

BOGDAN MURGESCU

The Romanian Countries between the Ottoman Empire and Christian Europe

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The works of Professor Bogdan Murgescu cover more than five centuries of economic, political and cultural history, of a wide geographical area, from the Atlantic to the Eastern borders of the former Ottoman Empire.

The volume of articles “*Țările Române între Imperiul Otoman și Europa Creștină* (The Romanian Countries between the Ottoman Empire and Christian Europe) published by „Polirom” Publishing House in 2012 is, in the author’s own words, “a phase balance”, putting together a collection of research papers performed over more than two decades and a half.

The articles included in this volume are grouped in four theme chapters: I. Politics, diplomacy, attitudes; II. Economy, finance, war; III. Structures and commercial contexts; IV. Synthetic perspectives.

Chronologically, the earliest articles go back to 1985-1986, „O nouă reglementare de pace moldo-otomană în 1481?” (1985) (A new Moldo-Ottoman peace regulation in 1481?) respectively, and „Impactul conjuncturii europene asupra comerțului românesc în a doua jumătate a secolului al XVII-lea” (1986) (The Impact of European background on Romanian trade in the second half of the 17th century), and the most recent since 2008 and 2011: „Lumea românească în economia europeană până la 1859” (2008) (The Romanian world in European economy until 1859), „Anul 1711 și filorusismul românesc în secolul al XVIII-lea” (2011) (The year 1711 and Romanian pro-Russian trend in the 18th century) respectively.

Between the two moments, 1985 and 2011, the themes approached in the articles published in this volume include both the analysis of concrete cases of Romanian medieval life (trade relations, financial aspects, balance of payments, freight) and wide syntheses on the integration of Romanian countries in European economy, i.e. „modernization” of the Romanian Countries in the 16th-17th c.

The complexity and level of detail of the analyses included in the articles and studies published in this volume may raise debates and exegesis, which would make the object of at least one other large work.

The core objective followed persistently and with scientific accuracy in all the author’s articles and studies is objectifying the results of historical research in the line of more or less delicate matters.

History is one of the most uncertain scientific disciplines of them all. The saying: *Truth is not only the fact, but [mostly] its interpretation* is suitable for historical research. But before *interpretation*, he who approaches history first faces the issue of *facts, data* determination, using the available documents, scarce and contradictory more often than not. Therefore, the researcher of *history* is mostly facing not only the overwhelming variety or, on the contrary, sources’ scarcity, but mostly, the arbitrary of their potential interpretations.

Bogdan Murgescu’s whole heuristic approach is oriented to the animation of the „exchange of ideas at the level of specialty” by „[...] confronting points of

view, [...] verification, confirmation or denial by the academic community of the ideas and (hypo)theses formulated.” Hence, in all his scientific works, Bogdan Murgescu excels by the investigation’s scrupulosity of the themes approached, presenting a considerable number of citations and references to all the available sources for a high degree of objectiveness of their interpretation.

The most dangerous form of pre-judgement in history research is *scientific bias*. Apparently deriving from facts (phenomena) and processes considered rather a-priori as *data* than proved as evidence, scientific bias takes shape and imposes by repetition and recognition to most of the intellectuals taking part in the debates on the past.

The *methodical* doubt is for the reviewed author an intense motivation for step-by-step building of scientific argumentation of „(hypo)theses”, based on the inherent Cartesian methodological scepticism and, where the case may be, on the „deconstruction” of those „common places” which won „an undeserved right of fortress in Romanian historiography”.

Prominently among such „common places” ranks the Turkish **monopoly on foreign trade of the Romanian Countries**, which, during the last two centuries has become a sort of haunting prejudice of most of the references to those over four centuries of Ottoman rule (p. 151-172: *The Avatars of a concept: the Ottoman commercial monopoly on the Romanian Countries*, 1990).

Causa tanti mali seems to be the very contents of the Treaty of Adrianopole of 1829, which in „Title V” developed included *Actul osăbit pentru prințipurile Moldova și Țara Românească (The special act for Moldova and Tara Romaneasca principalities)*. The provisions of this part of the treaty on the freedom of the Principalities’ foreign trade remained *effective* in Romanian and European historiography, and are synthetically reiterated by the formula „the abolition of Turkish monopoly on the Romanian countries”.

The issue of „the Ottoman monopoly” is the absence of both the establishment documents, and clear reference to abolition. Practically, in 1829 was abolished a monopoly about which nobody knows and is specified nowhere *tale quale* when it was established. The contents of the Treaty make concrete, positive reference to „the freedom of trade”, with no negative connotations, such as „abolition”, „removal”, eradication” etc. The idea of monopoly resulted from the strict interpretation of the text of the treaty is, in the best case *implicit*, and not at all explicit.

Moreover, subsequent references to the despotic regime of the High Porte imposed to the inhabitants of the Principalities gradually soften, at least in the case of the Forty-Eighters and Unionists, who mention the relationships with the Ottoman Empire as rather a cooperation, based on the „multitude of treatises signed with other sovereign states, during several hundreds of years after the Romanian-Turkish capitulations”.

The author makes a comprehensive overview of the contributions on the prejudice theme of „the Ottoman monopoly on the Romanian Countries”, the list (totally selective) including older authors, such as F. Wilhelm von Bauer (1778), Charles de Peyssonnel (1787), Andreas Wolf (1805), Thomas Thornton (1807), William Eton (1809), William Wilkinson (1820), newer ones, such as Romulus Scriban (1885), A.C. Cuza (1895), A.D. Xenopol (1892), C.I. Baicoianu (1896),

Leonida Colescu (1897), Nicolae Iorga (1897), I.N. Angelescu (1919), N. Razmiritza (1932), Gheorghe Bratianu (1929-1938), or contemporary authors: C.C. Giurescu (1946, 1977), Vlad Georgescu (1970, 1972, 1987), Paul Cernovodeanu (1978), Mihai Maxim (1974, 1979), Alexandru Dutu (1985), Alexandru Zub (1985) etc. The above list, which includes only a few names, highlights the exceptional effort of research made by the author to objectify the facts and their interpretation in any of his writings.

Along with the diversity of the analysed texts, unfolds the refinement of the interpretations of the issue in question: the so-called *Ottoman monopoly* would have actually materialized either in a „pre-emption right” of the Porte for certain products, or in various abuses or „raping” by the Turkish officials of the Porte and the tradesmen, set out by various documents and stories, either in the actions of the suzerain power manifested by worsening taxation rules, or in feeling the price decrease during various market circumstances.

On the background of the analysis of the Principalities’ commercial relations with Central and Western Europe, based on the works used (Nicolae Iorga, for example), was also found the impossibility of an effective establishment of an efficient control on the export of products from the Romanian Countries etc. Without the „**literal existence of a commercial monopoly**”, „we would rather say, that it is a varied range of means and practices through which the Porte has deformed the free play of market forces.” (p. 169).

