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1000 DE ANI DE CULTURĂ ȘI CIVILIZAȚIE ROMÂNEASCĂ

O ISTORIE ÎN IMAGINI



1000 YEARS OF ROMANIAN CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION

A VISUAL HISTORY

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SECOLELE
XI-XIV
CENTURIES



jurul Sibiului, în Țara Bârsei și în Bistrița, adică la granițele cu Țara Românească și Moldova. Sașii vor primi o organizare autonomă, asemenea unei populații cu origine controversată, secuii, din zona Carpaților de Curbură. Spațiul transilvan se modifică de acum față de cel extracarpatic printr-o dezvoltare urbană puternică.

Menționați sub nume diferite în izvoare – olaci, olași, balacci, blacki, walathi, francezul Philippe de Mezières ajungând să vorbească, la sfârșitul secolului XIV, de o „*double Abblaque*” (Moldova și Țara Românească) –, românii își continuă viața în forme ancestrale, alegându-și conducătorii („oamenii buni și bătrâni”, cnezii și voievozii) și aplicând *jus valachicum*, adică „dreptul valah”, rămas în funcțiune în Ardeal în anumite zone până târziu în secolul XVIII. De altfel, îndepărtarea reprezentanților români din congregațiile nobiliare s-a petrecut abia în veacul XV. Nobilii români sunt pomeniți fie în corpuri de oaste ce însoțesc pe regii unguri în campanii, fie în fruntea unor răscoale locale. Stau măturie și ctitoriile lor religioase de la Densuș sau Strei.

Despre stratificarea socială a populației românești de la sud și est de Carpați vorbesc elocvent descoperirile arheologice. Podoabele, relicvariile și ceramica de lux ce au ajuns până la noi sunt o dovadă a existenței unei categorii înstărite și care dorea să-și marcheze statutul privilegiat în raport cu ceilalți locuitori. Sunt și o măturie a plasării spațiului românesc pe două mari axe comerciale ce uneau, prin Transilvania, prin pasurile de la Turnu Roșu și Brașov, și prin porturile dunărene, spațiul flamand și german cu cel bizantin, respectiv drumul galițian, ce cobora pe Siret și Prut tot la Dunăre și la Marea Neagră.

Celelalte două principate române, Țara Românească și Moldova, s-au format și s-au aflat în primul veac al existenței lor sub semnul rezistenței contra expansiunii maghiare. Sub umbrela unei stăpâniri tătărăști îndepărtate, un Basarab la sud de Carpați și un Bogdan la răsărit au întemeiat cele două dinastii domnitoare, obținând prin luptă dreptul la existență.

De multe ori se face greșeala de a introduce în lumea medievală noțiuni contemporane, precum independența. Atunci altele erau regulile politice. Funcționa concepția familiei de suverani, în care fiecare ocupa o poziție mai înaltă sau mai joasă. Regele Angliei putea presta jurământ de vasalitate monarhului Franței, pentru o posesiune din cuprinsul regatului acestuia puteau ajunge și la război (cel de 100 de ani), dar asta nu însemna că în termeni reali unul era supus celui alt. Și domnii români au prestat jurământ de vasalitate regilor maghiari sau poloni ori au plătit tribut Porții Otomane. Ceea ce conta, dincolo de asemenea formule de omagiu, era capacitatea de a rezista ingerințelor externe.

Domniile românești ale veacului XIV sunt prea puțin cunoscute. Amploarea politicii externe desfășurate de domnii români nu este deplin relevantă, nici măcar în cazul lui Mircea cel Bătrân, cel care ajunsese să facă și să desfășoare sultani, după capturarea lui Baiazid Ildirim la Ankara, în 1402. Sunt puțin cunoscute publicului larg și înrudirile încheiate, cu rol covârșitor în politica externă. A doua soție a lui Nicolae Alexandru, Clara, aparținea unei familii de nobili ardeleni care adoptaseră religia catolică. Una dintre fiicele sale din prima căsătorie va fi soția unui duce de Oppeln, din Silezia, un

