

Romania – layers of collective identity in the 19th and the 20th centuries – an outline

(first part)

*Radu BALTASIU,
Manuela BOATCĂ,
Adela ȘERBAN,
Ovidiana BULUMAC*

There is no simple answer to the question of the development of the Romanian modernity. The paradigm of multiple modernities is a good starting point in understanding the issue since it “acknowledges” “the right” of the East “to appropriate modernity and the global system on their own” (Eisenstadt, **Transformation and Transposition of the Thematic Multiple Modernities in the Era of Globalization**, 2005, p.43), i.e. considering its own development as “normal”.

But, there is more at stake than multiple realities. The 19th century is for Romania the *locus* of the beginning to regain access to its own normality. For reality is not only a multiplicity of rightful paths of evolution. Reality can also be filled with people and societies with no access to their own history, i.e. abnormal developments, something which the Western approach has somehow understood as “development of underdevelopment”, “reversal of industrial revolution” etc.

We will outline some of the most important steps towards Romania’s “regained self”, i.e. taking into account also the “mishaps” – the pseudodevelopmental issues as well some of the successful paths toward Romania’s collective identity. There were three major cleavages between 1711 and 1944, to which we have identified three answers (“renaissance” periods). Romania’s take off towards modernity started with a sudden interruption (the Phanariot regime), it was overstrained with multiple options and unsound divagations after 1821, to be severely hampered again under the Soviet occupation after 1944.

Part I

On the Constitutive Dimension: Ethnicity, Christendom and Statehood at the dawn of modernity.

A brief time table:

Here is a summary of the most important events:

1691	<p>Through the 1691 Leopoldin Diploma, Transylvania becomes an autonomous province under the direct rule of the Austrian emperor. As a result of Habsburg pressures, the Transylvanian Orthodox Synod accepts the <i>Union</i> with Rome (1697) in exchange for keeping equal citizenship rights and other rights – which were never put in practice. By the Peace of Karlowitz to 1699, the Ottoman Empire recognizes the passage of Transylvania as the autonomous principality from the Turkish suzerainty to the Habsburg one. After the Russo-Turkish war of 1710-1712, the Turks introduced the <i>Phanariot</i> government (Moldavia 1711, Wallachia 1716). The Phanariot governance costs were huge. „More than half of the Principalities incomes, most of the times, were taken over for the sole purpose of buying an extension to the throne. ... Nearly all population is driven into credit accounts [and far-gone to extortioniers with interest rates up to 300%]. ... The annual interest [of the usury] represents more than the budgetary incomes of both Romanian states at the beginning of the „Unification epoch”.¹ Following the Treaty of Passarowitz (1718), Banat and Oltenia enters in the composition of the Habsburg Empire. In 1739, Oltenia is reclaimed by Wallachia through the Treaty of Belgrade. During 1729-1751 the repeated efforts for the recognition and enforcement of basic rights stated in the imperial diplomas of the Romanian intellectuals led by Bishop Micu Inocenție fail. In 1761 the Austrian army destroys a significant number of orthodox halidoms in Transylvania (General Buccow).</p> <p>By the peace of Kuciuk-Kainargi (1774), the Ottoman Empire recognizes Russia's right to intervene into domestic Romanian Countries. Following the same treaty, Russia wins the right of maintaining its navy in the Black Sea.² Subsequently, in 1775, Turkey turns Bukovina over to Austrian imperial hands. In Transylvania, the Romanians' struggle for rights continues on two levels: the human plus basic social rights and that of modernization. Although the uprising led by Romanians Horia, Closca and Crisan in 1784 put the emphasis on the elementary national and social rights, it contains very modern requirements such as the one that states "nobles are to pay taxes as every other taxpayer."³ Further on, the ideological and cultural movements of political recognition and national development are to be developed by the Transylvanian School, with impacts throughout the whole Romanian space. The first significant work of the School is printed in 1778 and belongs to Samuil Micu: <i>Brevis historica notitia originis ... (A short notice of the History of Romanians)</i>. The best known and most influential work of the Transylvanian School is Peter Major's <i>History for the Romanian beginning in Dacia</i>, released in 1812, in response to the new ideology of the Austro-Hungarian historical disparagement of the origins and social rights of Romanians (by Sulzer, Eder, Engel). The work of the <i>Transylvanian School</i> founded the national and social aspirations of Romanians to modernity by asserting and sometimes even exaggerating the Roman roots of the Romanians. The main exponents of the School are Samuil Micu, Petru Maior, Gheorghe Șincai, John Piuariu-Molnar, who are also the authors of</p>
1697	
1699	
1711	
1718	
1759	
1774	
1775	
1778	
1784	

¹ G. Zane, **Studii**, Editura Eminescu, București, 1980, p.45, p.52, respectiv p.181.

