.[14] Ultimately, Ceauşescu's conclusion, which was proposed and approved, was that the program should include 3–4 600 MWe nuclear reactors. Unaware of the complexity and uniqueness of the project, political decision-makers set deadlines that were difficult to meet: by 1980, three or four nuclear power plants, each with a capacity of 600 MWe, were to be built. The first reactor was to produce energy starting from 1974.

In a declassified secret document, the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) estimated that in March 1970, due to pressure from the USSR, Romania had agreed to build a nuclear power plant using Soviet technology. The plant was to produce 440 MWe. The plant was not to become operational until 1985.[15]

The USSR had been operating a 365 MWe reactor in Novovoronezh since 1964, and a second reactor of the same capacity was scheduled to come online at the end of 1969. Based on these reactors, plans were drawn up for slightly larger units, with a capacity of 400 MWe, intended for the national economy but also for export. In 1972 and 1973, reactors 3 and 4 of the Novovoronezh Power Plant, with a capacity of 400 MWe, were connected to the Soviet energy grid.

In early 1970, the new coordinator of the national nuclear program, Professor Ioan Ursu, met with A. M. Petrosiants, chairman of the USSR State Committee for the Use of Atomic Energy, to relaunch Romanian–Soviet cooperation, which had remained only on paper. The Romanian side drafted an initial agreement, which was quite surprising in its political and categorical wording: "The draft agreement provides for collaboration and cooperation in this field, based on the principles of sovereignty and independence, non-interference in internal affairs, equal rights, mutual benefit, and comradely assistance." Romania ensured that a joint strategic economic project with the Soviets would in no way affect the course of the economy and politics in Bucharest, which were reiterated as independent. The draft agreement provided for the development, design, construction, installation, and operation of power and research reactors of common interest, the supply of nuclear reactors, nuclear fuel and nuclear materials, related equipment and stations, and the development of isotope and radiation source applications in science, industry, and other economic sectors.

In February–March 1970, a Romanian delegation discussed the conditions under which Romania could acquire a 400 MWe nuclear power plant. The Romanian side discussed the framework of the government agreement to be concluded for the construction of the facility, as well as the conditions and terms of delivery.

On 13 April 1970, the Permanent Presidium of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party decided to purchase an enriched uranium-water nuclear power plant from the USSR. However, Romania did not intend to pay in cash, but with Romanian equipment and machinery. Importantly, the delivery date was shortened by one year, from 1976–1977 to 1975–1976. On the other hand, the high consumption of uranium in Soviet reactors, twice as high as in heavy water reactors, raised another problem. For the 25-year lifetime of the plant, 1,400 tons of natural uranium ore were needed, and the data showed that Romania still had 6,700 tons of category C1 and C2. There were 13,300 tons of prospective reserves and 20,000 tons of potential reserves. Therefore, the Romanian side proposed, this time, that the Soviets and Romanians provide equal quantities of nuclear fuel. The reasoning behind this was that between 1951 and 1965, no less than 19,000 tons of radiometrically sorted uranium ore had been delivered to the Soviet economy.

The Soviets agreed on a list of equipment to be manufactured in Romania. This included lifting equipment, tanks, pumps, fans, indoor electrical distribution stations, and embedded parts from the reactor and the machine room. Romanian specialists were also to benefit from specialization internships in the USSR. The schedule put forward by the Soviets was as follows: 1976–1977, delivery of basic equipment for the power plant, design, construction, and assembly; fourth quarter of 1978–first quarter of 1979, trial run; and 1979, final commissioning of the power plant. No agreement was reached on the following issues:

- the Romanian side had requested fuel supplies for the entire lifetime of the plant, without providing equivalent quantities of uranium concentrate in return. The Soviet side had not accepted this;
- the request for the delivery of equipment for 1974–1975, with the plant scheduled to become operational at the end of 1976;
- Romania's proposal to receive a 15-year loan at 2% interest to pay for supplies and services provided by Soviet organizations was rejected. The partners proposed that payment be made through deliveries of goods in accordance with the Romanian–Soviet agreement on the exchange of goods and payments;
- the Soviets did not accept the transfer of technical documentation for the manufacture of fuel elements and control rods and wanted Article 3 of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to be applied to the issue of control guarantees, which meant more stringent conditions than those imposed by the International Atomic Energy Agency's safeguards system for the construction of nuclear power plants.

In May 1970, the Soviets announced that they agreed to shorten the delivery period for the power plant equipment by six months, between 1975 and 1977; that they could not grant credit, with payment to be made from installations and equipment produced by the Romanian economy; that they did not agree that the Romanian side should provide only half of the fuel, the rest to be paid for. Thus, Romania had to deliver 3,000 tons of raw uranium to the USSR to provide enriched fuel for the entire period of operation of the nuclear power plant. The proposals from Moscow resembled an ultimatum, as Romania had to respond within 24 hours, on 14 May 1970. Bucharest rejected the Soviet conditions and proposed continuing negotiations. Romania insisted on payment for deliveries and services in facilities and equipment; equal shares of fuel raw materials throughout the plant's lifetime; and a one-year reduction in the delivery time for basic machinery and equipment (1975–1976 instead of 1976–1977). Discussions continued in Moscow until 20 May 1970.

Political relations between Romania and the USSR were becoming increasingly complicated, as evidenced on 19 May 1970 during Nicolae Ceaușescu's visit to Moscow. From the outset of the bilateral dialogue with the Soviets, Leonid

Brezhnev's string of accusations seemed endless. Romania's independence in international relations and even its indifference towards a common position with the USSR and the communist bloc deeply dissatisfied Moscow. The Romanian delegation was rebuked for having developed economic relations with the Federal Republic of Germany, for not opposing Israel's policy on the Middle East, and even for facilitating the emigration of many Jewish citizens. Brezhnev reproached Romania for benefiting from loans from the Jewish state in exchange for sending young people to serve in the Israeli army. The visit of US President Richard Nixon to Bucharest was considered a provocation to "progressive humanity," and the postponement of the 10th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party in August 1969 to welcome the leader in Washington was incomprehensible to the Soviets. The conclusion was clear: Romania was flirting with imperialism. The cessation of economic aid to Vietnam was another reproach levelled at Romania. The Soviets were also dissatisfied with the Bucharest regime's refusal to participate in the proceedings of an anti-imperialist world congress and with the fact that, in the Soviet–Chinese disputes, Romania openly supported Beijing's actions, including through the official press. Romanian–Soviet cultural relations were also unsatisfactory for the Kremlin, with Brezhnev criticizing the closure of the Romanian–Russian Institute of the Academy, the Maxim Gorky Institute and the Russian Bookshop (The World of Books), as well as the significant reduction in the activities of ARLUS.[16] All this was said to have affected Romania's prestige and demonstrated its isolation from the socialist countries. In a context in which he analyzed European security and even proposed the dissolution of both military blocs, the Warsaw Pact and NATO, Leonid Brezhnev accused Nicolae Ceauşescu of opposing a meeting of the foreign ministers of the communist countries to decide on some of the allies' priorities.

Given these accusations and political pressure, Romanian and Soviet specialists agreed, one day after the official dialogue, on 20 May 1970, on most of the clauses of the Government Agreement on cooperation with the USSR for the construction of a 440 MWe nuclear power plant in the Socialist Republic of Romania. The issue of Romania's payment of the Soviet contribution to design, installation, and fuel preparation had not been resolved, with Bucharest proposing payment in full through machinery and equipment.