Consistent to his assumed objectives, Bogdan Murgescu also sets forth the requirements which must lead the future research in approaching the theme of the Ottoman monopoly on the foreign trade of the Romanian Countries: abandoning the state-juridical views: „there was no unitary, constant norm (or even steady) which should settle the right for monopoly”; „overcoming the provincialism manifested both by historiography and by the Balkan national schools”; extension of the presented chronological interval, study of the relation between the politics and the economy in the Romania-Ottoman trade, and of the connection between the practices of the Porte and the overall economic circumstances („the Porte’s measures were typically anti-cyclical and their result inevitably mediocre”, p. 171).

Taken over elsewhere (pp. 173-185: *Comerț și politică în relațiile româno-otomane în secolele XVI-XVIII*, 1995 (Trade and politics in the Romanian-Ottoman relations in the 16th-18th c., 1995)), the analysis of the issue of the Ottoman „monopoly” leads to a conclusion which is more than enough argued in the two articles : „Accepting the fact that trade between the Romanian Countries and the Ottoman Empire was not free from the intervention of the politics, we should point out that **there never was in the 16th-19th c. an Ottoman monopoly on the Romanian Countries trade**”, p. 183 (B.M. underlining).

Under the consistently debunking circumstances due to some historians of the post-December period, Bogdan Murgescu has a careful and nuanced contribution to the crumbling down of other „common places” solidly built during the romantic nationalism period, extended and consolidated during the socialism decades.

In this respect, the reign of Ștefan cel Mare¹ (Stephen the Great), the nature of the reign of Mihai Viteazul² (Michael the Brave), respectively the capacity of the Romanian Countries of *keller* of the Ottoman Porte and that of Romania as „Europe’s garner”.

For the term of Stephen the Great reign, the author brings into discussion at least three sensitive points of the romantic nationalism historiography: the dedicated defensive character of the Moldavian ruler politics (and of all the Romanians, for that matter), his military achievements against the Ottoman giant, respectively the prosperity and peace of the inhabitants of Moldova during the 47 years of reign of the great voivode.

The revaluation of the sources highlights the frequently offensive of the Moldavian ruler’s foreign policy. Thus, for example, having accepted the payment of the tribute for 16 years (1457-1473), in November 1473, for various reasons, Stephen attacks Tara Româneasca, replacing Radu cel Frumos (Radu *the Handsome*), a ruler placed by the Turkish (Mehmed the IInd), with Basarab Laiota. The repeated interventions of the Moldavian ruler in Tara Româneasca, Transilvania and south of Poland, the high frequency of the initiation of military conflicts determines the author of the studies to qualify Stephen the Great’s foreign policy as „pro-active”, mainly offensive respectively, not at all defensive.

Similarly, without diminishing the military merits and achievements of the Moldavian voivode, the tradition of Romanian textbooks is reasonably corrected where, for the last fifteen years, the idea that „ours” defeated most of the times the „Turkish” has been present. Chronologically calculated, „the periods when Stephen paid tribute to the Ottoman Empire (1457-1473, 1480-1481, 1482-1484, 1486-1504) exceeded by far the periods of direct confrontation”, respectively approx. 34-35 years of submission from among the 47 years of reign. Though such a calculation seems mean as compared to the glory of the great leader, a glory consecrated by important personalities of the 15th century, in general the Moldavians’ victories coincided with fragile circumstantial positions of the Ottoman Empire, internally or externally.

Analysing the ‚pro-active’ politics costs promoted by Stephan and his subjects, Bogdan Murgescu submits data on the damage caused on the territory of Moldavia by the Turkish, Tartars, Hungarians and Wallachians, despite of the prevalence of the Moldavians victories. The author qualifies, for example, as significant some „elements, noted by Iorga”, which the great historian „deemed as irrelevant: those called to war «had endured for two months the suffering of fierce heat, scarce and bad food, hasty marches»”.

¹ „Dimensiunea europeană a domniei lui Ștefan cel Mare” (European dimension of Stephen the Great reign’), previously published in *Studii și articole de istorie (History studies and articles)*, vol. 69, 2004, pp. 5-20, respectively „Ștefan cel Mare-2004. Câteva reflecții la 500 de ani de la moartea domnitorului” (Stephen the Great-2004. A few reflections on 500 years since the death of the ruler’), previously published in *Acta Moldaviae Septentrionalis*, vol. 4, 2005, pp. 132-141.

² „Mihai Viteazul – medieval sau modern” (Michael the Brave – medieval and modern’), previously published in *Studii și articole de istorie*, vol. 68, 2003, pp. 14-24.

The author's change of attitude is obvious concerning the age of Stephen the Great from one article to the other, respectively from one year to another:

– in the first article, *The European dimension of Stephen the Great reign*, published in 2004, the conclusions usually follow the classical line of highlighting positive aspects:

1. „Stephen the Great exceeded all the previous Romanian rulers, managing an **unprecedented foreign policy for Moldavia**” (B.M. underlining).

2. „The experience acquired [...] enabled Stephen to handle skilfully and pragmatically international relations and to safeguard Moldavia's essential interests under difficult circumstances”.

3. „Stephen the Great managed to consolidate this position [Moldova's] in relation with Hungary and Poland, leaving on his death a wider and more prosperous Moldova than on his enthronement.”

4. „As compared to most of his contemporaries, as well as predecessors and successors on the throne of Moldova, his political balance is definitely superior.”

5. Invoking the feeling of the subjects as „the essential criterion for the evaluation of a monarch's merits”, the author cites an account of 1502 of doctor Matteo Muriano who „shows that Stephen deserved the rating «the Great»”.

– a few negative aspects arise from the same article:

1. Despite his experience, Stephen failed to eliminate „all in all the choleric component of his nature”.

2. Until the end of his reign, Stephen the Great „could not prevent the deterioration of Moldova's position in relation with the Ottoman Empire”.

– the article published in 2005, *Ștefan cel Mare-2004. Câteva reflecții la 500 de ani de la moartea domnitorului (Stephen the Great-2004. A few thoughts on 500 years since the death of the ruler)*, ends in the same glorifying note, despite the „iconoclast” nature of certain remarks, who „**aims in no way the diminution of the historical merits of Stephen the Great**” (B.M. underlining).

Nevertheless, in the post-scriptum attached to the article in 2011, in the light of some subsequent editorial events³, Bogdan Murgescu „radically rethinks” the term of Stephen the Great reign:

1. The works appeared between 2005-2006 (Stefan Gorovei, Maria Magdalena Szekely) confirm the hypothesis formulated by the author in the other two articles between 2004-2005 concerning the emphasis on the hostility between Moldova and Tara Româneasca during the reign of Stephen the Great.

2. Worsening Moldova's residents' status (or at least of certain areas) during the reign of Stephen is reflected by the diminution of the cash availabilities as compared to the first part of the 15th century (Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu).