² *Russo-Turkish wars* in **Encyclopædia Britannica**, 2002, the electronic edition

³ Academia Română, **Istoria Românilor**, vol. VI, **România între Europa clasică și Europa luminilor (1711-1821)**, Editura Enciclopedică, București, 2002, p.559. Citat din *Ultimatumul țăranilor adresat nobilimii în răscoala lui Horea*.

1791	the petition for the <i>emperor Supplex Libellus Valachorum</i> (1791). Called by the Saxons <i>The Grievance of the Romanians (Jalba Românilor)</i> , it demanded basic rights recognition for the Romanian and marked the beginning of modern romanian political affirmation of the Transylvanian intellectuals. The School Work continues until the second part of the 19th century, when a dispute with Titu Maiorescu and Junimea from Iasi (in Moldavia) is generated due to latinist exaggeration. Important parts of Romania are on the verge of being annexed by Austria after the Austro-Russo-Turkish 1787-1791 war. However, the Habsburg intentions fail in materialising due to the outbreak of the French Revolution. Moldova loses Bessarabia in 1812, annexed by Russia, after the Russo-Turkish war of 1806-1812 (Treaty of Bucharest). Russians reach the Danubian outfall. The basis of modern education in Romanian is laid by Gheorghe Asachi in Moldova (1813) and Gheorghe Lazar in Wallachia (1818). ⁴ . The Russian and Ottoman Empires together suppress the Revolution of Tudor Vladimirescu in 1821. Tudor's Movement represents the signal that proves the assumed organic intentions of the Romanian elite regarding the social imperatives and national issue. The Peace of Adrianople in 1829 (following the Russo-Turkish conflict of 1828-1829) states the release of the danubian outfall from the Turkish dominance. Its restoration to the Romanian Principalities is made under the principle of freedom of commerce, a moment in which The British interests set in. Another result of the Peace of Adrianople is the "Organic regulations" imposed by the Russian Empire (1831/1835), a mixture of modern prescriptions with other old feudal privileges.
1812	
1821	
1829	
1830	
1859	
1878	Moldavia and Wallachia are united under the name of <i>The United Principalities</i> , later on named <i>Romania</i> under the ruling of Alexandru Ioan Cuza. The Ottoman Empire was the suzerain power.
1881	Following the Russian-Romanian-Turkish war of 1877/78 Romania is recognized as an independent country by the Treaty of Berlin. Romania becomes monarchy under the rule of Charles the 1 st , who actually ruled the country since 1866.

Some of the historical fundamentals

The primordial stratum of Romanian collective identity was well established at the dawn of modernity (from the end of the 18th century). This is revealed in one of the first documented Romanian medieval writings with a clear stance: «... the Moldavians have the same language, the same customs and the same religion as the people in Wallachia ... except some minor aspects related to clothing. ... Their language was at the beginning the Roman language, as their ancestors were the Roman colonizers. ... [In Transylvania] are four different peoples: the Hungarians, the Szekely, the Sachsen and the Romanians ... The Romanians are convinced of originating from the Roman colonizers. The proof is that their language shares a lot with the Roman language and the many Roman coins found ...» (Nicolaus Olahus, *Hungaria sive de originibus gentis, regionis, situ, divisione, habitu atque opportunitatibus*,

⁴ Gheorghe Asachi deschide cursuri în limba română la „Academia Domnească” din Iași, iar Gheorghe Lazăr le inaugurează pe cele de la Sfântu Sava din București.

1536, in C.C. Giurescu, D.C. Giurescu, **Istoria românilor din cele mai vechi timpuri până astăzi [The History of Romanians since the Earliest Times]**, Ed. Albatros, București, 1975, p.390]

Since the earliest political medieval Romanian writings, **collective identity, ethnicity and statehood were linked with Christendom**. At the same time, the local political discourse was fully aware of the general European civilization of which the Romanian state(s) was (were) a part as successors of the Roman people and as Christians. It is interesting to note that the Roman tradition was understood in ethnical and historical terms as a matter of pride and legitimacy of the state, whose aim, ever since the emergence of the Romanian states, was to *belong*, not to *conquer*: Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania had no political ambitions except their own survival as states.

The link between Christendom, statehood and *being European* was not merely determined by the „logic of discourse” – in our case by a paradigm of governance dominated by the Orthodox Church. **It was a fact related to the survival of the nationhood and of the European civilization**. That is, although the Romanian medieval writers and most of its rulers did not have the modern discourse of nationhood and the postmodern concept of the stateless, borderless links and interdependence, they were fully aware about the link between “the context” – “Europe” and their role within, thinking of their *locus* as an integrated entity – as a *Christian State pertaining to the European order*. For instance, Vlad the Impaler clearly stated that: «If our small country will perish, *God forbid*, neither you, Sir, will have a gain, since the damage will be for the whole of Christendom. » (Letter of Vlad the Impaler to Matei Corvin, the voievod of Transylvania, February 11, 1462, in Giurescu, 1975, pp.382-383).