Significantly, also for economic relations, the Soviets and the Romanians were preparing the conditions for a high-level visit to Bucharest. On 1 July 1970, a special envoy informed the Romanian side that Leonid Brezhnev's health prevented him from leading the delegation, which was to be coordinated by Alexei Kosygin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR. Nicolae Ceauşescu did not take the news well, considering it to be a fabricated illness, a political signal that once again highlighted the tensions between Bucharest and

Moscow. Only the political maturity of Romanian Prime Minister Gheorghe Maurer convinced the young communist leader to accept the option proposed by the USSR. Finally, the treaty was signed on 7 July 1970 by the two prime ministers. In the absence of Leonid Brezhnev, Ceauşescu did not have the right to sign the document, which he ironically called a mere "piece of paper." Under these political circumstances, negotiations were taking place on the construction of a nuclear power plant using Soviet technology, and Moscow's hostile attitude and rejection of many of the Romanian side's proposals during the negotiation process came as no surprise.

After the signing of the Agreement with the USSR on the construction of a nuclear power plant in Romania on 26 May 1970, intense discussions took place between the two parties for two years. On 24 July 1972, Romania sent a letter to Moscow stating the need to build the Olt nuclear power plant with increased security measures, namely, the encasement of the nuclear reactor. Although, at least until the summer of 1972, it seemed that there were some favorable conditions for reaching a compromise, on 10 November 1972, the Soviet side sent its official response, stating that Soviet companies were not prepared to take on the obligations that would allow the construction of the nuclear power plant in the cladded version.

A second, unfavorable option was to build the nuclear power plant without additional protective measures and without a containment structure, as requested by the Soviet side. Accepting a VVER-440 series reactor without a containment structure entailed major risks. In the event of a nuclear accident, a large area could be affected, extending to a radius of 50–60 km around the plant, with the risk of radioactive contamination for the population, fauna, economic objectives, and material goods located within this area. This solution was contrary to the nuclear safety concept adopted in all countries that had installed nuclear power plants, with the exception of the USSR and some socialist countries that had purchased similar types of plants without a containment building. The safety requirements for nuclear power plants had become stricter worldwide, and the Soviets had moved on to designing reactors with enhanced safety features, i.e., with a containment structure. The conclusions of studies carried out in Romania and the opinions of specialists rejected the solution of a reactor without a containment building, even if a site far from populated areas, such as Northern Moldova, the Prut Valley or the lower course of the Danube, was chosen. The estimated number of people affected in the event of a nuclear accident remained unacceptably high, so the final option was to abandon the construction of the nuclear power plant on the Olt River with equipment from the USSR for the time being and replace it with another conventional or nuclear power plant.

The country's fuel balance was deficient, and the failure to build the Olt nuclear power plant exacerbated this deficit starting in 1978. As for the type of reactor, studies conducted up to that point showed that, from this point of view, the most suitable were power plants with natural uranium and heavy water reactors, i.e., Western rather than Soviet ones, and the recent experience of commissioning and operating such a power plant confirmed the expected performance of this type of reactor.

The best option was a nuclear power plant with an installed capacity of around 800 MWe, with the foreign currency expenditure doubling. Adopting this nuclear power plant solution had the following advantages:

- it was economically competitive and involved a lower foreign currency expenditure;
- it contributed substantially to restoring the fuel/energy balance starting in 1980, if the decision was made by mid–1973;
- it allowed Romanian industry to better capitalize on its capabilities by assimilating high-tech products early on.

Therefore, this option represented a last attempt to build the plant in accordance with Romania's requirements, despite the fact that the answer was very likely to be the same negative one.

Under these circumstances, a group of representatives from several ministries was to present proposals by mid-February 1973 on the nuclear energy program, the construction of energy equipment, and the manufacture of nuclear materials. Within 10 days, by Government Decision, all these details were put into practice.

On 10 November 1972, I. Arkhipov, Deputy Chairman of the USSR State Committee for Foreign Economic Relations, sent a letter to Bucharest stating that the Soviet side was ready to continue discussions with the Romanian side on cooperation in the construction of the nuclear power plant in accordance with the existing agreement based on the technical project submitted. With regard to providing technical assistance for the construction of the plant in the shell version, the Soviets stated that their companies were not prepared to take on the obligations related to the design and delivery of the plant's equipment. The information was addressed to Adrian Georgescu, Deputy Minister of Electricity of Romania.

A new attempt to convince the Soviet Union to accept the construction of the plant with a containment building was made by Ion Gheorghe Maurer, President of the Council of Ministers, who in turn sent a letter to the President of the Council of Ministers of the USSR. According to the provisions of the existing agreement between Romania and the USSR, the power plant, which had a 440 MW VVER reactor, was to be commissioned in 1978. In order to create optimal conditions for the work to be carried out, all the necessary measures had been taken in Romania to ensure that the construction site could be opened as early as 1972. Unfortunately, the work had not begun because, for almost two years, the specialist organizations of the two parties had failed to agree on the specific way in which they would work together to build the power plant.

In 1974, negotiations were not progressing, and Nicolae Ceauşescu expressed his dissatisfaction at the meeting of the Permanent Bureau of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party on 8 April. Given that energy imports (electricity) from the USSR were beginning to cause problems, the volume requested by the communist partners was increasing, and the need for a nuclear power plant was becoming increasingly obvious. The General Secretary emphasized that Romania was in a bad position, did not have a signed contract, wanted cheap imported energy, and it was unclear how long this situation could continue. It was decided to expedite the signing of the contract with the Soviets and to begin construction of the power plant, tasks assigned to the State Planning Committee and the Government Commission for Economic and Technical Collaboration and Cooperation.

A few years later, on 5 August 1977, the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party approved some proposals regarding the cooperation between Romania and the USSR in the production of equipment for nuclear power plants. The situation changed radically, in the sense that Romania proposed the manufacture and delivery to the USSR between 1978 and 1980 of equipment necessary for nuclear power plants, as well as the import of materials using free foreign currency between 1977 and 1980 for the production of this equipment, with a view to finalizing negotiations with the USSR for the conclusion of a cooperation agreement on the production of equipment for nuclear power plants.

The Ministry of Machine Building proposed:

> *The delivery to the USSR, between 1978 and 1980, of the following equipment for nuclear power plants: hydraulic vessels for the cooling system in the active zone of the VVER reactor; embedding elements under the vessels; the main circulation pump body; general-purpose and special fittings; elements for concrete reactor wells.*
>
> *Resumption of negotiations with the Soviet side on the text and annexes to the agreement.*
>
> *Import of materials necessary for the manufacture of equipment to be delivered to the USSR using free foreign currency; 1,890 tons of special steel for the manufacture and cladding of vessels, worth 15 million lei in foreign currency, were to be imported using free foreign currency.*
>
> *The value of the nuclear equipment to be delivered between 1978 and 1980 was reduced to 91 million lei in foreign currency; this was due to an increase in the volume of equipment to be delivered to the USSR.*
>
> *The delivery of equipment for nuclear power plants was to continue until 1990, and the Convention was to specify the technical documentation and technical as-*

sistance to be provided by the USSR, as well as the possibility of delivering other, more sophisticated nuclear equipment.[17]

However, the USSR's request was much greater than what Romania could offer. For example, the requested number of hydraulic containers for the cooling system in the reactor's active zone was 10 in 1978 and reached 32 in 1980. Romania proposed only two containers in the first year, with the possibility of reaching to 18 in 1980.