³ Stefan Gorovei, Maria Magdalena Szekely, *Princeps omni laudae maior. O istorie a lui Ștefan cel Mare (Princeps omni laudae maior. A history of Stephen the Great)*, Musatinii Publishing House, Suceava, 2005; Stefan Gorovei, Maria Magdalena Szekely, *Maria Asanina Paleologhina. O prințesă bizantină pe tronul Moldovei (A Byzantine princess on the throne of Moldova)*, Musatinii Publishing House, Suceava, 2006; mention is made of the authors of other two works and the years of publication, without specifying the titles of the works on the list of „References”, i.e. Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu, 2003-2005 and Serban Papacostea, 2007 respectively.

3. „A depleted population of Moldavia, half of the country outraged for many years against Stephan, who «dares not step in Tara de Jos» (according to the Polish report cited by Papacostea 2007: 17) and a deepening of the adversity between the Moldavians and the Wallachians are **images which challenge the traditional historiographical image** of Moldova’s ruler” (E.G. underlining).

Therefore, Bogdan Murgescu is consistent with the assumed objective concerning „the confrontation of the views”, in order to get closer to the historical truth.

The greatness of Stephen the Great cannot be diminished, as the author himself pointed out in various occasions. On the other hand, for a country with a low population density, at the crossroads of the interests of the feudal Great Powers in the north and central Europe with the pressure of the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the period of maximum expansion and the eastern Tartar incursions, the attempts of assuring an approximate sovereignty cannot be imagined and achieved without disproportionately high costs.

It is most likely, from the financial point of view, that the „pro-active” politics of the Moldavian ruler should have been more expansive than the unconditional obedience to the Turks.

For the avoidance of transforming certain areas of the country in a battle field, the Moldavian ruler could have accepted, it’s true, the High Porte’s suzerainty and protection even in the terms of regional instability during the reigns of Mehmed II (1451-1481) and Bayazid II (1481-1512), before the instauration of the Ottoman Peace (*Pax Ottomana*) under Suleyman *Muhteşem* (1520-1566). But it is hard to imagine, in the second half of the 15th c., a potential efficiency of the protection of the Ottoman Empire on a vassal Moldova, permanently confronted with the versatile and expansionary Hungarian and Polish kings.

Despite the hard times of Moldova population – of Tara de Jos people in particular – during the reign of Stephen the Great, along the next century the situation seems to have worsened, at least from the point of view of an increased number of obligations to the High Porte. At the end of Stephen’s reign the tribute (*haraciul*) paid annually (4000 golden pieces (*galbeni*)) was more than 16 times smaller than the maximum level attained in 1583 of 66,000 golden pieces.⁴

Therefore, under the given historical conditions, despite or better with the price of the assumed real sacrifice, the reign of Stephen the Great remains the most consistent period of political, economic and military affirmation in the medieval history of the Romanian Principalities.

⁴ Cf. „Țările Române în epoca timpurie” (The Romanian Countries in the Early Age) in the reviewed volume, *Țările Române între Imperiul Otoman și Europa Creștină (The Romanian Countries between the Ottoman Empire and Christian Europe)*, p. 316. The article was initially published under the title „Die rumänischen Länder in der frühen Neuzeit“, in the volume edited by Thede Kahl, Michael Metzeltin and Mihai-Răzvan Ungureanu, *Rumänien, Sonderband der „Österreichischen Osthefte“*, Wien: LIT Verlag, 2006, pp. 231-235. Though both increasing of the obligations to the suzerain power, and of home taxation reflect a sensible growth of the production and marketing capacity of the Romanian Countries during the 16th century, most of the social surplus product could not be designated for domestic use, respectively domestic investment (public or private).

The author achieves remarkable analyses on the motivations of the Romanian rulers in their attempts of contesting by military and/or diplomatic means both Ottoman suzerainty, and Austrians, Hungarians, Poles and later, Russians expansion, making the distinction between *financial*, *religious* and *political* motivations.

While for Stephen the Great the political and religious aspects prevailed, in the case of Michael the Brave the main motivation was financial, considering that during the 16th century the amount of payments to the Ottoman Empire, and in the case of Țara Românească, had increased considerably, the tribute (haraciul) increased from 10000 golden pieces (*galbeni*) annually in early 16th c., to a maximum amount of 104,000 golden pieces between 1574-1583.⁵

Although worsening of the debt to creditors was the obvious cause of triggering the anti-Ottoman fight in 1594, the Wallachian ruler would not include it in the official documents – memoirs, diplomatic letters – invoking in exchange religious and geo-political arguments. Michael the Brave's military actions after 1597 would confirm the decisive role of the seriousness of the financial situation of Țara Românească Principality: peace agreement with the Porte, respectively attacking Transylvania in 1599 for the relaxation of trade relationships. In counterpart, attacking Moldova in 1599 and the less concessive character shown in the treaties with the Habsburgs prove the priority of politics (a rather *military-political* strategy) over economy.

The political philosophy of the ruler matches the trends of the age. Citing various sources, the author emphasizes the maturity of Michael thinking, which exceeds the pragmatic prospect of the money destination *only* for battle fighting, supporting the idea that „money is the soul of all things in a state”. Paraphrasing the Latin collocation „*pecunia nervus belli*”, modern economic vision the voivode adopted would have been *pecunia nervus status*.

As for the personality of Michael the Brave, there are still, after 1990, two contradictory perceptions: from the nationalist-classical-romantic point of view the image of the great voivode initiator of the fight for national unity remains prevailing, an image consecrated by Nicolae Bălcescu; from the debunking perspective of the post-December period, *the Wallachian* seems to have been rather a typical *condottiere*, a kind of late medieval knight of the East.

Analysing the works dedicated to the Wallachian ruler, Bogdan Murgescu points out that „no text coming directly from the ruler expresses the idea that his endeavour aims at the political unity of the Romanians.”

Besides the idea of the absence of certain clear references related to the ethnic motivations, the author brings other eloquent arguments. Here are a few examples:

– instead of appointing in executive positions mainly Romanian natives (Wallachian, Transylvanian and Moldavian natives), Michael promoted „many Levantine and Balkan ethnics”;

– in all his campaigns he relied, from the military point of view, especially on Székely, Albanians, Serbians, whose respect he enjoyed as a brilliant military leader;

⁵ *Idem*, p. 316.

– he was badly received in Moldova, and the proof is that „he appointed in the fortress of Suceava as *Parcalab* (\approx Chief Magistrate) the Székely János Kaptury and not a Romanian”.

On the other hand, we should consider the fact that in 1600 a *national idea* could not possibly be taken into consideration, the arguments formulated for the end of the 16th century aiming, in the best case, *the ethnicity*, and not *the nationality*. The very idea of unity of the three principalities would not have been the result of actions arisen from the Romanian political environment, but the initiative of „the Chancellor of Prince Sigismund Bathory, Stefan Jósika, the artisan of a first union in 1595.”