membru al familiei regale poloneze a Piaștilor, ajuns palatin la Oradea. Iar Vladislav I (Vlaicu) era cumnat și văr cu țarul bulgar Ivan Strațimir. Așa cum nota Iorga, „cele două Românii ajunse libere și românitătea cavalească din Transilvania, din Banat, din Maramureș se află așadar împreună, cuprinse într-un singur sistem, cu instituții de feudalitate occidentală sub drapelul de cruciadă al hegemoniei franceze din secolul XIV”. De altfel, și participă la efortul de cruciadă (Nicopole, 1396), în paralel cu rezistența față de eforturile de convertire ale catolicismului. Mănăstirea Vodița, ridicată în ținutul Severinului, este o astfel de demonstrație de rezistență a ortodoxiei.

Apartenența la spațiul occidental ne-o relevă și frescele murale păstrate. Domnii români sunt reprezentați în pantaloni scurți și largi din piele, la modă în Normandia secolului XII, ori în ciorapi-pantaloni din bumbac sau postav fin, ce țin de moda secolului XIV.

Puțin cunoscută rămâne publicului românesc și pictura gotică (stilul liniar narativ) a ctitoriilor transilvănene, ca și faptul că doi meșteri clujeni, Martin și Gheorghe, realizau statui comandate tocmai de la Praga. Spațiul românesc, deși aflat la frontieră, aparținea pe deplin Europei.

În astfel de forme politice, similare celor în care au trăit germanii și italienii până în veacul XIX, avea să își ducă viața poporul român până la Unirea Principatelor din 1859.

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The Centuries of synthesis

The Romanians' history from the 11th to the 14th centuries is still waiting for a talented historian to draw it out of the scholars' books and tell it in the language of the many. The highschool graduate holds in memory some history shards: the names of some Transylvanian voivodes (ruling princes) before the Hungarian conquest, the names of some writings and authors who mentioned the Romanians, and the political structures on the two mountainsides of the Carpathians. What is missing is precisely the life and, especially, the original synthesis that took place during these centuries – the multi-cultural character of the Romanian realm's history.

Maybe the Romanian historiography, submitted for some centuries to methodical attacks aimed at demonstrating that the Romanians came here after the Hungarians, from south of the Danube, or that they descended from north of the Danube to the south, after the formation of the Bulgarian and Serbian nations, overlooked the fact that we continue to be the only people of Europe whose habitation right on the land where it lives today is disputed. No one questions this right in the case of the French, Germans, Spaniards, Swiss, Dutch, and so on. Of course, the memory of disputes still persists there too, or they burst out over a limited territory, but a contestation of such proportion is not to be found anywhere else in the European historiography. Therefore, instead of treating, naturally, the history of these places and their inhabitants, their synthesis, their life together with other peoples that settled here at some moment, and then either vanished or lasted until now – and this is exactly what gives our history its original character – the Romanian historians who have studied this epoch are fighting to reply to some absurd claims.

It is precisely this synthesis that gives the history of the lands between the Carpathians, the Danube and the Black Sea its original character. There are not many places in Europe where one can admire a Romanic or Gothic church next to a Protestant one and another, Orthodox of Greek plan. The Spaniard Puig i Cadafalch was the first to notice the originality of the art of Stephen the Great's time, the European value of the synthesis between the late Gothic and the Byzantine arts. As Nicolae Iorga mentioned, our place in the history of the world is still to be established. And we should be much more aware of the wealth we inherited from our ancestors and with which we don't know what to do. It took the Saxons, one of the populations who had been living together with us for almost eight centuries, only 30 years to leave us. In many places their architectural assets are threatened by ruin and we risk losing them without chance of recovery.

The area inhabited by Romanians was always situated at the crossing of the great migration roads, which favoured its place in mankind's cultural patrimony. The Neolithic cultures (especially the Cucuteni culture) that evolved here are famous in the ancient history. The most significant part of the present Romanian territory was included within the borders of the Roman Empire, and the rest was integrated in *pax romana* (The Roman Peace). In the very heart of Rome, Trajan's Column tells us the story of the emperor's wars with the Dacian King Decebal.

