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Romans, Dacians, Thracians, Slavs, or Pelasgians? A history of the debate on the ethnogenesis of the Romanian people since 17th century until the computer age^I

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Abstract: Romania: land of conquest by Romans, Huns, Turks, last outpost of Christendom in Eastern Europe, part of the Eastern front during the 20th century wars, a Soviet satellite and, finally, member of the European Union and of NATO. Romania has always been subject to different ideas of identity meant to define its essence: latinity or dacianism? Europe or autochthonism? The essay aims at analysing the debate regarding the ethnogenesis of the Romanian people since its origin in the 17th century, through the debates of the 19th century and the interwar period and, finally, analysing the debate between latinity and dacianism during the Ceaușescu regime in the light of the cultural politics of the regime and of the debate between different factions of intellectuals.

Keywords: Romanian Historiography, Dacians, Latins, representation of romanian past

Resumo: Romenia: terra de conquista pelos romanos, hunos, turcos, último posto avançado da Cristandade na Europa Oriental, parte da frente oriental durante as guerras do século 20, um satélite soviético e, por fim, membro da União Europeia e da OTAN. A Romenia tem sempre sido sujeita a diferentes idéias de identidade pretende definir a sua própria: latinidade ou *dacianismo*? Europa ou autoctonismo? O artigo pretende analisar o debate sobre a etnogênese do povo romeno desde as origens do século XVII, através dos debates do século XIX e do período entre guerras e, finalmente, analisar o debate entre latinidade e dacianismo durante o regime Ceaușescu à luz de sua política cultural e do debate entre diferentes grupos de intelectuais.

Palavras-chave: Historiografia, romena, Dácios, Latinos, representação do passado romeno.

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The contemporary web-surfer often faces ideas which are claimed to be able to revolutionize the course of history and to change positively the fate of mankind. If one millennia-long revolution, possibly not finished yet, has been necessary to make the transition from magic to technique, one should keep in mind that what appears to be new, emancipatory, and revolutionary may easily be worshipped and accepted uncritically, becoming an opium of the people and a necessary instrument to foster the constituted order. If we want to choose one specific subject, we can find it in 20th century history, in the debate on the origins of the Romanian people in contemporary Romania – we will be astonished by one doctor in medicine and two four-stars generals of the Romanian Army, listening to “uncanny truths” on the origins of the Romanian people: according to the documentary *Dacians – Uncanny Truths* (2012), Romanians are an autochthonous people, they are certainly not descendants of the Roman conquerors that repeatedly colonized and mixed with the autochthonous Dacian people. Unfortunately, this idea is nothing neither new nor innovative: it is called “dacianism”, and it is aimed at countering Latinism – the idea according to which Romanians are descendants of the ancient Roman colonizers; for over three centuries this idea has been one of the main layers of the political and intellectual speech among Romanian-speakers.^{III}

This essay aims at presenting the debate on the ethnogenesis of the Romanian people from its origin and until the late 20th century, focusing on the interwar debate and on the negation of any Latin character during the Ceaușescu regime, and with some final remarks on the contemporary scene. Discourses on national origins were part of most European nation-building projects during the 19th and 20th century, and Romania is not special in this. Rather, Romania is the perfect example of how nationalist historiography works in general, and in particular of how of its dynamics work in the majority of the countries of Eastern Europe, where the discourse on the origins is much more popular and important, for nationalist narratives. But in Romania, competing discourses on the ethnogenesis lead by several actors with different political agendas were predominant and fundamental in contemporary politics as no elsewhere in Europe. This is why Romans, Dacians, Thracians, Slavs and Pelasgian continued to clash with each other millennia after they ceased to exist up until the computer era.

At the beginning of Early Modern era, before the idea of nation was imagined by literature^{IV} or fabricated by state propaganda^V, Latinism was the claim of a dynastic specificity. In the 17th century, Romanians were one population with common language, mainly devoted to agriculture and livestock herding. Separated by borders of empires and reigns, they were subjects to the authority of several rulers: the Ottoman Empire kept its sway over Walachia and Moldavia, where multi-language and multinational nobles - and wealthy merchants - composed local elites (a multiculturalism not present nowadays in Romania). The Ottoman Empire imposed the law of Constantinople on the countryside and its inhabitants. The other main territory inhabited by Romanian-speaking peasants was Transylvania, where Magyars and Saxons were feudatories of the Austrian monarchy.