The author tries to identify elements of modernity in the institutional political efforts of the Wallachian ruler, Michael the Brave actions being consistent with those of the princes of his time. In the long run, tax increase for the purpose of supporting the mercenaries’ armies, as „modern” as it may seem, was only a marginal element in the potential attempt of achieving a coherent system of state institutions. The undeniable merits of brilliant army commander prevailed over the capacity of political man, edifier of state unity.

Despite the elements of modernity identified for the beginning of the 17th century and consecrated as such by the European historiography in the last two centuries, „the nationalistic anachronism,” typical for Romanian post-Balcescu historiography is quantifiable by a period of about two hundred years, while the organization according to national criteria of the modern states became a characteristic aspect only in the 18th century.

Besides, no matter how peripheral seem to be the Romanian Countries as compared to Central and Western Europe, the institutional gaps were not so obvious, at that time, as they would become in the following three centuries. At the end of the 16th century, neither Spain of Philip II (or III), nor Elisabethan England, nor France of Henric IV were much better institutionally structured in the modern sense of the word.

Another “common place” (*‘poncif’*) deconstructed by Bogdan Murgescu in the study *Ponderea cerealelor românești în comerțul european (secolele XVI-XX)* (“Weight of Romanian grain in European trade (16th-17th centuries)”) is the label of Romania as *granary of Europe*.⁶

The term of five centuries analysed in the study is divided into four periods: I. sixteenth century – beginning of the nineteenth century, II. Nineteenth century (up to WWI), III. Interwar period, IV. The post-war period.

For the first period the author concludes that “**the share of Romanian Countries throughout the European trade was very modest until the early nineteenth century**” (B.M. underlining).

The analysis performed for the second period leads to the conclusion that “**the share of Romanian cereals within Western Europe imports, although it has grown from nothing in 1820 to 12-13% in the years 1891-1913, was never**

⁶ The study was originally published in Maria Muresan (eds.), *Experiențe istorice de integrare economică europeană* (Historical Experiences of European economic integration), Editura ASE, București, 2006, p. 31-57.

large enough to justify the claim that Romania would have been ‘granary of Europe’” (B.M. underlining).

For the interwar period, comparing data available shows that **“Romania’s role in the grain supply for the European industrialized countries was less important in the interwar period than in times previous to World War first.”** (B.M. underlining).

For the post-war period, the decrease of the cereals’ share in Romanian exports value structure to less than 10% leads to the conclusion that **“grain exports have ceased to be a driver of the country’s integration into the European economy”** (B.M. underlining).

Bogdan Murgescu ends his study concluding that his own investigations confirm Victor Axenciuc’s statement that **“Contrary to common prejudice, Romania was never ‘the granary of Europe’**” (B.M. underlining).

It should also be noted that, by his research, Victor Axenciuc has decisively contributed to creating the most comprehensive historical-statistical data series on the modern history of Romania, providing a broad and carefully documented reinterpretation basis of the economic history for the period 1859-1947.⁷

Coming back to the relation *ethnic-national*, in another article, *“Phanariots” and “Pământenii”. Religion and Ethnicity in Shaping Identities in the Romanian Principalities and the Ottoman Empire*⁸, the author points out that, until the 16th century, religion, not ethnicity, had a prevailing role in establishing identities/solidarities. On this line of reasoning, the following conclusion arises: “a single political system functioned since the middle of the 16th century until the ’1820s, based on the appointment of the Țara Românească and Moldova rulers from among the Orthodox subjects of the Porte.” Therefore, just like “the national idea at 1600”, and “the Phanariot age” is a “modern historiographical construct”.

Moreover, in the synthesis of the latter part of the volume reviewed, *Romanian Countries in the early modern era*,⁹ Bogdan Murgescu systematically deconstructs “the common place” (“ponciful”) of the *Phanariot Era* established since 1711 in Moldova and in 1716 in Wallachia, after repeated betrayals of the

⁷ In his papers on modern economic history of Romania Bogdan Murgescu resorts to statistical and macroeconomic indicators documented in the works of Professor Victor Axenciuc. For this article, he makes reference to four works: V. Axenciuc, *Evoluția economică a României. Cercetări statistico-istorice 1859-1947*, Vol. 2: *Agricultura*, (Romania's Economic Evolution. Historical-statistical Research 1859-1947, Vol. 2: Agriculture), Editura Academiei, București, 1996 and Vol. 3: *Monedă-credit-comerț-finanțe publice* (Vol. 3: Money-Credit-Trade-Public Finance), Editura Academiei, București, 2000; V. Axenciuc, *Introducere în istoria economică a României. Epoca modernă* (Introduction to the Modern Economic History of Romania), Editura „Fundației România de Măine”, București, 1997; V. Axenciuc, „România – grânarul Europei?” (Romania – Granary of Europe?) edited in *Magazin istoric*, 33, nr. 1, 1999, pp. 24-26.

⁸ An article published in English, under the title “«Phanariots» and «Pământenii». Religion and Ethnicity in Shaping Identities in the Romanian Principalities and the Ottoman Empire”, in the volume *Ethnicity and Religion in Central and Eastern Europe* coordinated by Maria Craciun and Ovidiu Ghitta (Cluj University Press, 1995, pp. 196-204).

⁹ Cf. *supra*, footnote 4.

hospodars of the two principalities. Since the second half of the 16th century to the first decades of the 19th century, “getting of reign was achieved in Istanbul and meant the obtaining of the widest possible support within groups of influence in the Ottoman capital, requiring the payment of considerable sums to the Sultan and the people who could influence his decision.” During this period, the only restriction on the pretenders to the throne was not of ethnic order, but only to be “Christian, not Muslim”.

The attempts of some historians to identify contemporary sources supporting the decision to replace the *Landers*’ (“pământeni”) *hospodars* (proved, as we said, traitors) with *Phanariots* (coming from the Phanar district of Constantinople) failed. It’s true that “practice has made the most *hospodars* were Greek Orthodox, which, according to Ottoman terminology, meant they belonged to that category of Greek subjects of the sultan (*Rum zimmi*)”.

Although perpetuating in handbooks the period referred to as *Phanariot era* to somewhat simplified both the periodization of principalities’ history in the “early modern age” and the patriotic-ethical approach of the *Non-landers*’ (“nepământeni”), “the idea propagated by many Romanian and foreign historians that in 1711 (1716) there was a change of political regime [...] is just a historiographical myth.”

The solid reasoning of the author should, perhaps, be completed by the *statistic-genealogical* analysis of the ethnicity of Moldova and Țara Românească rulers during the 16th-17th c., “nepământeni” (non-natives) *zimmi* (“subjects of a Moslim state”) and *harbi* (“subjects of an independent non-Moslim state”), “pământeni” respectively. Also exciting seems to be the identification of the moments or periods of *awakening* of the “pământeni” as against the seizure of political and economic power by *venetici* (aliens).