The programmatic link between the civil society and politics was fully established by 1521 when Neagoe Basarab edited *The teachings of Neagoe Basarab to his son Theodosie* (“Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său Teodosie”). Considered the masterpiece of the Romanian literature written in Slavonic, *The teachings* reveal in full the organic link between the faith, the institution of the Church, the State, the politics and the people:

“To Love our God from all our hearts”

In order to govern, you, as a leader “should profess the truth, should not acquire things and behave well with those who are serving you”

That means “to keep your mind clean through praying and humility.”

“We do not choose to live like in an army [giving orders to one another and moving from place to place and conquering], we live in a fortress, in peace.”

(Neagoe Basarab, **Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său Teodosie**, ed. îngrijită de G. Mihăilă, Ed. Roza Vânturilor, București, 1996, pp. 245, 351, 365)

We should note that Machiavelli had edited his *Prince* a few years before, establishing the link between the people and the politics as a manipulable instrument of governing and legitimacy as pure calculus, legitimizing the need to *conquer*:

“Nothing is more important than *seeming* to have faith”

The most successful of the princes were those “who knew to how deceive the people’s mind”

“The need to conquer is a natural drive...”

“The people has no other need than to be dominated” (Machiavelli, **Principele**, Ed. Mondero, Bucuresti, 1998, pp.40, 63-64)

Machiavelli entrenched the Western politics in reason, more exactly in the reason of the *prince*. For Neagoe Basarab, politics was about serving the people, anchoring it in the *fear of God*.

Even if those two events are pretty far away from the 19th century, where the object of our study is located, they were to be mentioned in order to understand the *organic* Romanian paradigm of making politics. **The integrated paradigm of statehood (governance)-Church-people of Neagoe Basarab remained dominant til the Phanariot regime at the beginning of the 18th century, when Romanian society was forcefully enrolled in the periphery of the Ottoman Empire.**

Briefly on the first historical cleavage: the Phanariot regime. In the periphery of the Empire

Situated at the periphery of the emerging modern world-system in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the three Romanian Principalities, Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldavia were surrounded and beleaguered by three powerful empires – the Ottoman, the Habsburg and the Tsarist ones. The Romanian lands had successfully resisted both Habsburg and Ottoman conquest until 1699, when Transylvania was subordinated to the Austrian emperor, thus worsening Wallachia's and Moldavia's military and political situations.

The emergence of the "Eastern question" constituted by the Ottoman Empire's beginning decline turned the Romanian lands into prey for the proximate powers, Austria and Russia. Both were interested in the commercial and strategic position offered by the Romanian lands, but neither was willing to share them, so the Romanian provinces ended up not belonging to any of them, nor to the Ottoman Empire. However, after the Porte succeeded in establishing the "Phanariot rule" in both Romanian provinces as of 1711, Wallachia's and Moldavia's boundaries were subjected to a series of redrawing of boundaries to the (territorial) benefit of Austria and Russia. The so-called "Phanariot century", lasting from 1711 until 1821, represented the period of fiercest Turkish exploitation of the Romanian Lands. During this time, Romanian boyars (members of the privileged class, *Rom.* "boieri") had been denied the right to elect their own ruler, and voivodes (native princes) of both Wallachia and Moldavia had been appointed by the Porte from among the Greeks of Phanar, a quarter of Constantinople – which earned them the name "Phanariots". Fiscal exploitation, the Sublime Porte's intervention in the Principalities' internal affairs and its monopoly over their foreign policy, the deterioration of the two countries' armies, and the drastic decline in the political autonomy of the Romanian provinces were the main characteristics of the Phanariot regime (see Giurescu 1972: 133f.).

„More than half of the Principalities incomes, most of the times, were taken over for the sole purpose of buying an extension to the throne. ... Nearly all population is driven into credit accounts [and far-gone to extortioniers with interest rates up to 300%]. ... The annual interest [of the usury] represents more than the budgetary incomes of both Romanian states at the beginning of the „Unification epoch”. (G. Zane, **Studii**, Editura Eminescu, București, 1980, p.45, p.52, p.181, respectively) They led to the formation of what Daniel Chirot has termed the "protocolonial system" (Chirot 1976: 10), a weakly developed colonial society whose economic surplus was produced by an unfree labor force and to a large extent siphoned off to an economically and politically dominant society.