The chairman of the USSR State Committee for Nuclear Energy, A. M. Petrosiants,[18] came to Bucharest in 1981. On 16 May, he was received by Nicolae Ceauşescu. Although many years had passed since the political decision to import a Soviet nuclear power plant, with enriched uranium and natural water, the leader in Bucharest said with conviction, "We must now think about how to develop this collaboration more quickly and when to start building this nuclear power plant in Romania."[19]

The Soviets were very pleased with the progress of nuclear research and industry in Romania. The experimental heavy water plant produced one ton of heavy water per year, and Petrosiants noted that, from this point of view, some processes had been mastered from start to finish. Ceauşescu added that Romania needed 400 tons of heavy water for the CANDU plant built with AECL Canada. To this end, in 1983, Romanian industry was planning to build a new plant with four lines, each producing 90 tons of heavy water.

As for the uranium processing metallurgical plant, the Soviets noted that, in terms of the quality of the finished product, the processing activity was not among the most efficient. Moreover, they suggested that the plant be transferred from the Ministry of Mines, Petroleum, and Geology to the direct administration of the Committee for Nuclear Energy.

The production of fuel elements was very low, although the process was completely and scientifically correct. Ceauşescu asked the Soviets for support in developing other lines of production.

During this visit, a cooperation agreement in the field of controlled thermonuclear fusion was signed between CSEN and the USSR State Committee for the Use of Atomic Energy, which contained a concrete program of research, development, and experimentation.

Romania and the USSR collaborated in the field of laser construction for research and economic applications, and laser installations had been developed on machine tools. At the tandem accelerator at the National Physics Center in Măgurele, joint activities were carried out with the Institute of Physics and Nuclear Engineering and Soviet institutes in Moscow, Kharkov, and Yerevan. Between 1976 and 1980, the Institute of Isotopic and Molecular Technology in

Cluj-Napoca supplied the Soviet institute in Tbilisi with stable isotopes worth 2 million lei per year.

The construction of a VVER-1000 MWe nuclear power plant in Romania was under discussion,[20] to replace the VVER-440 MW plant, whose construction had been agreed upon through intergovernmental cooperation in the agreement of 28 May 1980.[21]

In conclusion, in order to build the 1000 MWe VVER power plant in Romania, discussions with A. M. Petrosiants also addressed the issue of fuel and the primary circuit of the future power plant. In March, in Moscow, the president of the Romanian State Committee for Nuclear Energy, Academician Ioan Ursu, and the first vice-president of the USSR State Committee for Foreign Economic Relations discussed topics related to the design of the 1000 MWe nuclear power plant, the delivery of equipment, and the supply of fuel for the plant.[22]

On 22 June 1981, the prime ministers of the USSR and of Romania, Nikolai Tikhonov and Ilie Verdeţ, agreed to supplement mutual deliveries of heavy machinery and equipment for the period 1982–1985, with a total value of 300 million rubles. The deficit of 50 million rubles was to be covered by the Soviets through deliveries of equipment needed for the construction of the VVER nuclear power plant. Three months earlier, on 18 March 1981, the Minister of Heavy Machinery Construction, Ioan Avram, and the ambassador to Moscow, Traian Dudaş, agreed with A. I. Mayorets, the USSR Minister of Electrical Engineering, that Romanian nuclear workers would specialize in the production of equipment for VVER 400 MWe and VVER 1000 MWe nuclear power plants. The documentation for the 1000 MWe reactor was to be submitted to the Romanian side in 1983, and deliveries of equipment were to begin in 1984. Economic discussions on nuclear energy recurred obsessively on the Romanian–Soviet agenda, without any practical results.

In the second half of the 1980s, the energy policy of communist Romania was at a turning point. The Cernavodă nuclear power plant project, based on Canadian CANDU technology, encountered serious technical and financial difficulties in an increasingly tense international context for the Ceauşescu regime. After 1980, Romania had accumulated considerable foreign debt, and access to Western technology was becoming increasingly difficult. Under these circumstances, Ceauşescu resumed talks with the Soviet Union on possible nuclear cooperation, even though in the 1970s and early 1980s he had consistently rejected the integration into the energy system coordinated by Moscow.

The first direct discussion between Nicolae Ceauşescu and Mikhail Gorbachev on this subject took place in Moscow on 4 September 1985, during an official bilateral meeting. According to the Romanian transcript, the Romanian leader raised the issue of "securing additional sources of energy," explicitly mentioning the nuclear field. He reiterated once again the issue of the delivery of a Soviet nuclear power plant, adding that he was prepared to discuss the offer in concrete terms. Mikhail Gorbachev responded favorably, evoking the Soviet experience in the construction of VVER-type power plants, but stressed that Romania had to accept closer cooperation within the CAER on energy issues. Ceauşescu, faithful to his policy of technological autonomy, avoided making a concrete commitment, limiting himself to stating that Romania would retain control over its own development. The discussion did not end with an agreement, but it opened a new stage in bilateral relations in the energy field.

After the meeting in Moscow between Gorbachev and Ceauşescu on 16 May 1986, it was agreed to conclude a convention on Romania's participation in the exploitation of deposits in the USSR (crude oil, coal, etc.) and another on the construction of a nuclear power plant with a view to establishing stable long-term imports of equipment and raw materials.

The topic was revisited during Gorbachev's official visit to Bucharest between 25 and 27 May 1987, during talks held at the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party. According to the transcript, the Soviet leader returned to the idea of cooperation in the nuclear field. The discussions did not lead to any concrete agreement. Romania never purchased a Soviet-type power plant, preferring to continue the CANDU project, even under increasingly difficult economic conditions. However, the episode illustrates the structural tension between the Romanian policy of technological autonomy and the Soviet efforts to economically reintegrate CAER member countries around the joint energy programs promoted by Gorbachev.

On 2 October 1989, in an article published in Izvestiya, the Soviet correspondent in Bucharest candidly highlighted the real state of Romanian–Soviet economic relations. Romania had announced that it was abandoning its collaboration with the Soviets on the construction of a nuclear power plant in favor of Western CANDU technology (construction had begun in 1982), a decision based on economic considerations such as lower costs and reduced nuclear fuel consumption. Between 1965 and 1980, the USSR's share in Romania's foreign trade had fallen from 39% to 17%, with the situation improving slightly after that year. Throughout this period, the author notes, as a bitter conclusion for Moscow, "the rapid development of Romanian industry required imports, especially loans, modern technologies, and equipment from Japan, the USA, West Germany, and France."[23]

The epic story of the construction of a Soviet nuclear power plant on Romanian territory ended in the last year of Nicolae Ceauşescu's dictatorship.

Conclusions

The construction of a Soviet-style nuclear power plant in Romania proved to be a protracted political and technical dialogue that lasted for decades. Even though the USSR was the first country in the world to build a nuclear power plant, and the first steps in Romanian nuclear research had been taken together, through the import of a Soviet-built reactor and cyclotron, the technologies offered to Romania from the outset of the collaboration were not the safest. This allowed Romanian specialists, under the cover of a foreign policy of openness towards the West, to visit Western countries that were performing well in the nuclear field. Romanian nuclear scientists opposed the import of Soviet nuclear technology from the outset, and political decision makers respected their scientific expertise. Aware that the vanity of the Kremlin leaders had to be constantly fed, Nicolae Ceauşescu and his team let it be understood until the last moment that Romania was interested in the Soviet power plant. In reality, every time a new cooperation agreement was presented, the terms written in the documents on the Romanian side were unacceptable. Subsidies and loans that were extremely advantageous only to the Romanian side, the provision of a considerable amount of fuel at Soviet expense, and other economic demands, which seemed deliberately exaggerated, delayed the actual start of specific economic relations for many years. Romania had decided to purchase its first nuclear power plant built with Canadian technology (CANDU) and could no longer economically support another one of Soviet design. Despite his increasingly pronounced political independence from Moscow, Ceauşescu could not afford to risk a categorical refusal in the face of the USSR's countless nuclear offers. On the other hand, the leaders in the Kremlin, from Brezhnev to Gorbachev, were informed and aware that Romania had once again chosen the West. The postponement or cancellation of high-level visits to Bucharest, the refusal to spend holidays in Romania, which was very common among the communist leaders of the Eastern Bloc, or the appointment of lower-ranking officials to head delegations meeting with the leader of communist Romania, Nicolae Ceauşescu, were clear signs of Moscow's hostility towards the continued development of economic relations with the West, including in the nuclear field. The seemingly endless odyssey of implementing Soviet technology in Romania came to an end with the collapse of the communist regime in Bucharest.