Two centuries later, the intellectual debate, in service of the national pedagogy of the Romanian state under construction, founded its own historiography on three works written in the 16th and 17th centuries: the authors were Grigore Ureche, Miron Costin and Dimitrie Cantemir, afterwards considered the most distinguished members of the “movement” of the Moldavian Chroniclers. They exhorted the attention of international audience in the attempt to emancipate the Romanians from the supranational empires. Their narratives suggest that

nothing remained of the ancient Dacians, and that Romanians were simply descendants of the Romans.

What is national history else than an homogeneous corpus of myths and legends, having nation as subject and the fabrication of a ideology-lead moralistic narrative as aim?^{VI} National history expresses the urge to establish the Truth about the national past and the genealogy of the nation, in order to create a common discourse that enables political action. In front of the bonfire at night, isn't it better to tell about sharp and clear-cut characters, "good" and "bad" or "winners" and "losers", in order to be better understood by the simple folk? The storytellers know this.

In the following years, high-culture followed the theories of the Chroniclers and avoided as much as possible the autochthonous element, considered as erased from history (though, not so easily erasable from the plot of the myth of origins). In Transylvania, between the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th, the writers of the Transylvanian School followed that path: Petru Maior and August Treboniu Laurian considered the history of the Romanians as a pure and simple continuation of the history of the Romans. This political argument was intended to re-focus the international attention on the destiny of the Romanians.

A few decades later, an explosion of national ideology took place in Europe. In Eastern Europe, Orthodox religion mattered as much as the ethnic element, but Romanians in the separate empires had one thing in common: a national discourse which considered them as a Latin exception among the Slavs. Rome was a much more glorious myth than Byzantium, guaranteeing one major quality: a *national specific*. The birth of nationalism, together with the birth of the modern academic disciplines, caused the radicalization of the elite-lead political discourse, which at the time was no longer fluctuating between history and literature as in previous times. It called for action, obliterating class divides and previous dissensions about origins, and created a dichotomy of "patriots" versus "enemies".

During the 19th century, the Latinist theory was abandoned and substituted by the Daco-Roman one. The Romanians became the descendants of the union between Romans and Dacians, and the qualities of these latter were emphasized: abnegation, courage, sense of honour and of sacrifice – all characteristics verifiable in the image of Decebalus. Furthermore, scholars attributed to the Dacians the henotheistic cult of Zalmoxis, firstly reported by Herodotus.^{VII} Nineteen century scholars fabricated, from the few Herodotus fragments, a wide and exegetic mythology.

In the second half of the nineteen century, Mihai Eminescu, politician and national poet, bemoaning the poverty and the ignorance of the people, which seemed to have no greatness in its faith, wrote: «if a real civilization has to exist on this land, it would be one which rises from the elements of the ancient civilization» - meaning "the Dacian civilization; «from its roots, and from its depths, the real civilization of a barbarian people emerges; and not from the imitation of foreign habits, foreign languages, foreign institutions».^{VIII} But the Dacians could not inspire the same appeal that the Roman conquerors did. In *The Life of Trajan Augustus founder of the Romanian people*, Dimitrie Bolintineanu describes the victory of Rome over the Dacian rebels. He considered the Dacian element to be not influent, but the origin of the Dacian was anyway a geopolitical argument: a theory stated that 'the Getae are Germans', and 'the modern German authors, profiting of this aberration, in favour of their idea to Germanize the gorges of the Danube, write about this theory in all the languages of the world'.^{IX}

Several years later, in 1913, Xenopol attacked the monumental work of Nicolae Densusianu, *Dacia Preistorică*, which narrated the Pelasgian origin of the Romanians and the centrality of these latter in the creation of contemporary European civilization; the writings of Densusianu contained nationalist expressions quite precocious for that time, but also a notable fantasy able to tickle the curiosity and to stimulate the imagination of the audience in pre-war Bucharest – and the irony of the scholars.