For the time continuity and consistency of ethnic identity, Bogdan Murgescu’s remark on the solidarity at *inferior* social levels is essential: “family ties and, maybe, village solidarities were even more important than the devotion to Christianity.” This kind of “solidarity” is actually the deep foundation of gradual awareness of ethnicity, of the identity atomized for centuries at the level of the small local communities and gradually coagulated under the form of *national conscience* along the 19th c., under the pressure of the Western culture.

The same cannot be said about the upper strata of society in the two Principalities. The lack of various political factions’ unity is understandable, if we consider on the one hand the diversity of external influences and pressures, and on the other hand ethnical heterogeneity of the allogeneous participation in different administrative offices, up to the office of ruler.

The ethnical heterogeneity of the political-administrative elite of Wallachia and Moldova is not a peculiarity with a character of uniqueness. The Kingdom of the Two Scillies is, among many others, an edifying example in this respect. As compared with Northern Italy, where the continuity of German prevalence became defining along the centuries, *the South* knew a remarkable ethnical heterogeneity generated by the succession of dominions, starting with the Ancient Greeks (Graecia Magna) and continuing with the Romans, Arabs, Normans, Byzantines and Spanish. Despite the political unification after 1860, Italy remained well defined until today according to its historical structures.

In the article *Confessional Polemics and Political Imperatives in the Romanian Principalities at the turn of the 17th-18th c.*¹⁰, Bogdan Murgescu analyses the offensive of Greek orthodoxy in the Romanian Countries in the last quarter of 17th c. and early 18th c. achieved by printing in Greek, „a great number of books of Orthodox propaganda” in the printing houses on the territory of the two Principalities.

The effect of the propaganda of Jerusalem patriarchs, Dosithei Notaras and Hrisant Notaras was, apparently paradoxical, “inhibiting any temptations of the Romanians to rise against the Ottoman rule”. Moreover, the author also advances the “more brutal” hypothesis of the conscious involvement of the two patriarchs and of other clergymen in a “fifth Ottoman column” in the Romanian Countries.

How was it possible for Moldova and Țara Românească to be a kind of *spearhead* supporting the Greek religious campaign with the considerable political help of some rulers of Greek origin of the 17th century (e.g., Gheorghe Duca, between 1665-1683)? The answer to this question is essential for the explanation of the beginning of Greek hegemony in the Principalities’ administration and economy, to last at least 150 year (until after 1821) along the so-called “Phanariot period”.

Bogdan Murgescu is again exhaustive in his research, reasoning and blast of eloquence in a 7-page only article!

The offensive of Greek orthodoxy was, in fact, a counteroffensive to the growing effective penetration in Hungary (through Ardeal) and Poland in Moldova and Țara Românească of the ideology of the two great enemies, Catholicism (*counter-reform*) and Protestantism (mainly *Calvinist*), with the Habsburgs’ military achievements in the last quarter of the 17th century. And the Greeks fear was not ungrounded: shortly after the Habsburgs’ rule over Ardeal (1699), the United Romanian Church as a part of the Catholic Church would be established officially (in 1716).

The High Porte *promoted* by means of the *Greek*, not only a visible tolerance towards Orthodoxy, but also a kind of *support* for the subjects in the Romanian Countries in front of the pressure of Catholicism and Protestantism. While gradually reducing, during the 16th century, of the attempts of organizing the anti-Ottoman *Christian Leagues (Catholic)* by the Holy See and by Central and Western Europe, the Ottomans encouraged the *right faith*, Eastern Christian (*the Greek branch*), seeking to stem the impetuous advance of western Christian ideologies.

In the post-scriptum of the article of 2011, Bogdan Murgescu cites the conclusions of Paschalis Kitromilides’ research in a paper of 2008, according to which the anti-Protestant position in Dosithei Notaras’ writings “are marked by a

¹⁰ Initially published in Romanian *In honorem emeritae Ligia Bârză. The time of history I. Memorandum and heritage*, a volume edited by Miron Ciho, Vlad Nistor and Daniela Zaharia, Universitatea Bucuresti Publishing House, Bucharest, 1998, pp. 272-280 and republished in the same year in English, under the title „Confessional Polemics and Political Imperatives in the Romanian Principalities (Late 17th-early 18th Centuries)”, published in Maria Craciun, Ovidiu Ghitta (eds.), *Church and Society in Central and Eastern Europe*, EFES, Cluj-Napoca, 1998, pp. 174-183.

strong Catholic influence” revealing “rather political than theological roots” for the “virulent anti-Catholic” attitude of Jerusalem’s Patriarch.

On the other hand, though *Greek* was not foreign to the cultural and administrative environment in the Principalities, the echo of the religious publications in this language was much less than the success of the Protestants in Ardeal by means of the writings in Romanian.

Despite the cultural and religious success, it should not come as a surprise that the whole Greek Orthodox propaganda did not diminish in the least the tension of the hostility between the two Principalities to the “*păgânii osmanlîi* (heathen Ottomans)”.

Under the circumstances of the Greek Orthodox counteroffensive, at the turn of the 16th-17th centuries it is at the same time noticeable the increase of the Moldavians and Wallachians sensitivity towards Russian orthodoxy. After the fall of Constantinople, Moscow would have been recognized, even if not unanimously, as the “third Rome”. The Russian Orthodox Church was becoming autocephalous in 1589 (by the efforts of Boris Godunov), and in 1652 Patriarch Nikon accomplished the centralization of ecclesiastical power by Russia, adopting at the same time uniformly the rituals of Greek Orthodox Church.

Russia’s rapprochement to the Romanian Countries, to Moldova in particular, during the 16th and 17th century, was achieved first by the echo of Russian orthodoxy, especially due to the endeavour of the Metropolitan of Kiev, Petru Movila, (1633-1646) and of Moldova’s metropolitans Varlaam and Dosoftei.

If the above-mentioned Greek prints would have aimed at the distraction of the subjects of the High Porte in the Romanian Countries against the western Christian “heresies” and at the avoidance of their involvement in the potential anti-Ottoman campaigns, the year 1711 (besides other moments) reflects the full failure of such attempts.

But how could the Russian variant of orthodoxy be more attractive than the Greek one?

In the studies: *Factorul popular în lupta antiotomană. Un studiu de caz: 1711*¹¹ (The popular factor in the anti-Ottoman battle. Case study: 1711) and *Anul 1711 și filorusismul românesc în secolul al XVIII-lea*¹² (Year 1711 and the Romanian pro-Russian spirit in the 18th century), Bogdan Murgescu analyses the external and internal circumstances of the pro-Russian attitude of most of the Principalities’ population in the first decade of the 18th century.