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Notes

1. Nicolae Ceauşescu was elected first secretary of the Romanian Workers' Party in July 1965, following the death of leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. On 24 July 1965, the PMR changed its name to the Romanian Communist Party, led by Nicolae Ceauşescu until 22 December 1989, when the communist regime in Romania collapsed.
2. Central Historical National Archives (Arhivele Naţionale Istorice Centrale, hereafter cited as ANIC), coll. CC al PCR, Secţia Propagandă şi Agitaţie, file no. 34/1965, fol. 107.
3. Ibid., fol. 113.
4. The State Council of the Socialist Republic of Romania was the supreme political governing body of the Romanian state. Chivu Stoica held the position of president of the Council for two years, from 1965 to 1967, after which Nicolae Ceauşescu took over the role.
5. http://andr.ro/domeniul-nuclear-in-ro/informatii-generale.
6. https://www.curentul.info/cultura/mari-personalitati-ale-stiintei-romanesti-si-mondiale-horia-hulubei-1896-1972.
7. ANIC, coll. CC al PCR, Secţia Cancelarie, file no. 124/1965, fols. 80–81.
8. ANIC, coll. CC al PCR, Secţia Relaţii Externe, file no.147/1966, fols. 2–14.
9. Ion Gheorghe Maurer (1902–2000), a lawyer by profession, was Minister of Foreign Affairs (1957–1958), President of the Grand National Assembly (Parliament) (1958–1961), and the country's longest-serving prime minister, president of the Council of Ministers from 1961 to 1974.
10. Paul Niculescu-Mizil (1923–2008), member of the CPEX of the PCR (1965–1989), vice-president of the Council of Ministers (1972–1981), Minister of Education and Training (1972–1976), President of Centrocoop (1981–1989).
11. The United States had substantial budgets for scientific research: \$15.3 billion in 1966, \$16.5 billion in 1967, and \$16.7 billion in 1968.
12. ANIC, coll. CC al PCR, Secţia Cancelarie, file no. 44/1970, fols. 10–12.
13. ANIC, coll. CC al PCR, Secţia Economică, file no. 3/1969, fol. 116.
14. ANIC, coll. CC al PCR, Secţia Cancelarie, file no. 69/1969, fol. 11.
15. Nuclear Program of Eastern Europe, 1 March 1979, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/nuclear%20programs%20of%20easte%5B15313994%5D.pdf.
16. ARLUS was the Romanian Association for Establishing Relations with the Soviet Union, founded in 1944 by left-wing figures. Over time, Soviet influence and propaganda in Romania grew significantly, and paying ARLUS activists became very costly. ARLUS was dissolved in 1964.
17. ANIC, coll. CC al PCR, Secţia Economică, file no. 32/1977, fols. 6–8.
18. Andronik Melkonovich Petrosiants, graduate of the Uralsk Institute of Mechanics, former Deputy Minister of Medium Machine Building, CPSU activist, winner of the State Prize, and Hero of Socialist Labor.
19. ANIC, coll. CC al PCR, Secţia Relaţii Externe, file no. 53/1981, fol. 3.
20. The first VVER-1000 (Vodo-Vodyanoi Energetichesky Reaktor) nuclear power plant was built by the Soviets and commissioned at the Novovoronezh NPP (Unit 5) in

1980, on the territory of the then Soviet Union. It was the pilot model (V-187) of the 1000 MW high-power reactor, the basis for the further development of the VVER-1000 type. Other units followed, and the model became a standard design widely used in the USSR and its allied states.

21. ANIC, coll. CC al PCR, Secţia Relaţii Externe, file 53/1981, fol. 22.
22. Ibid., fol. 14.
23. Vasile Buga, *Lumini şi umbre: Relaţiile economice româno-sovietice (1965–1989)* (Bucharest: Institutul Naţional pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2019), 268–392.

Abstract

The Atoms of Independence:
Romania's Refusal to Import Soviet Nuclear Technology

This study explores Romania's strategic decision, under the leadership of Nicolae Ceauşescu, to progressively reject the import of Soviet VVER nuclear technology, in the context of the Cold War and given the desire to assert national autonomy. Although Romania's early nuclear scientific activity was based on Soviet influence and equipment, discussions on the acquisition of a high-power nuclear power plant (400 MWe, later 1000 MWe) became a political bargaining chip that lasted for 24 years. The documents analyzed reveal the tensions between Bucharest and Moscow. On the one hand, the Soviets offered VVER-1000 reactors, but imposed restrictive political and technical conditions. In turn, Nicolae Ceauşescu's experts proposed conditions that were difficult to accept, all of which were clearly to the detriment of the USSR: non-performing loans, the provision of part of the nuclear fuel with Soviet money, and other unacceptable conditions. Ultimately, Moscow's refusal to offer acceptable security guarantees and transfer critical technology led to the practical abandonment of the Soviet project, paving the way for the search for Western alternatives and the affirmation of a strictly national nuclear policy. After carefully studying the archive documents in Bucharest and the evolution of high-level political dialogues between Romania and the Soviet Union, at the end of this study we highlight and interpret the causes of the failure of this impossible economic collaboration.

Keywords

nuclear technology, Eastern Bloc, communist Romania, USSR

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A Radiography of German Cultural Influences

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Maria Sass, Ovio Olaru, and Andrei Terian, eds., *The German Model in Romanian Culture / Das deutsche Vorbild in der rumänischen Kultur*
Berlin: Peter Lang, 2023.

The book—Maria Sass, Ovio Olaru, and Andrei Terian, eds., *The German Model in Romanian Culture / Das deutsche Vorbild in der rumänischen Kultur* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2023)—proposes a multiple perspective on what has been generically called the "German model" and its influence on Romanian intellectual traditions. The contributions vary thematically and refer to many different yet intersecting cultural fields (language, imagology, translation and publishing activity, education, sociology, philosophy), since they have literature as a common denominator. The editors describe the volume as "part of a larger project aiming at integrating contemporary Romanian scholarship in a European circuit and thus 'de-peripheralize'" it and "as a more hands-on approach to literary production in Romania and especially in connection to the German cultural space" (15). Organized chronologically rather than thematically, the volume can be considered a radiography of cultural influences and

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symbioses across all fields of the humanities (15) within a fairly extended period of time—from the 1860s to the early 2000s—showing how and to what extent the "German model" or *a* "German model" has influenced, re-shaped, or catalyzed Romanian culture.