According to Chirot, during the Phanariot century “Wallachia was becoming more detached from the Western economic sphere. Wallachia was becoming virtually an Ottoman colony, and it was Ottoman power – not Western – that was forcing changes strikingly analogous to those that were occurring in the more northerly parts of Europe at that time” (Chirot 1976: 47). However, the already declining Ottoman Empire, much like Spain, but unlike England or Holland, behaved more like a traditional “world empire” than like the new “capitalist system”, in that it exploited its colonies to “finance luxuries, wars, and the maintenance of overextended imperial structures, but not in order to develop core economies” (Chirot 1976: 61). Consequently, this form of exploitation did not lead to the emergence of modern nation-states in the colonies, nor to the industrialization of the empires’ economies. Eventually, this caused both Spain and Turkey to lose their core status and become peripheral areas of the expanding capitalist world-system. The dissolution of the three empires Habsburg, Ottoman and Tsarist was, however, a long process, which covered about 200 years of Eastern European history, and did not automatically lead to the liberation of the nations living in that area (cf. Bădescu 2003 Sincronism,). As far as the Romanian Principalities were concerned, if the “Phanariot century” had meant a shift of their power and economic structure into the Ottoman sphere of influence, thereby turning Wallachia and Moldavia into the Ottoman Empire’s periphery, the nineteenth century, and particularly the period following 1821, meant their reintegration into the Western historical cycle.

Despite the fact that the Phanariot Regime was the hardest, the Romanian Principalities remained autonomous against the Sublime Porte. Wallachia and Moldavia remained under the regime of *tributal protection* (‘ahd ad-dhimma) and not *provinces of the Empire* (‘dar al-Islâm). Between 1711/1716 and 1774 the autonomy was solely under the Ottoman Empire and in the 1774-1821 interval, it was shared with the Russian Empire. (**Istoria Românilor** , vol VI, p.591)

The Struggle for Renaissance before 1821

Romanian Renaissance is less centered on reason and more on rediscovering collective identity. It is about regaining elementary rights: the right to be Romanian (in Transylvania) and social, political and economical rights (in all three of the Romanian states: Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldavia). **The Romanian movements were ideologically connected with those in Europe.** Once the problem of national identity were to be solved, **liberty meant at the same time reinventing the social space, redeeming it civil** – free people, with economic, social and political rights. The “Peasant Uprising ” of Horea, Closca and Crisan in 1784, for instance, was even 5 years ahead of the French Revolution in 1789 in claiming the disposal of the nobility rights and equality for all. The general background of the Romanian struggle for Renaissance was, at the same time, **a struggle for modernity.** There was no evidence of a superimposed ideology from abroad yet. The Romanian society had the power to discover by itself the “natural” imperatives of modernity: the right to national identity, to property, equality in front of the law, as fully stated at the end of 18th century by the Uprising of Horea . The problem with this more- than- secular movement was that the historical forces which put pressure over the national identity were much stronger than the local ones and the movement towards modernity was only partially successful. **Regaining the right to nationality was not a Romanian ideological, it was a sheer necessity towards normalizing the social space** and together with the newly claimed civil liberties **it defined modernity.**

The general context of the First Renaissance was given by the mounting pressure of the Hungarian domination over Transylvania and the one of the Phanariot regime in the other two of the Romanian Principalities – Moldavia and Wallachia. Most of the First Renaissance is located in Transylvania. Historically, this period ends with the 1821 Revolution of Tudor Vladimirescu, when the southern Principalities (Moldavia and Wallachia) free themselves from the Phanariot domination and the Turkish dependency begins to subside. **It should be noted that there is a *dual drive* fuelling those liberation movements: the peasants and the clerical body together with the intellectuals, many of them *united with Rome* around the Transylvanian School.**

The first to synthesize the modern urgencies for the Romanian society was Inochentie Micu, the *Greek-Catholic bishop* of Făgăraș, who supplicated the Hapsburg Court for almost forty years on behalf of the Romanians and their request to be recognized as an *equal nation* in its own right. The pinnacle of his efforts was his *Supplex Libellus* enacted in 1743 and addressed to the Hapsburg emperor – a document to become a manifesto for the following movements.

The main points of Inochentie Micu were the following:

- The Romanians are to be recognized as equals not *tolerated* alongside the Magyars, Szekely the and the Sachsen, i.e., “The Romanians should become a fully political nation” [in 1790, in the Parliament of Transylvania, of 417 seats, only one was occupied by a Romanian – Giurescu & Giurescu, 1975, p. 542];
- The right to receive education in equal terms with the other “three political nations”, since education is the main instrument for social and individual progress;
- The right to full access to military service and the administrative body for all Romanians, including the nobility;
- The right to education, free profession and private property, according to everyone’s abilities;
- Full access into the cities for the Romanians;
- Equal treatment for the Romanian peasants.