The reader may think that, in reconstructing the historiography on the discourse on the origins of the Romanian people, I mock historians of the 19th and 20th century for their use of metaphysical, irrational, unreferenced, and myth-constructive approaches; but this is far from my interest. Rather, I need to point out that it is on those kinds of approaches that contemporary nationalist historians base their works on nowadays, and sometimes even copying these ideas. For this main reason, it is important to rediscover the “genealogy” of these ideas: are the Romanians Dacians, Romans, Daco-Romans, or Pelasgians?

The construction of a nation is a polyphonic and multi-instrumental cultural-political project. Among the instruments used for cultural and political aims, the archaeological museums should also be mentioned. The first Romanian archaeological museum was opened in 1934, when a rich amateur donated to the state his vast collection. The nature of the museum starts to grow and to expand from the idea of mere collection to the idea of cataloguing, that mean the spatial and diachronical cataloguing of the national state, which became the scenography for national history. Few years later, the second director of the museum, Grigore Tocilescu, proposed to build three new buildings to host the museum: ‘the aim is to create one vast museum for antiquities in general, a special one for the monument of Adamclisi, and one for the Dacian civilization’ (Păunescu). The idea was to show the ideal link between the past civilization and the absolute affirmation of the Latins over the Dacians, these latter symbolically represented by the monument that commemorated the victory of Trajan over the Dacians in the battle of Adamclisi (102 A.C.), a place that Tocilescu considered to be ‘the birth certificate of the Romanian people’.^X

While scholars from many subjects discussed the national character of the Romanians^{XI}, there was social and political turmoil both at home (the Peasants revolt in 1907) and at the international level: after the victory in the first World War, the Treaty of Trianon declared Transylvania to be Romanian territory, enlarging considerably the area of the state and multiplying its population. The impact of the inclusion of Transylvania, officially dated 1920 but already a reality after the end of the conflict, was a determinant for the development of the national discourse: the Romanians lived finally united under their own national-state flag. But several problems had to be solved in order for a golden age to flourish. Various political and artistic movements expressed their ideas concerning the problems facing Romania, and their opinions regarding which direction the country should move. During the turbulent 1920s, even in the cosmopolitan and multilingual milieu of Bucharest, many people despised multiculturalism and cultural diversity and celebrated instead the peasants as “real Romanians” and the Orthodox religion as a reason for national pride.

A good example of the *Zeitgeist* is given by archaeologist Vasile Pârvan who, in 1919, during the opening lecture of the course on ancient history and art history at the University of Cluj-Napoca, defined the “supreme aim” of the Romanian academic community to be ‘the spiritualization of life into the great socio-political and cultural creator organism that is the nation’.^{XII} He defined the Roman idea as ‘the mother-idea of the whole Romanian culture’; it

‘switches on without delay [...] the primitive soul of the daughter-nation with desires, impulses, violent tendencies, enchanting thoughts’.^{XIII}

Distinguishing the Roman and national idea, he invited the audience to take part in a ‘purification’ from ‘mundane ideas’, since Romanian culture has been subordinated to other cultures, and that was made possible since ‘we [the Romanians] had abandoned our instinctive love for Rome’, letting foreign cultures and ideas ‘different from the Roman one’ penetrate the nation.^{XIV} After the unification of all the territories inhabited by Romanians, Pârvan affirmed the concrete previous existence of a Dacian substrate: ‘they were not a barbarian people [...]. They were determinate, resolute, enlightened’.^{XV}

Historian and politician Nicolae Iorga dedicated one short essay to the subject of Romanians’ Latinity.^{XVI} According to his well-known thesis, the Roman colonization permitted the ‘de-nationalization of the Dacians, of the Gaete, of the Thracians, and of the Illyrians’, since it penetrated deeply in the souls of these peoples who during the following centuries followed ‘the ideal footsteps of Italy and France’.^{XVII} Iorga presented to the international audience the history of the Romanian people as ‘a regrettable sequence of misfortunes’. Saviours of the Byzantine civilization during the Ottoman invasion^{XVIII}, and also of the Greek traditions^{XIX}, according to Iorga, the Romanians have never been listened to by the West – at least not until the Treaty of Trianon. At the end of the First World War, the birth of the unified nation-state and the challenge of a global world were elements which contributed to give importance to the theme of placing Romania and the Romanians among the established European nations.