Teodora Dumitru ("About the Mechanistic-Scientist Origins of the First Theory of Poetry in the History of Romanian Literature: The Influence of Schopenhauer and Herbart on Titu Maiorescu," 25–51) identifies the first moment when a specifically German influence can be distinguished within a broader Western framework, namely, Johann Friedrich Herbart's philosophy as reflected in Maiorescu's conception of early Romanian poetry. In her contribution, Dumitru analyses the influence exerted by the German philosophers Johann Friedrich Herbart and Arthur Schopenhauer on the first theory of poetry in the history of Romanian literature, showing that Maiorescu's *Poezia română: Cercetare critică* (Romanian poetry: A critical mnquiry) (1867) is in fact grounded in scientific principles. Building on the work of Mircea Florian (1930s) and Liviu Rusu (1970s)—who not only noted Herbart's influence on Titu Maiorescu's concept of poetry but also rejected the possibility of Hegel's influence—Teodora Dumitru further examines how "Herbart and, through him, Maiorescu are increasingly drawn to explanations and theorizations inspired by Newtonian mechanics and other concepts and theories (which have themselves meanwhile become established) of modern science" (28). She shows how Schopenhauer and Herbart not only represent "the immediate sources of Maiorescu's thesis on the origin/'object' of poetry in 'feeling' or 'passion'" (30), but also how they contributed to a scientization of poetry: Maiorescu seems to have re-coded Schopenhauer's ideas "through the filter of this new perspective on psychology borrowed from Herbart" (28). Dumitru outlines different similarities and adaptations of various theories and concepts of the "Schopenhauer–Herbart couple" as they appear in Maiorescu's debut book, *Einiges Philosophische in gemeinfasslicher Form* (Berlin, 1860) and in his study *Poezia română: Cercetare critică* (Iaşi, 1867).

Maria Chiorean's contribution ("Imagological Selection and Novelistic Dispersal in Nineteenth Century Romania: The Appeal of the German Culture and the Promise of Nation Building," 53–72) focuses on the image of German nationals as reflected in Romanian novelistic production at the end of the 19th century and around the Junimea (Youth) group. Maria Chiorean presents a brief history of the object of study in the wake of Manfred Beller and focusing mainly on a certain continuity in the representation of the Germans from Caeser (1469) until Madame de Staël (1813) and on the fact that this imagological register was based since the Enlightenment and Romanticism on similar contradictions and opposites and on attributes that mainly distinguished the German identity from the French identity (55–56). These attributes were adopted in this form by 19th-century Romania, at a time when the French model was widely regarded as superior in every respect and when Romanian society sought to emulate the French through imports of all kinds. This changed in the 1860s, when the Romanian cultural and political life underwent a significant shift under the influence of Junimea, led by Titu Maiorescu. In the main part of her contribution, Maria Chiorean examines the way in which the Junimea group perceived the image of the German, itself influenced by certain German models in literature and philosophy, and further presents Junimea's definition of the concept of nation as influenced by German philosophy. Finally, the author compares the image of the German in the conservative narratives about nation building, with the novelistic representation of German characters, as seen in the *Digital Museum of the Romanian Novel*, showing through a survey of novels from the period that, rather than forming a single, stable typology, German characters are portrayed in a wide variety of ways, resulting in a fragmented and heterogeneous image. She concludes that "the coexistence of imagological selection and novelistic dispersal in the nineteenth century also confirms that, when it comes to Romania's struggle for recognition and access to the center(s) of the modern world-system, the usual dichotomies—Westernization vs. nationalization, progressive vs. traditionalist, imitative vs. authentic—are infinitely complicated by the pervasive nature of Eurocentric philosophical, developmental, and knowledge patterns (70).

Two Romanian renditions of the vampire myth from Jules Verne's 1892 *Le château des Carpathes*, one of which is completely anonymous, are the topic of Anca-Simina Martin's chapter ("Jules Verne and the Transylvanian Struggle for Independence: Political Appropriation in Victor Onişor's 1897 Translation of *Le château des Carpathes*," 73–88). The author shows how Victor Onişor's translation of Verne's novel, serialized in the newspaper *Tribuna*—whose founder, Ioan Slavici, stood at the forefront of the Memorandum movement and whose views traditionally aligned with the German cultural model due to their ties with the Romanian literary group Junimea—is connected to Onişor's own involvement in the 1892 Transylvanian Memorandum. As an activist, he attempted to suggest Verne's support for Romanian identity in the region of Transylvania. Anca-Simina Martin compares this rendition with Verne's text and with the unsigned version published later that same year in Romania, showing that *Tribuna*'s politicized translation removed the German and Hungarian elements underlying Verne's portrayal of Transylvania, whereas the unsigned edition appears to have simply capitalized on the novel's setting and its author's popularity, with no discernible political agenda (76). In the introduction, Martin explains how the emergence of the vampire myth in Romanian culture has always been connected to the practice of translation and outlines the context in which the two renditions appeared. The author also emphasizes the major role of a newspaper like *Tribuna:* Slavici's pro-German orientation encouraged a favorable image of Germans, contrasted with the negative perception of Hungarians, which made the idea of a rendition depicting a Hungarian-oppressed Transylvania even more tempting for Onişor. However, states Martin, "Verne's Transylvania features a second foreign element, the German one, which unlike the former, was unacknowledged yet similarly effaced." She shows that although both translations adapt or omit politically sensitive elements, Onişor's version represents a clear reshaping of the original novel, highlighting Hungarian oppression, minimizing the German element, and reinforcing a Romanian national identity.

Imre József Balázs ("Expressionist Models in Interwar Romania," 89–101) discusses the evolution of the literary avantgarde in interwar Romania based on three case studies belonging to the movement's Hungarian rendition. He argues that through opening up Romanian literature toward extraterritorial, multilingual, minority variants, the idea of cultural transfers becomes even more relevant for the field. By examining the works of Hungarian minority authors in Romania, the article identifies transitional forms that negotiate between modernist and avantgarde tendencies, French and German cultural models, urban and rural topics, and rational and instinctive approaches. Romania, Balázs notes, was a "complex cultural landscape" in terms of influences: the French one was predominant, but the German one was also not to be neglected, leading to a series of "hybridizations and dynamic adaptations" (90). He highlights not only the combination of these two models, but also other elements shared across minority cultures. The central focus is the presence of Expressionism in the Romanian avantgarde. The author chooses to illustrate four different variants of Expressionism in interwar Transylvanian Hungarian literature, based on the approaches of three writers—László Dienes (1889–1953), János Bartalis (1893–1976), and Jenő Szentimrei (1891–1959)—as well as a 1923 anthology, showing that Expressionism "does not contain a single, uniform discourse" (98). Imre József Balázs concludes that although the German model seemed more important for Hungarian authors than for Romanians, the avantgarde in Transylvania did not experience the same conflict with aestheticist modernism as in Budapest. Hungarian avantgarde writers from Romania often promoted themselves in the same journals as the modernists or the Transylvanists (99). Expressionism would therefore emerge as a transitional form bridging modernism and the avantgarde, and illustrating how these categories can overlap rather than oppose each other—an aspect particularly relevant in semi-peripheral cultures like Romania. Here, such transitional forms mediate between different models, encouraging hybridity rather than division.