(Academia Română [The Romanian Academy], **Istoria Românilor [History of Romanians]**, vol VI, coordonatori dr. Paul Cernovodeanu, dr. Nicolae Edroiu, Ed. Enciclopedică, București, 2002, p.534)

Vexed by the bishop’s requests, Vienna exiles him to Rome in 1744.

Herein lies an important observation that we have to make on the “limits of modernity” concerning almost all liberation movements of Romanians in Transylvania: these movements were somehow looking to Vienna for support, thinking of the emperor as being a “good ruler”, no matter how advanced, i.e. potentially antimonarchic were their social, political and economic requests. Untill the formation of the Great Romania – which ended the Renaissance process in 1918 – there were some proeminent voices in Transylvania advocating for national liberation and social modernization *within* the framework of the Austrian Empire as a federation (one of the first federalist doctrine to be “invented” by A.C. Popovici in 1893). The most important priority was the cessation of Hungarian domination. This served very well the Hapsburgs. There was no real support from the Emperor for the Romanian ideals and no real gain to be derived from it. They were increasingly oppressed, untill the final dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918. Why has the Monarchy chosen “to work” with the Hungarian minority in order to oppress half of the Empire and why have the Hapsburgs chosen to “modernize” the Empire making the dualist agreement (1867) that directly violated the rights of most of its citizens? These are subsequent questions to be addressed by further researches on the role of political and cultural ideas.

A second *Supplex*, *Supplex Libellus Valachorum* was issued in 1791 by the Transylvanian School, **addressing the same national and social problems again:**

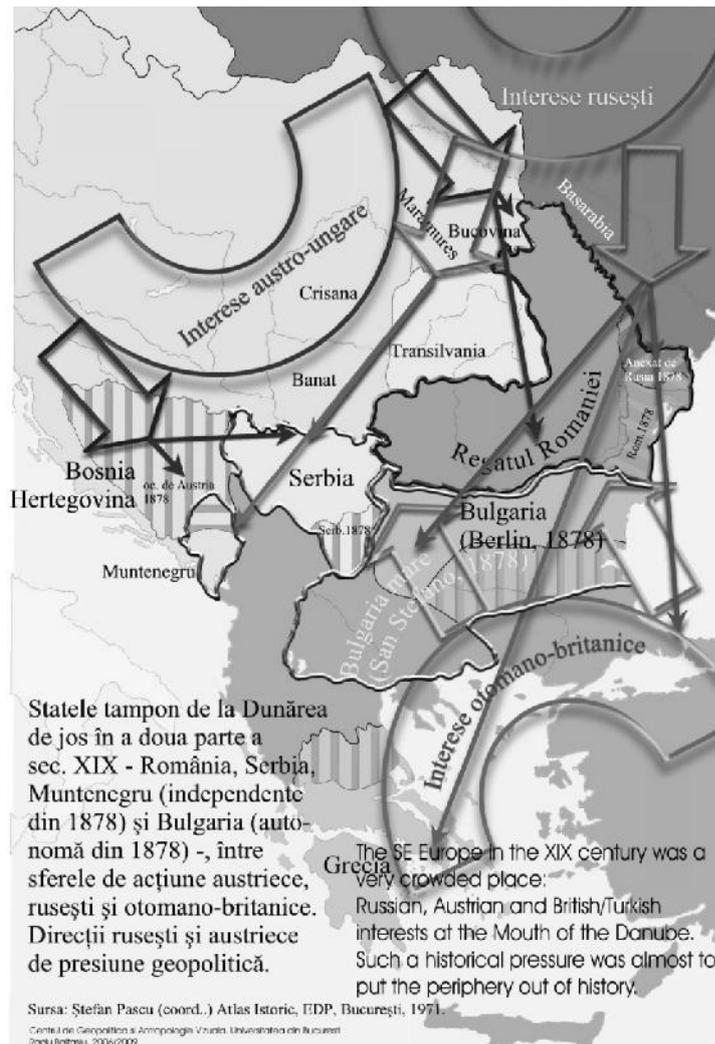
The Transylvanian School summarized in the *Supplex* its political program as follows: 1.[There is] to be revoked and removed publicly as undignified and unjust, any spiteful denominations to Romanians as tolerated, admitted, uncounted among the privileged nations [Stări], and the Romanian nation is to be reconsidered reborn and with all the civil and religious rights.... 4. In the Diet, in the counties and in the seats, districts and cities, the Romanian nation is to be represented in proportion to her number, and so proceed to the appointment and advancement in the new job ... 5. The administrative units which have Romanian majorities is to have Romanian denominations ... [The Monarchy and the Diet] shall declare all the inhabitants of the Principality of Transylvania equals, irrespective to their national or religious membership, according to their own condition and capacities[only], regarding their liberties and benefices and to bear the same duties.»