In the mid-twenties, literary critic Eugen Lovinescu claimed that Romanian people, originating by a mixture of blood of different races, had a Latin mind-set influenced by foreign ideas and by ethnic particularism, that allowed the existence of the specific Romanian style. He considered the insistence of his contemporary colleagues on the ethnic element as an argument against the synergic exchange, that he defined as “synchronism”, with Europe. Was not Romanian culture created by a crossroads of cultures and of several succeeding civilizations? For this reason, he considered as transient and dangerous, for the national essence, the cultural forms coming from the East. Lovinescu defined them as ‘ancestral forces of obscurantism and inertia’, referring to Orthodoxy, while at the same time considering in a positive manner each and every element of Western influence.^{XX} In the cosmopolitan milieu of interwar Bucharest, the ideas that appeared most convincing to Lovinescu and several other intellectuals were those from the West, and thus for them the Latin element was still necessary to in order to equate Romania with Western European nations.

Among the Romanian intellectuals, there were also those who thought that the nature of the national soul was composed by several layers of different origin and valence. In 1921, metaphysic poet Lucian Blaga wrote:

We speak of the spirit of our culture; we want to be only this: Latin – calm, rational, balanced, lovers of form, classics – but wanting or not wanting we are much more; (...) it can be said that in the Romanian spirit Latinity dominates quietly and through cultural excellence. We have, however, a rich Slavic-Thracian nature, exuberant and vital, which, regardless how much we might resist it is sometimes freed from the corolla of the unknown, rising powerfully in our consciousness. Latin symmetry and harmony is frequently riveted by a storm that strikes mildly in depths however metaphysical in our Romanian soul. It is arevolt of our Latin essence.^{XXI}

To those who accused him of being a romantic, Blaga answered: ‘I believe that truth should be expressive and that consequently myth is more real than reality’.^{XXII} Even if Blaga

was invoking the rule of national will over the simple “biological determinism” that counted Romania among the second-rate nations, his message would soon be distorted and used by mystical-reactionary intellectuals and politicians, those whom Lovinescu considered to be so dangerous for Romania.

The birth of the extremist and anti-Semite nationalism of the Iron Guard legionaries at the end of the First World War would prove Lovinescu right. But, leaving aside the extreme fringe on the political Right, which would exercise power only in 1940-44 in the national-legionary state and later during the Antonescu dictatorship, the Liberal Party, the conservative Right and, after 1938, the royal dictatorship, continued to promote the idea of Latinity among Romanians. In official and diplomatic speeches, albeit in very vague terms, the politicians pursued this theme but hardly gave it any deeper meaning. The idea of Latinity was also firmly established among the Romanian scholarly community.

The subsequent rise to power of the Communists in 1948 disrupted, revolutionized, and harnessed the Romanian cultural discourse for a considerable length of time. The new regime removed persons, books, and discourses; destroying them physically or changed their meanings, sometimes falsifying them completely. During the Stalinist era (1948-58), culture was simply a power-praising discourse. Since in the interwar period the Romanian Communist Party has been opposed by all other parties, and was even latter declared it illegal in 1934, Romanians were apprehensive and scared by the Communist rule imposed by the Soviets. It was thus necessary for the Party to create instruments aimed at obtaining a sizeable backing and support among the general population.

One of those instruments consisted in directing historical, archaeological and linguistic research in such a way as to emphasize the Slavic component of Romanian history.^{XXIII} For this purpose, historiography – the mother discipline of each and every discourse on identity, and basic metanarrative for each and every cultural discourse – had to follow the rules dictated by the unique manual for Romanian history written by Party activist Mihai Roller. An original Russophone, Roller was given the task to rewrite national history according to the Djanov tenets, aimed at creating a cultural front against Western decadent culture. According to this unique manual, Slavs united with the Romanized Dacians, thus forming the Romanian people and its language. The role of the Slavic component was enhanced, while the importance of Christendom was negated. As part of blatant falsifications, several archaeological ruins were attributed to the Slavs, while the Transylvanian School was renamed the “Latinist School”, was accused of chauvinism and of downplaying the Slavic and Russian influence in the history of the Romanian people.^{XXIV}