After a long Romanization process the Romanians are today a Latin people, speaking a language whose kinship with the Italian, the French or the Spanish is obvious. This is a people of Latin origin, with a Christian life already certified in the first centuries of the first millennium of our era. The legend of Sava the Goth, the one drowned in 372, on the fifth day after Easter, in the river Buzău by the Goth king Athanaric, the objects with Christian distinguishing marks, the ruins of the basilicas, and the discoveries at Murfatlar prove it. Even more, it is here in this area that Ulfilas translated the Bible for the Goths.

Generally speaking, this first millennium of our history lacks of written sources. But we should not forget that, excepting the classical Byzantium, the phenomenon was typical for the entire European East. Not even the Czechs, or the Poles possess written chronicles before the 13th century, and the first ones were actually transcriptions of some *gesta*, oral sagas where you cannot tell fantasy apart from reality.

Nevertheless there is in the sources a first mention of the proto-Romanian language – the “torna, torna, fratre” call, which a soldier of the Imperial Byzantine army (marching against the Avars and the Slavs in 587) cried out intending to call the attention of a comrade, but causing instead panic among the other soldiers.

The history of the area between the Carpathians, the Danube, and the Black Sea was not fundamentally different from that of the French-Spanish territory. Several successive waves of migrants passed over the land of a lasting population. The Europe of that time could be compared with an immense hall, whose “walls” were the waters – the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean – and with a “gate” here, in the East. The newcomers penetrated through the gate and marched towards the back seats, which they occupied, the following newcomers completing the rows closer to the “gate”. Only when the last migrants came in the “gate” was closed and people settled also in the regions next to it. In the West came in turns the Alans, the Ostrogoths, the Vandals, the Visigoths, and the Lombards in Italy, the Burgundians and the Franks in Gaul, the latter already stopping the following wave – the Huns. In the East, the whirlpool continued as new populations rushed in. Over the Slavs, who settled in, but had no sufficiently strong military structures to resist them, came the Hungarians, the Pechenegs, the Cumans, the Tatars, and – the latest – the Turks.

Initially only the Romanians embraced Christianity of an Eastern structure and with many pagan influences absorbed in the new belief. Then the Slavs were Christianised by Cyril and Methodius. Thanks to their activity and except for the Greek world, the Slavonic became the liturgy language in the Eastern Church, as Latin was in the Western Catholic rite. The Hungarians, the last to be Christianized, adopted Western Catholicism. After the great schism of 1054, the lands between the Carpathians, the Danube, and the Black Sea became an area of confrontation between Orthodox and Catholics. The Catholic missionaries brought here the monastic orders (the Benedictines, the Cistercians at Igrîș and Cârța), and even the cavalry order of the Teutons (after the failure of their mission, their role would be taken over by the Cistercians) and of the Knights of St. John. The papacy

founded bishoprics “on the territory of the Cumans” (on Milcov River) and complained about the heretics who did not want to listen to anyone but their Orthodox priests. The Catholic proselytism had no chance south of the Carpathians, where the Saxon colonization at Cămpulung remained an isolated episode. The vicinity of the Byzantine realm south of the Danube would have played its role. On the other hand, Moldavia, submitted to a second – Polish – influence, proved to be much more responsive, and one of the rulers from the 14th century, Lațcu, became a Catholic. And the first princely necropolis of Moldavia, the church at Rădăuți, was an example of how could Gothic architecture be adapted to Orthodox liturgical needs.

After conquering Transylvania, “*silva Blaccorum et Bissenorum*” (“the forest inhabited by Vlachs and Pechenegs”, as named by a source), in order to strengthen their domination, the Hungarian Kings brought here, besides the Teutons and the Knights of St. John, a Germanic population from the area of nowadays Luxembourg, the Saxons, and settled them around Sibiu, in Țara Bârsei and in Bistrița, at the borders with Walachia and Moldavia. The Saxons would receive an autonomous organization, just like the Szeklers, a population of controversial origin located in the area at the bend of the Carpathians. Unlike the area outside the Carpathians, Transylvanian started to change through an intense urban development.