In the first of the two studies, the author emphasizes the main reasons of the Moldavians’ sympathy for the Russians, choosing as a moment of reference the year of Peter the Great’s campaign against the Turks.

The result of a repulsion accumulated during over three centuries, “**the persisting hostility towards the *osmanlîi*** (Ottomans), was a basic element of the common culture both of the elite and of the masses.” (B.M. underlining).

¹¹ Based on a communication presented in 1987, the text was published in *Caietele Laboratorului de Studii Otomane* (Notebooks of the Ottoman Studies Laboratory), nr. 1/ 1990, pp. 153-164.

¹² The study was first published in *Studii și articole de istorie* (History studies and articles), 78, 2011, pp. 15-22.

Apparently odd enough, the Greek (except for the Ionian Islands) manifested only sporadically during the 16th-18th centuries by anti-Ottoman political or military actions, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople being practically responsible rather of maintaining the status of subordination of the Christian populations subject to the High Porte and of inciting them against the Catholics and the Protestants.

On the other hand, at the end of the 17th century few Romanian rulers (most of them of Greek origin) still dared to resume the *classical* alliances with the Habsburgs, in spite of their military achievements after the rejection of the Turks in front of Vienna (1683).

Based on a growing aggressive oppression from the Turks, the Austrians arrogance and the Greek's duplicity generated, especially in Moldova, **“a strong wave of anti-Turk orthodox exaltation inexorably pushing towards a pro-Russian politics”** (B.M. underlining). Yet, even under the circumstances of the „anti-Ottoman turmoil arisen in various parts of South-Eastern Europe”, the above-mentioned *exaltation* failed to have identical effects in the two Principalities.

If in Țara Românească, “after 20 years of relatively steady reign, Brâncoveanu was able to resist any internal pressure and decide depending on his own analysis on his and the country's interests”, Dimitrie Cantemir “recently enthroned [...] had no choice”. In order to consolidate the ruler's authority, he had nothing to do but “place himself in front of the anti-Turkish wave [...]”

Bogdan Murgescu chooses quotations as suggestive as they are picturesque in the chronicles of Ion Neculce, Radu Popescu, Radu Greceanu and Miron Costin, presenting not only the hesitations of Constantin Brâncoveanu towards engaging in combat on the Russians' side, but also, the fate of the Moldavians called to war by Dimitrie Cantemir under the flags of Peter the Great from the moment of passing under arms until the final disaster. So, in two quotations from Neculce, is admirably grasped the trespassing from a specific *ecstasy* in the beginning of the campaign, on which the chronicler noticed quite puzzled and compassionate „they stood pretty well the poor Moldavians, though they were crowd armee” („sta bine și bieții moldoveni, măcar că era oaste de strânsură”), to the *agony* of the humiliating defeat “the Turks pounced upon as a pack of wolves in a sheep herd” („le-au dat turcii năvală ca o noajă de lupi într-o turmă de oi”).

In the second study mentioned above, Bogdan Murgescu adds to the arguments of the pro-Russian attitude the image that Peter the Great had gained after the victory of Poltava (1709) against the Swedish, as „pious tsar, always victorious and potential liberator”, expected as „Messiah of the Moldavians, Wallachians and Bulgarians”.

The author also reviews the previous attempts of association to the Russians' anti-Ottoman battle, mentioning the treatises of Gheorghe Stefan (1656) and Stefan Petriceicu (1674) with tsar Alexei Mikhailovich, and the appeal to the tsar of Metropolitan Teodosie of Țara Românească in 1700. It is important also the report of courier David Corbea to the Russian authorities, where the name of the hesitating Constantin Brâncoveanu is also included, together with those of Jerusalem Patriarch Dosithei Notaras and of brothers Mihai and Constantin Cantacuzino, where mention is made of the request addressed to the tsar for “the redemption of all the pious Christians who are moaning under the yoke of the

unfaithful tyrant [...]”. In the same text, mention is made, besides the above-named, about the Moldavians and Bulgarians again, and in addition the Greeks (!), the Serbians, the Arnauts, and the Romanians from Transylvania.

Apparently abandoned by the western and central-European powers after 1716, the persistence of the Romanians’ pro-Russian feelings during the 18th century appears justified, especially after the peace of Kuciuk-Kainargi (1774), when Austria acquired Bucovina, and Russia was recognized as diplomatic and military protector of the Romanian Countries.

The climax of the Romanians’ pro-Russian feelings despair seems to have been attained in 1770 by the Wallachians and between 1806-1812 by the Moldavians. For the first year, the author quotes the memorandum of the Wallachian delegates sent to Moscow requesting neither more nor less than “the complete annexation to Russia”. During the Russian-Turkish war, 1806-1812, Veniamin, Moldova’s Metropolitan, in front of a group of noblemen and bishops were sending memoranda by which, in their turn, they requested the incorporation to Russia. In this last case, ironically enough, the request was partially fulfilled by Bessarabia’s annexation to Russia in 1812. And then (in 1807 at Tilsit) and later (in 1939), both France (Napoleon), and Germany (Hitler) manifested their full *désintéressement* regarding Bessarabia.

Perhaps the only positive effect of this pro-Russian attitude would have been the institutional modernization of the Principalities by the Organic Regulations elaborated under the coordination of Pavel Kisseleff during the Russian occupation, between 1828 and 1834. With the still obvious indifference of the West towards the two Danube Principalities, we may say that Romania’s *modernization (westernisation) started from the East by care of the Russians.*

Emphasizing the passing from one extreme to another, Bogdan Murgescu follows the line of pro-Russian turning into anti-Russian attitude and points out a few “traumatic” moments of the relations with Russia, starting with 1811, when it was obvious that Bessarabia would be yielded, and the territories of the Principalities left also in the hands of the Turks, then the 4 and 5 decade of the 19th century when the attraction towards Moscow starts to vanish in favour of the European West and, finally, the introduction of communism in 1944.

Another “common place” of Romanian historiography in the last 150 years was the participation of the masses in the anti-Ottoman battle, known in the textbooks as *oastea cea mare (the big army)*. While deconstructing this prejudice, as well as in any other endeavours, Bogdan Murgescu is objective and careful.¹³

The author analyses differently the existing situation of the 15th century with extensions even in the next century, as compared to the 17th century. For the first period, in spite of certain justified “puzzles” – which we fully share – expressed “in relation with the concrete way of functioning of this military system” (“how the supply of large armies was provided when the campaign was extended, all the more so as the Romanian traditional tactics provided a long wear and tear of the opponent before the decisive battle”), the reasoning in favour of the thesis of Romanian historiography is pertinent: “it is clear that the efficiency of the anti-

¹³ In the above-cited quotation *Factorul popular în lupta antiotomană. Un studiu de caz: 1711*, pp. 68-73 in the reviewed volume.

Ottoman fight of Mircea the Elder or Stephen the Great involved a large mass basis, assured by the mobilization of a numerous and rather wealthy free peasantry”.