This time, the Transylvanian School added another principle to its argument: “Romanians were the first to be Christianized [on the Romanian soil]”. The intellectual strata fought for social rights using religious arguments. **The religious argument was not to be separated from the Romanian Renaissance until the 1848 Revolution.**

(*Istoria Românilor [History of Romanians]*, vol VI, 2002, pp.570, 575)

The second Renaissance owes much of its discourse to the programme of the Transylvanian School. The shape of the civil society, as well as the political conscience of the political class after 1821/1848 were to be very influenced by this paradigm.

On the Constitutive Dimensions of Modernity. The 19th century



The second historical cleavage: from the periphery of the Ottoman Empire to the periphery of the world system

The general logic of the new system (of the new modernity)

1821 was the year of a revolutionary national and social movement in Moldavia and Wallachia against the Ottoman Empire's domination in the two principalities. It mainly sought the re-establishment of native reigns and the natives' exclusive right to hold public office. The modernizing process was also directed towards reforming the institution of the Church, dominated by foreign interests: «Regarding the beasts which are eating us alive, our political and religious leaders, for how long should we endure them? For how long should we be their servants?» (*The Pades Manifesto* given in April 1821, cited in Giurescu&Giurescu, 1975, p.555). It is interesting that some of the Romanian Orthodox officials gave Tudor Vladimirescu the agreement to fulfill his general modernizing goals. This was the starting point of rationalizing and modernizing the relationship between the state and society, fully accomplished 40 years later through *the Law of secularizing the Monasteries' holdings* in 1863 made by the modern state of Romania. Although eventually repressed by the Turkish army, its aims not to be fully achieved at that time, the 1821 Revolution led by the Romanian boyar Tudor Vladimirescu marked the end of Ottoman domination and thus the shift to a

neocolonial model – a strongly developed colonial society more akin to the one engendered by classical colonialism in other parts of the world-system's periphery – that is, to an indirectly controlled state in which there was no single metropolis but rather a consortium of overseers. Further, the proximate great powers, Austria, Russia, and Turkey, were not exactly the most advanced industrial powers in Europe. They had relatively little need for an added agrarian province to serve as an extra supplier of primary products and as a market for their own industrial goods.

It was Western Europe that was the more logical metropole for colonial Wallachia, and Wallachia developed in the nineteenth century as a colonial outpost of the more advanced Western economies" (Chirot 1976: 89).

Chirot's conceptualization of these developments as a shift from a protocolonial to a neocolonial system has been captured in Romanian sociology by Ilie Bădescu's enlightening phrase "the shift of peripheral axis" (Bădescu, forthcoming). Consequently, according to Bădescu, in the nineteenth century the Romanian lands moved over from the periphery of the Empire to the periphery of the Western metropolis, thereby experiencing not emancipation, but rather a new form of dependency. It is in this context that the use of the term "neocolonial" needs to be further specified.

In this context, the term "neocolonialism" helps to highlight an instance of peripheralization in nineteenth century Eastern Europe, which took place in the absence of colonial administration, but which had as a result the creation of "a blatantly colonial society" (Chirot 1976: 162) nevertheless. ... The economic peripheralization in Romania and the cultural reaction on the part of the Romanian intellectuals that this colonial situation stimulated must therefore be understood against this background.

The history of the new peripheralization starts with the signing of the Russian-Turkish Peace Treaty at Adrianople in September 1829 which warranted the abolishment of Turkish monopoly on Romanian trade and allowed Romanian vessels use of the Danube harbors for trade, at the same time restricting Turkey's right to interfere in Romanian internal affairs (cf. Giurescu 1972: 158). Although still under Turkish suzerainty and Russian occupation, Wallachia and Moldavia's newly gained right to free export meant that the wheat surpluses were no longer destined for the Ottoman Empire, but could be increasingly directed toward the Western markets, thus allowing for the purchase of previously unaffordable Western goods. This opening toward the West and increasing restriction of the Ottoman economic domination represents the culmination of a development already begun in 1774 by the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji, when Russia first gained access to the seas and harbors of the Ottoman Empire and the latter's commercial privilege over Wallachia and Moldavia's trade extended to Russia as well.

If the 1821 uprising could be regarded as a very distant echo of the 1789 French Revolution⁵ in the backward Romanian Principalities (Eliade 2000: 313) among a population only vaguely aware of its alternatives, by 1848 the process of consciousness-raising had been completed. At this point, it had become imperative to see Romanian development as a national development, impossible to achieve before the end of foreign domination in *all* three provinces.