Mentioned under different names in sources – olaci, olah, balacci, blacki, walathi (at the end of the 14th century the Frenchman Philippe de Mezières talked about a “double Abblaquie” – Moldavia and Walachia) – the Romanians continued their life in ancestral forms, electing their leaders (“the old and good people”, the knez and voivodes) and enforcing *jus valachicum* (“The Walach Law”), which was still functioning in some areas of Transylvania until late in the 18th century. As a matter of fact, the removal of the Romanian representatives from the nobility congregations happened as late as the 15th century. The Romanian noblemen were mentioned both in the army corps that accompanied the Hungarian Kings in their campaigns, and as heads of some local uprisings. Their religious foundations in Densuș or Strei testify to this.

As for the social stratification of the Romanian population south and east of the Carpathians there are convincing archaeological testimonies. The ornaments, the reliquaries, and the luxury ceramics that got to us prove the existence of a well-do-to category that wanted to show off its privileged status in relation with the other inhabitants. They also reflected Romania's position at the crossing of two big commercial roads – one, that joined through Transylvania, the mountain passes of Turnu Roșu and Brașov, and the Danube harbours the Flemish and German areas with Byzantium, and a second – Galician – road that came down along the Siret and Prut rivers to the Danube and the Black Sea.

In the first century of their existence the two other Romanian Principalities, Walachia and Moldavia, were founded because of and characterised by their resistance to the Magyar expansion. Under

the umbrella of a far-off Tartar domination, Basarab to the south of the Carpathians and Bogdan to the east founded the two ruling dynasties, gaining their right to existence on the battlefield.

Contemporary notions like independence have been many times erroneously introduced in the mediaeval world history. The political rules were different then. People had the notion of the sovereign family, in which every one occupied a higher or lower position. The King of England could perform a vassalage oath to the king of France, for a possession outside his kingdom; they could even wage a war one against the other (like the 100-year one), but this did not mean that one of them was really subdued by the other. The Romanian rulers performed a vassalage oath to the Hungarian or Polish kings, or paid a tribute to the Ottoman Porte, but what mattered, beyond such forms of homage, was their capacity to resist external encroachments.

The Romanian rulers of the 14th centuries are poorly known. The scope of their foreign policy is not fully highlighted, not even in the case of Mircea the Old, who appointed and removed Sultans after Bayezid Yıldırım was captured in Ankara in 1402. The kinship relations, which played an overwhelming role in the foreign policy, are also very little known. Nicolae Alexandru's second wife Clara belonged to a Transylvanian noble family that embraced the Catholic religion. One of his daughters from his first marriage would become the wife of a duke of Oppeln, in Silesia, a member of the Polish royal family of the Piasts, later appointed Palatine of Oradea. And Vladislav I (Vlaicu) was the brother-in-law and cousin of the Bulgarian Tsar Ivan Stracimir. As Nicolae Iorga wrote, „the two free Romanias and the Romanian gentry from Transylvania, Banat, Maramureş, were all included in a single system of Western feudal institutions, under the crusade flag of the French hegemony of the 14th century”. As a matter of fact, they participated in the crusade endeavour (Nicopolis, 1396), resisting at the same time the Catholicism's efforts to convert them. The Vodița Monastery, built in the Severin region, is a proof of Orthodoxy's resistance.

The affiliation to the Western culture is emphasized by the conserved wall frescoes. Romanian rulers were represented in short, large leather trousers, trendy in Normandy during the 12th century, or in tights made of cotton or fine cloth that followed the fashion of the 14th century.

Romanian public opinion still knows very little about the Gothic paintings (the narrative linear style) of the Transylvanian churches or about Martin and George, two Cluj-based craftsmen who carved statues commissioned from as far as Prague. In spite of being at its border, the Romanian realm fully belonged to Europe.

These are the political forms – highly similar to those in which Germans and Italians lived until the 19th century – in which the Romanians conducted their lives until the Unification of the Romanian Principalities in 1859.



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