George State ("Traklative: Another Critical Confession," 103–118) shows the continuous relevance of Georg Trakl's poetry, tracing it from the Austrian author's first mentions and translations to the present day. He frames his discussion around the question: "Does each translation highlight one particular component, outlining certain elements that would otherwise remain less visible (which ones?), and do all of them combine to create an otherwise ambiguous and disturbing image?" (105). In the historical overview of the translation of Trakl's poetry into Romanian, George State—himself a translator of Trakl—lists, discusses, and compares the major Romanian versions: the first poems translated in 1922 by Ion Pillat and Oskar Walter Cisek, followed by Ştefan Baciu's translations from 1934–1936, Petre Stoica's first comprehensive sample of the poet's work—*59 poeme* (59 poems)—from 1967, A. E. Bakonsky's 1965 translation, the poems translated by Ştefan Aug. Doinaş in 1988 for one of the most representative anthologies of world poetry ever published in the Romanian language—*Atlas de sunete fundamentale* (Atlas of fundamental sounds)—, the only complete translation of Trakl's work by Mihail Nemeş (1988, later republished and reissued), and finally Nicolae Ionel's translations from 2007. State's comparative analysis of the style and character of each of these translations, as well as of the critical views on Trakl expressed directly or indirectly by their translators, leads him to what he calls a "rabbinical answer" (114) to his initial question about whether the numerous Romanian translations produced over a relatively short period of time contribute in any way to the understanding of the poet's work: "yes and no. No, because if we look at them from the perspective of the average reader and in terms of their loyalty to Trakl's poetics, the differences between the Romanian versions are hardly significant . . . Yes, because the translation of a poem should be, in and of itself, a poem" and therefore a distinct text, where any of the translator's decisions plays a crucial role "in conveying the unmistakable Trakl-Ton" (115).

Andrei Terian's contribution ("Hugo Friedrich and Romanian Poetry Criticism," 119–130) focuses on Hugo Friedrich's *Die Struktur der modernen Lyrik* (The structure of modern poetry) (1956) and on the German scholar's importance for Romanian postwar criticism. The author shows that Friedrich contributed, although indirectly, not only to the understanding and definition of Romanian modernity, but also of postmodernity. His work became "a genuine Bible for poetry criticism" (123), due both to its non-political perspective and to the way it enabled the conceptualization of alternative modernities. According to Terian, the book's success can be ascribed to four main factors. First, its bold claim that all modern European poetry shares a single underlying structure gave readers a sense that the entire field could be grasped quickly and coherently; second, its focus on stylistic analysis offered a practical and accessible method for interpretation; third, its formal and apolitical approach made the work adaptable across different political systems, including communist regimes, and finally, its narrow focus on a handful of Western European traditions paradoxically broadened its global impact, as it provoked responses and reinterpretations in other cultural contexts, helping to fuel its international reception (120–121). Since "at least the last two mentioned factors seem to have proven decisive for Friedrich's reception in Romanian culture" (121), Terian focuses his study on them. The text analyzes the major role that Friedrich's book has played in Romanian culture by becoming a "standard-bearer of this new direction in Romanian poetry criticism" (121), whether embraced or contested, as demonstrated by the numerous examples cited by the author.

Radu Vancu ("Intertextuality as a World Literature Mechanism: German and French Sources in Mircea Ivănescu's Poetry," 131–140) discusses the German- and French-language intertext in Mircea Ivănescu's work. In his article, Vancu starts from David Damrosch's definition of world literature—*What Is World Literature? (*2003)—particularly from the idea that it involves translation as a natural medium, together with the changes that the work undergoes through it (131–132)—and extends this notion with the concept of intertextuality, whose effects on the text resemble those of translation: "world literature is writing that gains in translation—as well as in intertextuality" (132). His first aim is therefore to prove this similarity, which he does through the work of the Romanian writer Mircea Ivănescu—an author who "has conceived his work as world poetry" (134). Secondly, Radu Vancu shows that the German sources in Ivănescu's work are at least as present and meaningful as the Anglo-Saxon ones, arguing that the author actually had four "stellae fixae" in his work when it came to allusions or references: the French Proust and Camus, and the German writers Rilke and Goethe. This, Vancu suggests, "shows that Romanian literary criticism hurriedly relegated Ivănescu's poetry in the wake of Anglo-Saxon postmodernism exclusively—and, given the fact that his four fixed stars are three high modernist poets and a pre-modern one, it is disputable if one can label Ivănescu as a postmodern at all; . . . one can still argue that none of Ivănescu's most frequent intertexts is excerpted from a postmodern writer, which could be taken to indicate something meaningful regarding his postmodern affinities" (138).

Snejana Ung's contribution ("Importing Writers or Books? The (In)Visibility of the German-Language Literature in the Romanian Literary Field," 141–155) examines what she calls a "compromised import," referring to the limited circulation of German language literature back into the East European periphery, despite the strong interest and nostalgia surrounding the Eastern European turn in German literature. Following the development of two successive turns in German-language literature—the Turkish turn and the Eastern European turn—her chapter aims to conduct a sociological analysis of the visibility of German-language writers originating from Eastern Europe. Her study consists of a twofold analysis, considering both the translations and the presence of German-language writers at literary festivals. Starting from the idea that "the reception of every transnational writer originating from the Second or Third World hinges on their homeland" (141) and drawing on Leslie A. Adelson's alternative to the "between two worlds" paradigm—namely, the concept of "touching tales" (142)—the author notices that writers who would normally fall into the East European category "still carry the label of their former cultural and national background" when considered individually (142). This observation leads Ung to several key questions: What happens to the somewhat exotic character of works written in German by Eastern-European-born authors? How are these works revalued in a different context? And to what extent do they really travel to Eastern Europe (143)? By examining Romanian translations of this such works, the presence of Eastern-European-born authors writing in German at three major Romanian literary festivals (FILB, FILTM, FILIT) and the number of authors who have received the Adelbert von Chamisso Prize and/or the Ingeborg Bachmann Prize, Ung draws some interesting conclusions regarding the visibility of the Eastern European turn in Romania. She shows that there is an elliptical representation of this literature, as a kind of compromised import in the Romanian literary field, resulting in a process of importing either writers or works, but rarely both. She argues that this compromise is shaped by the economic constraints of the post-communist Romanian book market as well as by the hegemony of English-language literature.

Maria Sass—"Deutsches Gedankengut als Vorbild zur Entwicklung der rumänischen Literatur Siebenbürgens vom Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts bis 1918" (German intellectual tradition as a model for the development of Transylvanian Romanian literature from the late 18th century to 1918), 157–170—examines the cultural, primarily literary, connections between Transylvanian Romanian scholars and poets and the German-language literature from the late eighteenth century through the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth, prior to Transylvania's annexation by Romania. She discusses the role that the Transylvanian School had in importing Enlightenment ideas into Romanian culture. Since one of the movement's central aims was emancipation through culture, Sass shows how representatives of the *Şcoala ardeleană* (Transylvanian school) Movement—Samuil Micu, Gheorghe Şincai, Petru Maior—introduced different kinds of German-language literature through translation. She further examines several Germanophile tendencies throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, focusing on the catalytic role of the German culture as promoted and imported by scholars and writers such as Gheorghe Lazăr, Vasile Aaron, Ion Barac, Gheorghe Bariţiu, Ioan Slavici, George Coşbuc, George Bogdan-Duică, Ştefan Octavian Iosif, and Lucian Blaga. The author emphasizes that the dissemination of Romanian literature in the German-speaking world was possible only through translation, and she presents examples of the very few translations of Transylvanian Romanian literature available before 1918, as well as texts that mention or address Romanians (Johann Karl Schuller, Carmen Sylva, Mite Kremnitz, *New Romanian Sketches*; Wilhelm Rudow; Martin Opitz, Joseph Marlin).