52 The Constitution which the petty Moldavian nobility, led by Ioniță Tăutu, presented to the Ottoman Porte in 1822 contained a series of measures highly reminiscent of the 1789 French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, like constitutional ruling, equality before the law, full observance of property rights, freedom of speech, trade freedom, personal liberty. Russia and Turkey did not accept it precisely because of the very modern character of its provisions.

The main aim of the 1848 Romanian revolution therefore was that of uniting the Romanian principalities. Other issues, such as emancipation and allotment of the serfs by indemnification, abolition of the boyars' privileges and of the Organic Regulation, equality of civic and political rights, freedom of speech and of the press, and the creation of a national army, were also addressed. Some of them were put into practice by the decrees issued during the short rule of the revolutionary government in Wallachia (June 14th to September 28th). Yet the movement was stifled that same year by Russian and Turkish intervention, resulting in the restoring of the old regime of the Organic Regulations in both Wallachia and Moldavia, whose princes were to be appointed by the Sultan for seven years. Transylvania obtained removal of the Hungarian administration and recognition of its status as independent state body within the Austrian monarchy, but, with the defeat of the Hungarian revolution against the Habsburgs in 1849, became an imperial province directly subordinated to the Court in Vienna (Giurescu 1972: 173).

A new international status of the Romanian lands would not be established until the end of the Crimean War (1853-1856) between Russia on the one hand, and Great Britain, France, the Kingdom of Sardinia and the Ottoman Empire, on the other. Once again, the Romanian Principalities occupied a strategic position because of their access to the Black Sea and the mouth of Danube. If the Ottoman Empire, long in control of these strategic targets, had irretrievably become "the sick man of Europe", its possessions were at least as interesting for the Tsarist Empire as they were for the expansion of Western capital, always in search of new markets.

After Russia's defeat, Wallachia and Moldavia were removed from under the Russian protectorate and placed under the guarantee of the European powers. The latter also secured total control of the Danube Delta by forcing Russia to return southern Bessarabia to Moldavia. Caught between the need of uniting their territories the better to protect them, the proximate powers' attempts to incorporate them, and their position as "buffer state" (H.H. Stahl) warranting to one empire the security of its frontiers against another empire's attacks, Wallachia and Moldavia enjoyed a love-hate relationship with Western Europe which gained them their relative autonomy as a result of the Treaty of Paris (signed at the end of the Crimean War). The European powers' decision in this respect, rather than a generous act, only mirrored the many political and economic interests linked to the fate of the Romanian principalities.

Two main actors of the new peripheral modernity: the intermediate class and dependent thinking

It was not the middle class who brought to bear the onset of capitalism in Romania, but the middlemen, the *intermediate class*, highly specialized in moving the economic values from the periphery to the core of the world system. What had been lacking in the beginning of the nineteenth century, and was still absent after 1848, was a local Romanian middle class, whose formation was being stunted by the presence of foreigners in key positions. The ruling liberals of the 19th century strongly believed that the only way to modernize Romania was to fully import the Western superstructures and to place them over the local realities no matter the cost. This development from *top to bottom* was to become the "development by imitation" theorized by Eugen Lovinescu in the first half of the 20th century and criticized by the Junimea School at the time of its application as *a form without substance*. The problem was that trying to superimpose foreign forms over the local realities generated a wholly new reality with huge social costs which conservatives in the 19th century named the

semibarbarian society. Deconstructing the traditional realities by this top to bottom approach generated a long lasting conflict with severe consequences known in the epoch as the conflict between the *Legal Country* and the *Real Country*, i.e. between the rulers and the ruled. The main beneficiaries of this cleavage and important vectors of it were the intermediate class of the core interests in the periphery of the world system. The interesting fact is that when theoretizing on this matter, almost half a century later, Lovinescu Lovinescu, Eugen, **Istoria civilizației române moderne** [*The History of Contemporary Romanian Literature*, 1924-1925) was still convinced that the huge costs were “natural”, given the “primitivism” of the traditional society to be civilized. His paradigm of local development by imitation of the center of the world system is still active today under the name of “Europeanization” of the postcommunist society. In terms of the world system theory, the synchronization approach is related to the dependent form of thinking in the periphery.

Lovinescu stated that:

“Delayed as we were in our spiritual, economic and political structure, still medieval in the midst of contemporary history, our contribution to the organism of European life, i.e., interdependency, was out of the question, as is today the ‘determination’ in the sense of an imposition of differentiated and even inferior forms of social life, according to the narrow interest of advanced peoples [...]; but both ‘determination’ and ‘interdependency’, that is, both moments in the formation of modern Romanian civilization, dominated by a single spirit, can be subsumed under one law: the law of the *synchronism of modern life*, which operates in a leveling, not a differentiatory manner” (Lovinescu 1972: 394).