The three characteristics of the peasantry called to army in the 15th century are essential: *free, numerous and wealthy*.

But the situation gradually changes, almost radically, during the 16th century, not only as the result of the emergence of “new types of arms, expensive and rare in the Romanian space, which drastically reduced the efficiency of the troupes supplied with traditional arms”, but as a result of an “extension of the campaign duration” and especially of “taxation tightening”. The last cause “determined the numerical decrease of free peasantry and of the categories of courtiers and servants”.

Therefore, after the glorified age of Michael the Brave (a ruler who, among others, did not manage to attract the efficient support of the *masses*) as the peasantry was no longer either free, or numerous, or wealthy, could no longer be the basis of the “great army”, despite the persistence of the hostility towards the Ottomans.

It still remains totally unclear, as Bogdan Murgescu shows, how could “the great army” be organized based on the participation of the peasantry, be it *free, numerous and wealthy*. For the late beginning of the 18th century, the rethoric of Ion Neculce is suggestive, and cited by the author for the description of the *heap* soldiers: “What sort of soldier could have ever been ragtail and bobtail, boors who never mounted a horse, and also did not grasp any arm in their hand since they were born, nor served in the armee” (“Dară ce oșteanu va să fie prostimea, mojiicii ce nici odată pe calu n’au încălecatu, nice armă în mână n-au prinsu de cându erau ei, nice în oști n’au slujitu?”) In other words, how prepared, trained for battle could have been the peasant taken away from his plough to be efficient on the battlefield?

Scientific accuracy, permanent concern to specify more complete historical data and information is one of the defining qualities of the researcher Bogdan Murgescu.

As an example, we will review as synthetically as possible, two of the most eloquent testimony of the author’s fidelity to the accuracy of history’s understanding and interpretation:

a) **most accurate determination of the extent to which Romanian Countries revenue succeeded to cover the level of payments due to the Ottoman Empire** in the sixteenth century.¹⁴ Given the absence of statistical records, estimates are extremely difficult, while being very approximate.

¹⁴ The whole discussion is presented in the reviewed volume’s study „Plăți externe, fiscalitate și economie monetară în Țara Românească la sfârșitul secolului al XIV-lea”, “Foreign Payments, Taxation and Monetary Economics in Wallachia by the late 16th century”, originally published in *Revista istorică* (serie nouă) (Historical Journal – new series), IV, nr. 5-6, 1993, pp. 457-471.

Taking the size of the amount of debt to the Sublime Porte in the ninth decade of the sixteenth century, Michael Berza estimated in a 1958 paper,¹⁵ the author considers proper the annual average of 650,000 golden pieces (*galbeni*) destined to *formal* (official) payments (the tribute, *haraciul*), as well as *informal* (mainly “*ruşveturi*”). The covering of the average annual amount is calculated first, based on tax revenues (taxes owed by the reign’s subjects), the result obtained being then checked by analysing Wallachia’s monetary stock and overall balance of payments. The value obtained by both methods was approximately 400,000 golden pieces (*galbeni*), amounting therefore insufficient to ensure obligations to the suzerain power, the difference of about 250,000 ducats being covered by borrowing.

The inevitable consequence has been the increase, from year to year, of borrowing to Porte Wallachia rulers, so that at the beginning of the reign of Michael the Brave "Wallachia hospodar’s debts amounted to 700 million *akçes* (about 5.8 million golden pieces (*galbeni*) at the official exchange rate, somewhat less in the free market)."

Analytical results confirm not only the “cataclysmic impact of the economic domination of the Ottoman”, historiographical consensus yet reached before 1960,¹⁶ but also that “the Romanian Countries apparent economic phenomena of modernity in the sixteenth century (the expansion of the monetary economy and production to exchange high rate of exports) were actually the **expression of a peripheral incorporation** [...] centred in this case on Istanbul.” (B.M. underlining). Despite a chronic active trade balance, “peripheral-type relationship was likely to steer the country’s economic development on a path to ensure the preservation of long-term gaps, as compared to more developed areas of the Ottoman world, and also to other world economic systems.”

b) **correcting the size of the physical volume of grain exports of Romanian Countries in the 16th century** by analysing the units of measurement used in historiography.¹⁷

¹⁵ Mihai Berza, „Variațiile exploatării Țării Românești de către Poarta Otomană în sec. XVI-XVIII” („Variations of Romanian Countries exploitation by the Ottoman Empire in the 16th-18th centuries”), edited in *Studii. Revista de istorie*, II, nr. 2, 1958, pp. 59-71.

¹⁶ Here are mentioned the innovative studies of Mihai Berza, such as the one of 1958 (mentioned above), and another one of 1957, „Haraciul Moldovei și al Țării Românești în sec. XV-XVI”, (The *haraci* of Moldova and Wallachia in the 15th-16th centuries) in *Studii și materiale de istorie medie*, II, pp. 59-71, as well as those of Damaschin Mîoc from 1957: „Despre modul de impunere și percepere a birului în Țara Românească până la 1632” (About taxation and levying the tribute in Wallachia until 1632), *Studii și materiale de istorie medie*, 2, pp. 49-116, and from 1962: „Cuantumul birului pe gospodăria țărănească în Țara Românească în secolul al XVI-lea”, *Studii și materiale de istorie medie*, 5, pp. 151-173.

¹⁷ The analysis is presented, in the volume reviewed, in an article entitled „Au exportat Țara Românească și Moldova cereale în secolul al XVI-lea?”, („Did Wallachia and Moldova export grain in the 17th century?”) pp. 236-243, originated in two previous works: Dorin Matei, Bogdan Murgescu, „Două kile buclucașe”, („Two troublesome *kile*”) *Magazin istoric*, 24, 1990, p. 27, and in the paper presented in 1995, respectively, „Did Moldavia and Wallachia Export Grains During the 16th Century?”, published in the volume *Miscellanea in honorem Radu Manolescu emerito*, edited by Zoe Petre and Stelian Brezeanu, Editura Universității din București, 1996, pp. 190-199.

A part of the official Romanian historiography had already assiduously promoted the Romanian Countries' image as the leading provider of Ottoman Empire (Kingdom's *keller*). Interpretations of part of Romanian historians are not at all an exception in the European historiography dedicated to this topic. The author quotes Fernand Braudel's statement according to which Moldova would have sent to Istanbul, "bon an mal an," not more or less than 350,000 hectoliters of grain in the sixteenth century, which "would be equivalent to 1/5 of the whole grain Mediterranean trade estimated [...] at approximately 100,000 tons every year."