Doris Sava—"Exportschlager Deutsch: vom Aspirin zum Zeppelin: Germanismen als Kulturgut" (German as export hit: From aspirin to the zeppelin: Germanisms as elements of the cultural heritage), 171–198—focuses on German-language imports into the Romanian vocabulary. The author outlines the facets of these borrowings and explains several notable ways in which language contact influences lexical material, presenting both the classification criteria for Germanisms in Romanian and the subject areas in which they appear. The article also includes a case study on the influence of Romanian on the regional standard variety of German in Romania, using the example of the supra-regional *lingua franca* spoken within the German-speaking communities in the country. Doris Sava illustrates how changes in lexical material result from social, political, economic, and socio-historical shifts, and how direct borrowings are often linked to factual borrowings, even though the routes of transmission are diverse. Many words of German origin have been adapted so thoroughly upon adoption into another language that their foreign origin is no longer apparent. Because linguistic innovations are tied to socio-historical, cultural-historical, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic factors, tracing the pathways of lexical-semantic borrowings with German as either source and intermediary language presents a particular challenge. In Romanian, naturalized Germanisms often retain only the meaning adopted from German and refer to concrete concepts. However, these borrowings may also involve a shift in meaning, in which the original meaning is supplemented by a further, new, or semantically related one. A specific form of semantic change is metaphorical transfer, through which speakers no longer perceive the words in question as foreign. Many metaphorically used Germanisms are stylistically marked and frequently appear in colloquial speech. The presence of Germanisms in Romanian is also due, to a considerable extent, to the ongoing contact with German-speaking communities that settled on the territory of present-day Romania, contributing significantly to the enrichment of the language.

Ovio Olaru—"Ibsen importieren: Das deutsche Modell in der rumänischen Peripherie" (Importing Ibsen: The German model in the Romanian periphery), 199–211—illustrates how the Romanian reception of the Norwegian author

Henrik Ibsen is closely linked to the cultural capital he accumulated in "the" Germany of his voluntary exile. Analyzing Ibsen's ties with Germany and the ways in which he was imported, discussed, and staged in Romania, Olaru shows that his reception cannot be attributed solely to the influence of the German-language press, although this played an important role, particularly because it was through this channel that Ibsen first entered Hungarian cultural life. Nevertheless, German theater productions dominated in Romania in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a phenomenon connected both to Ibsen's association with the German cultural sphere and to his affinity with German literature and philosophy. In Romanian literary criticism, Ibsen was frequently recognized as a representative of naturalism and was discussed within broader cultural debates alongside other Nordic authors, which produced a dichotomous interpretive framework contrasting the French theater model with the German one. Nordic theater emerged as an innovative alternative to the French tradition, which was perceived as dominant. At the same time, the orientation toward the German model could also be interpreted as the expression of a growing Romanian cultural autonomy. Although Naturalism across Europe exhibited strong socially critical and, at times, socialist tendencies, Ibsen's work offered a middle ground: it combined socially critical content with a form that remained acceptable to a broader, more liberal-minded audience. This approach resonated particularly in a society like Romania's, which was marked by social inequalities, hypocrisy, and strict norms.

Lăcrămioara Popa's contribution—"Die Übersetzung rumänischer Volksdichtung ins Deutsche: eine Periodisierung" (The translation of Romanian folk poetry into German: A periodization), 213–236—examines the translation of Romanian folk poetry into German and points out that the aesthetic dimension of these translations was only acquired during the twentieth century. Her diachronic analysis begins with the observation that the earliest German–Romanian relations date back to the Middle Ages and arose from the interethnic coexistence of German settlers in Transylvania and the Romanian population, where the Saxons played an important role as mediators of cultural values. From the first translators responsible for official documents—crucial for the relations with the Romanian principalities—through the early history of translation involving church literature during the Humanist era, several examples from the Baroque era, and the eighteenth century, when translations were primarily linked to trade, Popa traces the long and varied history of German translations of Romanian texts. She then turns to the nineteenth century, when the first systematic attempts to translate Romanian folk poetry into German occurred, coinciding with the publication of the earliest Romanian folk literature collections. The examples from the twentieth century demonstrate the paradigm shift that occurred in the twentieth century, when the meaning of translation began to incorporate the idea of literary value.

Valeriu P. Stancu—"Paul Celan: Sprachliche Neuschöpfungen als *Meridian*-Dichtung in den Bänden *Sprachgitter* und *Die Niemandsrose*" (Paul Celan: Linguistic innovations as *Meridian*-poetry in the volumes *Sprachgitter* and *Die Niemandsrose*), 237–257—analyzes the linguistic innovations of the German-language Romanian poet Paul Celan in the two volumes of poetry mentioned, taking into account the theoretical considerations articulated by Celan himself in his two famous speeches, the Meridian Speech and the Bremen Speech, both grounded in the deconstruction of language and, implicitly, of the history of the Shoah. In the first part, Valeriu P. Stancu outlines the principles underpinning Celan's Meridian Speech: poetry's relationship to reality, its perception through actualization, and its liberation from linguistic conventions (238). In this context, tropes, images, and metaphors become merely means toward an ideal language (240). Stancu argues that the reflection on the catastrophic scale of the Holocaust is not only to be explored ontologically, but also in the linguistic aspects of the poems, and he demonstrates that linguistic innovation can serve as a key to both the creation and reception of poetry in the wake of the Shoah (255). He draws on two studies by Larissa Naiditch ("Strukturelle Besonderheiten und stilistische Funktionen der Komposita in der Dichtung Paul Celans," 2010) and Jürgen Lehmann (*Kommentar zu Paul Celans "Sprachgitter,"* 2005), which also address linguistic innovations and compound words in Celan's work. Central ideas put forward by these two authors, such as the metaphorical basis of compound words, the tendency toward textual densification, and the deconstruction of language perceptible across multiple layers of the text (disassembled lexemes, ellipses, severed grammatical connections, graphic signs that often correspond to silence or a reduction of what is said, the tendency toward nominalization, etc.) (242–243), lead Stancu to conclude that Celan sought a form of poetic condensation that heightens sensory perception and enables the experience of a new, painful reality (243–244). The author identifies three categories of important perception-related compounds or linguistic innovations: compounds centered on perception and sensory impact, compounds with figurative associations and an emphasis on the reconstruction of concepts, and compounds created through associations of words from multiple fields. Through his detailed analysis and the many examples provided, he demonstrates that the poems in the two selected volumes reveal a new poetic language, one that seeks not only to find a poetic form for the wound of the Shoah, but also a form for the eternal nature of that wound (241).

Ioana Constantin—"Rumänische Versionen von Goethes *Faust*: Die Übersetzung von Ştefan Augustin Doinaş" (Romanian versions of Goethe's *Faust*:

Ştefan Augustin Doinaş's translation), 259–272—shows how Ştefan Augustin Doinaş's 1983 translation of Goethe's *Faust* is an updated version of the German classic. She highlights both the theoretical considerations of Doinaş's translation and his hermeneutical approach to the tragedy itself. The analysis incorporates comments grounded in the theoretical framework provided by Werner Koller's theory of equivalence in translation. Out of the five types of equivalence relations (260) identified by Koller (denotative, connotative, text-normative, pragmatic, and formal-aesthetic), the author focuses on the connotative and formal-aesthetic types, which she identifies in Doinaş's translation. Building on Doinaş's hypothesis of an aesthetic reading—one that may, however, betray both the source and target texts when viewed from multiple perspectives (260)—Ioana Constantin shows how Doinaş develops the concept of a "genetic reading" that engages critically with prior interpretations (262). In this context, Doinaş comments on the previous translation of the tragedy, made by Lucian Blaga. Although one cannot deny its outstanding quality, Doinaş identifies the very personal touch that the poet impresses upon his work as the most striking feature of Blaga's translation and sees in this overemphasis of his own poetic personality the very weakness of the translation (263). At the same time, Doinaş warns that translations which stray too far from the source text's intentional ambiguity, becoming overly vague or lacking coherence, can mislead the interpretation, potentially obscuring meanings that a more faithful rendering might have preserved (264). Ioana Constantin attempts to illustrate precisely this effort on Doinaş's part to maintain a balance between the two approaches and presents Doinaş's interpretation of *Faust* and of its translation, emphasizing its relevance today: For Doinaş, the Faustian man is in fact a synthesis of the European spirit, the prototype of a still undefined *homo europaeus*, where the concept of Europe is understood in the wake of Karl Jaspers (1946) as the meeting point of the three concepts of freedom, history, and science (265–266). In addition to demonstrating how this European synthesis is dialectically present in Doinaş's translation, Ioana Constantin focuses on the connotative level of the equivalence relationship, illustrating how Doinaş's excessive concern that something might be lost in translation can be seen at the prosodic, syntactic, morphological, or stylistic level.