Theoretically, Lovinescu substantiated his approach on the basis of a modified version of the “laws of social imitation” by French sociologist Gabriel Tarde (Tarde 1895). Yet while Tarde had defined imitation as a manifestation of the universal law of repetition of social behaviors and had restricted it to mental individual interaction, Lovinescu extrapolated from it the essential element in the formation of social institutions and the main mechanism of the “contemporaneity of our material and moral life” (Lovinescu 1972: 404).

According to Lovinescu’s law of synchronism/contemporaneity, European societies assumed the configuration determined by the “spirit of our age” (the equivalent of Tacitus’ *saeculum*, or of the more common *Zeitgeist*) to the extent that they adopted its characteristic structures by means of imitation. Consequently, in the modern age, characterized by leveling, generalizing tendencies additionally enhanced by the impact of the means of communication facilitating the diffusion of imitation, synchronism ensured that “the direction of peoples’ development [...] is the same” (Lovinescu 1972: 397).

The history of modern Romanian civilization therefore exemplified, in Lovinescu’s view, the evolutionary course of every other European society. His account of this “natural” development translates as a reinterpretation of Romania’s modern history along the lines of his own law of synchronism achieved by imitation: In the nineteenth century, Romania had been included in the larger network of cultural and economic interdependency of contemporary life through the large numbers of Romanian youths pursuing their studies in Paris on the one hand, and through the 1829 Treaty of Adrianople on the other. The 1848 revolution, an instance of “imitative contagion” (Lovinescu 1972: 478) similar to most 1848 European revolutionary movements, had thus been the result of Romania’s exposure to the ideology underlying the French revolution of 1789. While the former’s character had of necessity been purely ideological – in the absence of a middle class to which the proclaimed social desiderata could correspond – it imprinted a revolutionary course to the entire subsequent development of Romanian society: “meagre in its immediate results [...], the

revolutionary movement produced a current of opinion which could no longer be overlooked [...]. Through revolution, our life axis shifted from the East to the West” (Lovinescu 1972: 228). From then on, the agent of change acting as “the necessary instrument of synchronism” (Lovinescu 1972: 387) by promoting the liberal ideology of the French Revolution would be the National Liberal Party, whose growth Lovinescu, viewed as a historical series paralleling the process of state formation.. In this case, Lovinescu adapted Tarde’s theory to the extent of turning it upside down, since, in the French sociologist’s model, imitation proceeded *ab interioribus ad exteriora*, i.e., the imitation of mental processes triggering specific social behavior preceded the imitation of the social behavior as such. Transferred to the level of macrosociological analysis after this reversal of sequence, the passage from simulation to stimulation (cf. Lovinescu 1972: 296), the equivalent of an evolution from forms to substance, was considered “the young civilizations’ only possibility of development”, while the “traditionalism” associated with the Romanian critical culture and the organic evolution it postulated was “a sociological impossibility: [...] it was precisely the lack of a strong tradition, coupled with the lack of an organized authority, that enabled such a sudden transformation of our civilization in a revolutionary sense” (Lovinescu 1972: 480).

It becomes increasingly clear that this ideological and political conflict had deeper epistemological roots – that is, it reproduced *within Romania* the very process of subalternization of knowledge through the imposition of global designs in reaction to which the critical culture had arisen in the first place.

Accordingly, liberal policy in Romania was a form without substance not simply because the country lacked the economic foundation capable of reflecting its institutional superstructure, but chiefly because the very basis of Western liberalism, the aforementioned “middle class that produces something”, fulfilled the opposite function in Romanian society, where it produced nothing, thus becoming a form of pseudo-liberalism and promoting an *underdevelopment policy*.

The so-called *intermediate class* is a minority playing a crucial role in the pursuit of the core’s economic interests. It is made up of two overlapping categories, *the landowners*, whose main function is the extraction of surplus from the peasants, and *the town merchants and administrators*, acting both in support of the core’s interests and of their own. Considering the centuries-old tradition that made it essential for a noble to supplement his income by getting appointed to a court or local administrative position (cf. Chirot 1976: 85), the administrative elite itself is either made up of or controlled by the landowning segment of the intermediate class. Both the landowners and the town merchants and administrators become “acculturated to the dominant ways of the metropole” (Chirot 1976: 58), and adopt its speech patterns, ways of dress and religious attitudes. Very much unlike the Western societies, where the bourgeoisie had developed in opposition to the old landed aristocracy, in neocolonial societies and therefore in Romania as well, the former was included in the latter.

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