This official history was not very persuasive. Instead, purges eliminated most of the interwar cultural elites, but the new regime made exceptions for those who embodied a specific and irreplaceable know-how. This was the case for well-established scholars like Constantin Daicoviciu, David Prodan and Andrei Oțetea. University professor in archaeology since the 1930s, and later dean of the Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca and dealing with immense difficulties for scholarly research during the war and the years of popular democracy, Daicoviciu managed to survive and even be appreciated by the general secretary of the Romanian Communist Party, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. For this reason Daicoviciu is remembered both as an opportunist and as the “saviour” of Cluj University.^{XXV} With professional seriousness, he published for the Romanian Academy the results of his research conducted in the interwar period on several Dacian ruins.^{XXVI} He also wrote several articles on literature, language, expansion and economic and social life of the Dacians for the *Steaua*

review.^{xxvii} Those activities were certainly part of the aims of the cultural politics of the regime, and even more part of the mobilisation of national sentiments desired by the political faction in power. This faction was constituted by ethnic Romanians, not educated in Moscow, former anti-fascist (Communist) members of the resistance, who were well familiar with the interwar discourse on nation, and the frightening effect that Communism had on the general population. Prevented from claiming, as in the interwar period, any reference to the “Romanity” of the Romanians, to the Dacians and to the Romans as ancestors of the Romanians united ‘by Romanity and Christendom [...] under the sign of Christ’^{xxviii}, the Dacians were a perfect and “autochthonous” substitute for claiming an anti-Soviet identity, that had nothing Western and nothing Slavic either when it came to origins.

When the weight of Soviet Stalinism withdrawn after Stalin’s death, Daicoviciu and his colleagues did not hesitate to show the errors and the plagiarisms of Roller. Left with no protection from his Soviet supporters, he lost his employment and died shortly afterwards, while his historiography was abandoned and forgotten. In 1959 archaeologist I. Nistor, referring to the work of his colleague, philo-Slavist Maria Comşa, demanded moderation when sustaining the Slavist thesis because of the lack of objective evidences. However, he was less circumspect when expressing a very strong judgement: ‘it seems that those who study in Soviet Union are not well prepared, and Soviet science is not the most advanced science’.^{xxix} Times were changing, and the intellectuals understood it.

Scholarly disciplines, considered as completely secondary in the plans of the regime, were conducted by bureaucrats and political activists who did not promote the advancement of scholarly research. Instead they, as in the case of Roller, aimed at propagating the official truths already accepted by the Party. Since the Soviets could no longer protect these disseminators of official Stalinist truth, these little dictators of scholarly disciplines found their academic careers ruined.

Soviet Stalinism left the floor to a Romanian-conducted Stalinism: achieving popular consent became the aim of the regime. The intellectuals purged in the 1940s were allowed to return to their former employment, though with the precondition of not criticizing the regime. The interwar period discussion on national origins re-entered public life, and with it several theories on the ethnogenesis of the Romanians. In 1957, Pârvan’s monography on the Dacians was republished – it described the Dacians as ‘primarily Western, but with several Eastern traits’.^{xxx}

This was probably the best identifying metaphor for a regime that was shortly going to revert all its energies towards internal consensus, building an idea of nation that was essentially recycled from the interwar period, while the same time trying to demonstrate a continued loyalty towards the Soviets. Nevertheless, the debate on Romanian origins was not much conceptually developed during this period, or given any major relevance in the political-cultural debate. In the *History of Romania*, Daicoviciu, Emil Petrovici and Gheorghe Stefan adhered to the Daco-Roman thesis, but mentioned that both the Romanian language and the Romanian people were born in the lands in the north of the river Danube, that is in the Free Dacia, not the Roman one.^{xxxi}

A new impulse to the debate on origins was given after the death of Gheorghiu-Dej and by the rise to power of Nicolae Ceauşescu. Cultural discourse started to comprehend the Party’s pre-ordered historiographical thesis dictated mainly by the megalomania of Ceauşescu, which wanted to revolutionize Romania and the world. In contrast to his predecessor, who was a fine strategist, Ceauşescu was instead a good tactician: arriving in a position of power he found a

ready-to-use pre-established general strategy, aimed at creating popular consensus. While unable to fully understand it, he took all the advantages that this strategy guaranteed.