Susana Monica Tapodi's contribution—"Das Bild der Anderen in den Romanen von Eginald Schlattner" (The portrayal of others in the novels of Eginald Schlattner), 273–287—concerns representations of otherness, ethnic influences, and conflicts in multicultural Transylvania as depicted in Eginald Schlattner's novels with autobiographical undertones *Der geköpfte Hahn* (The beheaded rooster) and *Rote Handschuhe* (Red gloves). Following a biographical sketch and a brief overview of various theoretical approaches and a definition of imagology as a transdisciplinary approach concerned with the study of collective representations and with the mental representation of otherness (274), the author draws on Zsuzsanna Ajtony's study "A nemzeti sztereotipiak—a gondolkodas segitői vagy gatjai?" (Stereotypes—a help or a hindrance to understanding?) (Cluj-Napoca, 2011), which discusses the principles of analyzing stereotypes and the importance of emphasizing their aesthetic effect. She also refers to Daniel Henri Pegeaux's contribution *Literatura generală şi comparată* (General and comparative literature) (Iaşi, 2000), in which he identifies three fundamental attitudes towards otherness: phobia, mania, and philia (276). Tapodi incorporates these concepts into her imagological analysis of the two novels; furthermore, she examines hybridization, cultural and religious differences as perceived by the characters and the depiction of their thought processes, demonstrating that the first novel showcases an encounter of internalized stereotypes and the experienced reality, whereas the second one illustrates how a gaze directed at the other turns back towards the self, and the gaze at the self passes through the other (285).

This comprehensive volume is of interest not only to specialists in the humanities represented by its chapters, but also to anyone interested in the ways cultural models circulate and transform. Taken together, the studies demonstrate just how fluid the concepts of culture and cultural models truly are. By focusing on influences and interactions with the German culture, the book contributes to a repositioning of Romanian culture and to its clearer understanding within the broader European context.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Gabriel-Nicolae Bleahu
Răsăriteni şi Apuseni la Conciliul de la Konstanz (1414–1418)
(Easterners and Westerners at the Council of Constance, 1414–1418)
Preface by Ioan-Vasile Leb
Cluj-Napoca: Romanian Academy, Center for Transylvanian Studies, 2025.

Gabriel-Nicolae Bleahu is a young researcher and a graduate of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology at Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, where he completed his undergraduate degree in Pastoral Theology and two master's programs. He further advanced his academic training with a PhD in Theology, which he successfully defended at the same institution. His work, *Easterners and Westerners at the Council of Constance (1414–1418)*, is based on his doctoral thesis and was published under the auspices of the Center for Transylvanian Studies of the Romanian Academy.

Easterners and Westerners at the Council of Constance (1414–1418) analyzes the interactions between the Eastern and Western Churches within this pivotal assembly. While the subject has been extensively researched in Western historiography, Eastern scholarship has offered relatively few contributions. Therefore, approaching the topic from the perspective of Orthodox specialists in ecclesiastical history is essential to ensure a balanced interpretation of a subject that involves both Christian traditions.

Professor Ioan-Vasile Leb emphasizes this in the preface: "A fundamental work by an Orthodox researcher was long overdue—a bold endeavor undertaken by the young doctoral candidate Gabriel-Nicolae Bleahu. He has succeeded in producing the first doctoral thesis on this topic within the Orthodox milieu, adhering to all the historical-theological methodological principles required for research of this magnitude." Consequently, the Orthodox perspective on the subject is the work's primary strength.

Structurally, the work comprises six main chapters of varying lengths, each subdivided into several sections. In the introduction, the author highlights the relevance and originality of his research, subsequently published in this volume. He also presents the primary sources and the current state of research on the Council of Constance, covering both international and Romanian historiography.

The second chapter, titled "Historical Context," analyzes the primary causes of the Papal Schism. The author demonstrates that at the turn of the 15th century, the Western Christian world faced both spiritual and secular decline, culminating in the ecclesiastical rupture caused by the simultaneous election of two popes. The resulting tensions profoundly destabilized Christendom, prompting various efforts to resolve the crisis. In this regard, the councils of Pisa (1409), Como (1413), and Lodi (1413) set the stage for a major assembly intended to settle these disputes. The choice fell on Constance, a city under the control of Sigismund of Luxembourg, who sought to decisively influence the proceedings.

The third chapter, “The Council of Constance (1414–1418),” captures the pivotal moments and crises that marked the assembly’s proceedings. The author provides details that illuminate the tense atmosphere, noting, for instance, that Emperor Sigismund of Luxembourg “kept others waiting in unimaginable cold, as if playing the role of God’s messenger,” thereby assuming the symbolic mantle of “savior of the Church.” This chapter also explores a wide range of issues, from the flight of Pope John XXIII to the political and procedural mechanisms, alongside doctrinal disputes and proposed reform directions.

The fourth chapter, “The Reception of the Council of Constance,” focuses specifically on the ecclesiastical sphere, analyzing the Western world’s reception of the assembly’s decisions. It also examines the shifts in Pope Martin V’s authority within Latin Christendom.

The fifth chapter, “Union with the Greeks?”, addresses the question posed by its title. While the Council of Constance focused on resolving the Great Western Schism (1378–1417) and combating heresies, Gabriel-Nicolae Bleahu emphasizes that it also addressed relations with Eastern Christendom. The author examines the attempts at unification, the theological dialogue, and the historical context of the schism between the two branches of Christianity.

The sixth chapter, titled “Future Research,” though the shortest, provides a perspective on the author’s intended research directions. Among these are the analysis of the correspondence between Sigismund of Luxembourg and Manuel II Palaiologos, the study of Ulrich von Richental’s Chronicle, the Orthodox response to the ecclesiology of Constance, the evolution of the conciliarist movement, and the exploration of specialized literature in the digital sphere.

The author concludes that no reconciliation between Greeks and Latins was achieved at the Council of Constance, as no official agreement was signed and the Byzantine delegations were composed predominantly of laypersons. Consequently, the assembly failed to bridge the divide between the two Churches and did not lead to the restoration of unity.

Gabriel-Nicolae Bleahu’s work stands out for its rigorous and well-structured approach to a topic at the intersection of ecclesiastical history and East–West relations. The study’s primary merit lies in its Orthodox perspective on a subject predominantly treated in Western scholarship, thereby contributing to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the event. Although the Council of Constance did not achieve a union between the Eastern and Western Churches, Bleahu’s analysis underscores the crucial role of dialogue and historical context. This volume represents a valuable contribution to church history, while opening new avenues for research and inviting a critical reevaluation of the relations between the two Christian traditions.

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