The exaggerated estimates of Moldavian grain exports to Istanbul are owed to one of Ion Nistor's works, published in German in 1911,¹⁸ in which the 100,000 *kile* of grain (mainly barley) that Moldova had to send annually in Istanbul, were considered to 350,000 hl. Leaving aside the fact that the 100,000 *kile* mentioned certainly were not an average, available for each year, but even one exaggerated, Bogdan Murgescu notes that the transformation unit of kila into kilograms used by the Bucovinian historian was the *Galați kila* of the early nineteenth century (equivalent to 380.852 litres). For the documents issued by the Ottoman authorities in the 16th century the unit of weight was the *Istanbul kila*, which contained only about 25 kg of barley, so that "the whole amount was actually about ten times smaller than considered it Ion Nistor, Fernand Braudel and all the other historians who have taken this information from them."

Here's how a simple and seemingly insignificant confusion may generate excessive estimates, distorting historical phenomena and processes.

The last 53 pages of the volume (p. 269-322) are devoted to "Synthetic Perspectives", including the following studies: *Lumea românească în economia europeană până la 1859* ("Romanian World within the European Economy until 1859"),¹⁹ *Economiile sud-estului european în epoca timpurie modernă: între Istanbul și Occident* ("Southeastern European Economies during Early Modern Age: Between Istanbul and the West"),²⁰ "Modernizarea" Țării Românești și a Moldovei. *Tipare, particularități, perspective* ("The «Modernization» of the Romanian Principalities during the 16th-17th centuries: patterns, distortions, prospects"),²¹ *Țările Române în epoca modernă timpurie*. ("Romanian Countries in the early modern era")²²

¹⁸ Ion Nistor, *Die auswärtigen Handelsbeziehungen der Moldau im XIV. XV. und XVI. Jahrhundert*, Gotha, Perthes, 1911.

¹⁹ Study developed with Florentina, originally published in Maria Muresan (ed.), *Procesul de integrare a României în economia europeană. Dimensiuni istorice și contemporane* ("The integration of Romania into the European economy. Historical and contemporary dimensions"), Editura ASE, București, 2008, pp. 17-50.

²⁰ Initially published in a volume edited by Almut Bues, *Zones of Fracture in Modern Europe: the Baltic Countries, the Balkans and the Northern Italy*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005, pp. 187-202, the study was reprinted in Romanian with the title „Economiile sud-estului european în epoca timpurie modernă: între Istanbul și Occident” (“Southeastern European Economies during Early Modern Age: Between Istanbul and the West”) în *Studia varia in Honorem Professoris Ștefan Ștefănescu Octogenarii*, volume edited by Cristian Luca și Ionel Căndea, Editura Academiei Române & Editura Istros, București-Brăila, 2009, pp. 341-357.

²¹ The study originates in a paper presented in Warsaw in 1998, initially published in English with the title "The «Modernization» of the Romanian Principalities during the

In the postscript to the third synthesis, the author deplors the unwarranted reluctance of Romanian historiography to “summary trials perceived as mere compilations, and not for what they actually are: interpretations that give meaning to point investigations, integrating them into a coherent overview.”

In fact, in the four syntheses, Bogdan Murgescu does right that: puts together, orders and systematizes the lessons learned during the point investigations, trying to integrate the Romanian historical research within Western research trend. If “piecing together” in the sense of the above means “compilation”, then we can call “compilation productive and beneficial”.

Pointing out quite briefly here, because extensively reviewing the four synthesis involves preparation of at least one new work, the author touches the essential elements of Romanian modern and contemporary history within the Southeast-European and European context, as a whole:

– a first conclusion that crosses all four studies is the peripheral condition of the South-East European space from the main monetary and commodity flows of both Central and Western Europe and the Near East (“until the 13th century the Carpathian-Danubian region was somewhat peripheral to medieval trade axes”, “[...] Romanian countries were in the 16th-18th centuries in the contact area of the two world-economies, the Ottoman and the (western) European, underwent the attraction of both and, therefore, were not fully integrated within any of them until the 19th century when the Ottoman economy was incorporated in the outskirts of the Western world-economy.”; “from the 16th century to the early 19th century, Wallachia was an economic periphery of Istanbul, typical for the early modern era.”);

– the periods of attraction of the Romanian territories into significant European circuits were the 2nd and 3rd centuries, determined by the Roman integration, the 14th and 15th centuries, associated to Genoese trade in the Black Sea and intensifying trade with Brasov and finally, after three centuries, the timid attracting within the interest area of the West, due to the Treaty of Adrianople, after 1829 (given that “during the 16th and 17th centuries there was no economic system that can truly be called «Ottoman trade monopoly», the role of the Treaty of Adrianople was much more limited than assumed until now”, instead “the significance of the Treaty of Adrianople was greater through its provisions that led to the drafting of the Organic Regulation and to the acceleration of institutional modernization of Wallachia and Moldova”);

– otherwise, from the beginning of the 16th century until the early 19th century, economic growth trends of the Romanian Countries were timid, to not call them belated, as compared to those of Central and Western Europe;

– on the other hand, “[...] despite the economic backwardness, the two Romanian countries were neither stagnant nor completely separated from Central Europe and Mediterranean regions.”;

16th-17th centuries: patterns, distortions, prospects”, in the volume *Modernizacja struktur władzy w warunkach opóźnienia. Europa środkowa i Wschodnia na przełomie średniowiecza i czasów nowożytnych*, Red. Marian Dygo, Sławomir Gawlas, Hieronim Grala, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo DiG, 1999, pp. 173-184.

²² Cf. *supra*, footnote 4.

– increasing “tax burden”, the official, and, especially, the informal duties to the Sublime Porte led to the paradox of the formation of export economies with chronic active trade balance. The net export was absolutely necessary to gather the accepted monetary liquidity for the payment of the tribute owed to the suzerain; “Tax burden threatened to displace production structures” and the outflow of resources **“prevented the modernization of Moldova and the Wallachia”**. (B.M. underlining);

– **“over the 17th and 18th centuries, the Ottoman rule did not prevent population and economic growth of the Romanian Countries”**, but, instead, *only* their development and modernization; **“«the achievements» on the modernization way of Wallachia and Moldova during the 16th and 17th centuries are rather modest.”** (B.M. underlining);

– the low rhythm of an incomplete urban development, the obvious limits of capital accumulation (be it even a *primitive* one), restricted development area of the monetary economy (barter remains prevalent, the peasant scarcely sees the akce, the para or the golden coin) made the Romanian Countries to remain, during **“the whole early modern age, territories with a relatively low population density and a less efficient agriculture”** (B.M. underlining).

We must end this review, although we managed to render very little of what we believe it had to be exposed.

The whole issue discussed in the volume reviewed consists of defining concerns not only for the undersigned, but also, and we can assume it without any doubt, for any scientific explorer of the classical *fundamental (or essential) problems of homeland’s history*.

The volume reviewed, along with that published in 2010, *Romania and Europe. Accumulation of the economic lags (1500-2000)* constitute, through the huge documentation, systematization efficiency and essential conclusions, indisputable value works of Romanian, European and world historiography.

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