Historiography reminds us that the 1960s were considered to be years of freedom in which academic ideas could be expressed without fear of censorship or repression. This goes for discussions on Romanians' ethnogenesis as well: in the beginning of the Ceaușescu era this debate was rich and interesting. In 1967, the copy of the Trajan Column, crafted by Vatican and Romanian sculptors, finally reached Bucharest. That was a splendid occasion to reaffirm with style the belonging of the Romanians to the neo-Latin family and therefore to Western Europe. A very important aim was reached, since everyone in Romania knew the importance of the Trajan Column for the history of the Romanian people. The bas-relief was exhibited at the Museum for the History of the Party.^{XXXII} The same year, while the regime remembered the noble origins of the Romanians, the regime recruited a well-known film director to shoot a colossal film epic, *The Dacians*, soon a feature in Romanian cinemas.

Its director, Sergiu Nicolaescu, recruited Constantin Daicoviciu and his son Hadrian as historical consultants. It was devised to suit all kinds of audiences, and watching it became mandatory for students' classes of all ages. Even if the Romans imperialists were Westerners, the allusion to the Soviets in the film was clear to each and every one who saw the film at that time in Romania. This allusion is evident, particularly in the first scene where the Romans are depicted when arriving in Dacia and presenting themselves as 'the masters of the world'. The re-evaluation of Romanian autochthonous roots did not have an anti-Western function, but rather an anti-Soviet one: it wanted to show that the Romanians were for the Soviets the same hotbed of stubborn resistance that the Dacians represented for the Romans.

The Nicolaescu film was followed in 1968 by *The Column* by Mircea Drăgan, showing the achievements of the Romans and the Dacians and the consequent combined Daco-Roman ethnogenesis of the Romanian people. By letting several cultural theses be expressed freely, the regime managed to gain popular consensus, becoming for a short while able to turn the cultural discourse produced autonomously by the intellectuals to its own political advantage.

The Dacian revival both continued and went through transformations following the changes in the strategy of the regime. Since the degree of freedom accorded to the intellectuals did not produce any tangible popular support for the Party, the myopic vision of Ceaușescu understood this to mean that the intellectuals produced a myriad of different cultural significances and cultural products that the regime could simply not control – in a sense, this was actually true, which is evidenced by the student protests and the popularity of nationalist subjects in 1968.^{XXXIII}

The regime subsequently directed each and every form of culture, presenting its worships and tributes, and making it indistinguishable from propaganda – when previously culture was a positive contribution to the building of popular consensus, *parallel* to the overt regime propaganda. Since 1971, the nationalist tendency became a characteristic of the regime and very visible in its propaganda, even if it was more a matter of creating pleasant images rather than the result of a well-designed strategy.

The divide between Party activists and scholars became subsequently more evident: activists and nationalists felt more and more stimulated to propose bombastic and megalomaniac ideas concerning the Dacian origins, and were rewarded by the regime with important academic positions. At the same time the Romanian professional historians and archaeologists could only witness the obsession of the regime to have their propagandistic

slogans welded to academic scholarship. This tendency was combined with a reduced funding for cultural projects in general.

Among the usurpers of the scholarly disciplines were nationalist intellectuals, prominent army officers, and Daco-phile businessmen. Among the intellectuals enamoured by the Romanian nation and its history I include not only the Daco-philes, but also those who in more general terms used the discipline of history in order to justify the Romanian people and the decisions taken by its leaders through the ages. Within the Ceaușescu regime, a majority was protochronist – which meant that they supported the claim that each and every great idea and invention produced by mankind originated from Romania, or at least had one Romanian contemporary counterpart

These tendencies were present in the Romanian cultural panorama from at least 1974 onwards, the year when Edgard Papu's article *Romanian Protochronism* was published. Papu claimed that Romanian literature was completely autochthonous and never inspired by any kind of foreign literature.^{xxxiv} The following year, as an introduction to the conclusion to the 11th Congress of the Party, the regime published a short official history of Romania in which the 'negative aspects'^{xxxv} of the Roman conquest of Dacia were emphasized. The regime's support for the tenets of protochronism and its desire to control the historical discourse also led to the expansion of the Centre for Study and Researches of Military History and Theory, founded in 1970, whose mission was to 'involve the whole available population in the effort of [national] defence'.^{xxxvi}

Since Ceaușescu's philosophy prescribed that the history of the Romanian people should also include that of the Party and the army, the regime promoted after the mid-70s not only the publishing of a monumental history of the Romanian people but also an equally megalomaniac work on the nation's military history. The first volume of the official history, regarding ancient times, was actually ready to be printed when the regime issued a counter-order: before being published, all contributions should give more weight to the Dacian influence rather than the Roman one. Since the historians observed a respectful but determined silence against this imposition, the whole project was stopped.

The parallel work on Romanian military history did not meet with similar obstacles. The coordination of these volumes included some of the scholars who had also taken part in the blocked official history, such as Ștefan Pascu and Ștefan Ștefanescu, but also the new minor dictator of Romanian historiography, Mircea Mușat, as well as several army generals, among them Ilie Ceaușescu, brother of the dictator. In the first volume, dated 1984, the formation of the first centralized and independent Dacian state, 2,050 years ago, was narrated. The presentation of this historical interpretation four years earlier at the World Congress of Historical Sciences in Bucharest in 1980 had caused considerable embarrassment among Romanian professional historians and incredulity and sarcasm among their international colleagues.

Dacomania was infused by a clearly visible political message, and developed through a fanaticism that actually distracted cultural politics from the general aim, gaining popular support for the regime. In the 1960s, regime propaganda was more effective in exalting the nation, the Party, and the leader, connecting it to the prevalent discourse on the origins of the Romanian nation. In the 1970s, this discourse became particularly prevalent in all fields of culture as a characteristic of a more and more nuanced nationalism. However, in the 80s, even if the regime proposed more and more extreme ideas aimed to spur the nationalism present in

the public discourse, the general population could not but witness that the extremism of the regime was inversely proportional to the actual quality of life.

Among the nationalists, it is worth mentioning the Italian-Romanian gas tycoon Constantin Drăgan, who, through his publishing house Nagard and his European Centre for Historical Research (respectively in Milan and Turin), and his Drăgan European Foundation, actively promoted Dacomaniac ideas in several publications with eloquent titles such as, i.e., *We, The Thracians And Our Multi-millenary History*. Ceaușescu, very interested in doing business with Drăgan, pandered to the latter's passion for the Thracians, and contributed to the diffusion of the attached ultra-nationalist thesis in Romania itself.

Between the seventies and the eighties, the Dacomaniac phenomenon became more and more pervasive, up to the point when it was given regular columns in popular historical journals. For this reason, several cultural products emphasized the importance of the national leaders of the past – among those, Burebista, who became the protagonist of the homonymous feature film by Gheorghe Vitanidis in 1980. The main cue in this case was to create a historical legacy for Ceaușescu by portraying him as a successor of the work of national unification begun 2050 years earlier by the king of the Dacians.

However, this kind of propaganda was no longer able to engage, excite, and inspire – the revolution of 1989 swept away Ceaușescu, the Communist Party, and several of the propaganda institutes mentioned earlier. Still, the matter of the origins of the Romanian nation remained. The Latin, Dacian, Thracian and Slavic “inspirations” continued to be present in both cultural and political discourse. Today, several internet websites are affiliated with extreme Right and/or fanatic Orthodox parties and movements, and remind the contemporary Romanian-speaking web-surfer about the importance of their “roots”.^{XXXVII} Attributable to parties, movements or foundations inspired by legionary ideology, they re-hash old ideas and sell them as new, innovative, and revolutionary.

Napoleon Săvescu, the main historical advisor for the documentary *Dacians – Uncanny Truths*, is a medical doctor who emigrated in the United States in the seventies, founded the "Dacian Revival International Society" through which he organizes congresses on the topic of antiquity in the Danube-Carpathian area. The aim of Dacian Revival is basically to give an apparent “academic” affiliation to all those non-professional Dacomaniac historians who are unanimously opposed by the Romanian scholarly community – the letters of protests against their participation in history and archaeology conferences are a very good indication of this.^{XXXVIII} In his most central contribution, titled *We are not descendants of Rome*, Săvescu recycles ideas and concepts previously expressed by Densusianu and later re-hashed by Drăgan, adding the protochronist absurdity to the history of mankind. In fact, humanity should, according to this book, give tribute to the Dacians for its origins and cultural development. Săvescu and his army generals, improvised historians, pretend to impose their own thesis with arguments that are clearly fabricated, apply unhistorical categories of analysis (“the Roman genocide in Dacia”), and use biological-deterministic arguments.^{XXXIX}

We have shown that these ideas come from the centuries-old debate on the origin. From being points in literary-political agendas between the 17th and the 19th century, when Latinism was the only theory about the origins of the Romanians, since the mid-19th century, together with the introduction of the Daco-Roman theory, scholars clashing each others with these different theories appealed to their "scientificity", a characteristic that will persist also in the interwar period and in the communist times, and in post-communist pseudo-scientific texts written as those mentioned.

During communist times, the discourse on the origins had no significant change qualitatively, but it acquired normativity: during the Stalinist times, only the Slavist theory was allowed. But more and more importance was given to the discourse on the origins during the Ceaușescu period: first the Daco-Roman theory, with the “return” of the Trajan Column to Romania in 1967, and then the Dacomania since the seventies.

Ceaușescu’s regime cultural products stressed and emphasized the importance of the national origins, in their Dacomaniac version, as no other regime in Romania’s history did before, and with an persistence which was unique, compared to other Eastern European countries during communism, with maybe the exception of Albania. The regime gave to the scholars great means to display this discourse, as part of the nationalistic, anti-Westerner and anti-Soviet agenda. As the example offered by Napoleon Săvescu and his army generals shows, this discourse is still strong in post-communist Romania, even if confined outside of the academia.

Notes

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^{III} Boia 2005, 27-57.

^{IV} Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983, Anderson 1983.

^V Hobsbawm 1990

^{VI} White 1973; Lorenz 2008, 35-55

^{VII} *Historiae*, IV, 94-96.

^{VIII} Verdery 1991, 38-39.

^{IX} Bolinteanu 1869, 12-13.

^X Papuc 2008, 396.

^{XI} Boia 2005, 36-37; Verdery 1995, 126-133.

^{XII} Pârvan 1919.

^{XIII} Pârvan 1919.

^{XIV} Pârvan 1919.

^{XV} Oprisan 2013.

^{XVI} Iorga 1920.

^{XVII} Iorga 1930, 9.

^{XVIII} Iorga 1930, 8.

- ^{XIX} Iorga 1930, 10.
^{XX} Papahagi 1995, 168-172.
^{XXI} Blaga 1921, 181. The English translation is by Doris Plantus-Runey (Bâgiu – Plantus-Runey 2010).
^{XXII} Blaga 1921, 181.
^{XXIII} Madgearu 2006.
^{XXIV} Pleșă 2006, 168-169; Măgureanu 2007, 291-293.
^{XXV} Țene 2009.
^{XXVI} Bordenache 1957, 245, 360.
^{XXVII} Bordenache 1957, 349-350.
^{XXVIII} Daicoviciu 1943, 10.
^{XXIX} Măgureanu 2007, 302.
^{XXX} Pârvan 1957, 7.
^{XXXI} Măgureanu 2007, 303; Matei-Popescu 2007, 265-288.
^{XXXII} Țeposu-Marinescu 1988, 247.
^{XXXIII} Fichter 2011, 567-585.
^{XXXIV} Papu 1974.
^{XXXV} RCP 1975, 27.
^{XXXVI} <http://www.mapn.ro/diepa/ispaim/istoric.html>.
^{XXXVII} Borangic 2008.
^{XXXVIII} See, i.e., the protest against the admission of the Dacomaniac historians at the International Congress of Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo, USA, 2008: http://soltdm.com/tdman/protest_kalamazoo.html. See also the open letter against the presence in Alba Iulia of the XI Congress of Dacology, organized by Dacia Revival in 2010: http://www.historia.ro/exclusiv_web/actualitate/articol/istoricii-alba-iulia-se-revolta-impotriva-dacologilor
^{XXXIX} Pop, 2012.

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