

NATIONAL IDENTITY, NOURISHED FROM THE ROOTS OF HISTORY

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Abstract: *Perhaps the most concrete perspective of national identity is the historical one, because this perspective departs from real events spent in the past to bring their echo to date. For the formation of the Romanian nation and the Romanian State the reference moments are marked by large-scale national speeches, that make the transfer of the identity concepts from the elite to the masses. To capture the way in which the national feeling in Romania was propagated vertically (from intellectuals to peasants), the way in which he transformed from ethnic identity into national identity, is the quintessential way in which the national identity was born. Strengthening a relationship with the past, gradually led to the genesis of Romanian ethnic consciousness, which materialized in the unification programs of the Romanian nation. The analysis of messages transmitted by the elite in the past, who had succeeded to anime the entire Romanian population and led to the unification of all Romanian historical provinces, is important because this is the way we can have the image for what represents the contemporary speech regarding National Identity.*

Keywords: *national identity; national speeches; national cohesion; union; state nucleus*

1. INTRODUCTION

Romania has been set up as a state in the year 1859, when the union of the two principalities, Moldavia and Wallachia, was done by choosing a common ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza. The establishment of the first Romanian state nucleus was possible in the context of the international events of the time, and the consolidation of the Romanian state was also based on the enthronement of the United Principalities of a foreign prince, on the promulgation on July 1st 1866 of the first Constitution of Romania, on the War of Independence and the proclamation in 1881 of the Kingdom of Romania. The affirmation of the principle of nationalism at international level, that occurred mid-19th century, was a favorable context for establishing the nation-state, and the identity elements - developed above - found a good background to fall into place. The 1866 constitution, which was one of the fundamental elements of state support, was shaped on the Belgian Constitution of 1830 and was based on the idea of an ethno-cultural nation, being a modern constitution that promoted the principle of the separation of powers within the state. Subsequent to the Small Union of 1859 and the constitution of

the state nucleus, the Great Union of 1918 represented the completion of a historic process that resulted in the union of all the Romanian provinces in one national state, Romania.

In the work *Memoria națională românească*, Mihai Rusu (2015:24) has identified an active pattern regarding the movement of national emancipation from the "small" countries of Central and Eastern Europe, including Romania, in agreement with the three phases designed by the Czech historian Miroslav Hroch, namely:

- a) Phase A, of scholastic interest, in which the scholars "discover" the nation and by which they trigger the nation-state building movement;
- b) Phase B, of "patriotic agitation", in which the literacy people who discovered the nation start actions of ideological proselytism for the development of national consciousness;
- c) Phase C, the institutionalization of nationalism as a mass movement".

A brief presentation of the way in which the national feeling in Romania has propagated vertically (from intellectuals to peasants), the way in which ethnic identity has turned gradually in the national identity, is at least as important as the chronological presentation of historical events'

development. But the two levels: the ideological one, of provision of ethnic and linguistic arguments for the achievement of the union and the factual one, of the conduct of major political affairs, are intimately linked, even if there is a slight temporal gap.

Through this article we aim to investigate the hidden ideological dimension of the first two phases of the Hroch-Rusu model, which underpinned the institutionalization of Romanian nationalism.

2. THE PHASE OF SCHOLASTIC INTEREST. THE LATINIST FOUNDATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

2.1 Historical approaches. The idea of the Romanians' Latinity was the one that represented the kernel of Romanian ethnic identity, being common to Moldavians, Vlachs and Transylvanians. The first known author who supported the idea of the Latin origin of the Romanians was the Transylvanian humanist Nicolaus Olahus, in his work *Hungaria* (1536). This was followed by the writings of the Moldavian scholars who preached in the 17th and 18th centuries the common Latin origin of the Romanian people, among them Grigore Ureche – *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei* (1642-1647), Miron Costin - *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei de la Aron Vodă încoace, de unde este părăsit de Ureche* (1675) and *De neamul moldovenilor, din ce țară au ieșit strămoșii lor* (1686-1691), Dimitrie Cantemir – *Hronicul vechimei a romano-moldo-vlahilor* (1719-1722) and Ion Neculce - *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei de la Dabija Vodă până la a doua domnie a lui Constantin Mavrocordat* (1732-1744), but also the Wallachian humanist Constantin Cantacuzino - *Istoria Țării Rumânești dintru început* (1716). If in Wallachia and Moldavia, progress has been easier to be obtained, in view of the fact that the Romanian Principalities were autonomous as regards the internal politics, but had some limitations with regard to foreign policy, being vassal to the Ottoman Empire, Transylvania was in a very different situation, entering the Austrian Empire at the end of the 17th century as autonomous principality, and thereafter being included in the Habsburg Empire. The representatives of the Romanians in Transylvania have made sustained efforts to emancipate the community of Romanians, which, although they represent the majority population, have the status of tolerated nation. Numerous petitions have been addressed by those who today are known as part of the Transylvanian School, through which they

claimed rights for the Romanian population. The arguments of those petitions have become the guiding ideas of the Romanian population, in its fight for the recognition and the acquisition of independence, through the creation of the red wire of the national identity. The most important Latinologic ideological wave, drawing its roots in the chronicles of Grigore Ureche, grew at the end of the eighteenth century - the beginning of the nineteenth century, through the representatives of the Transylvanian School. Through the treatises of history and philology, of which we mention: - Samuil Micu *Elementa linguae daco-romanae sive valachicae* (1780, in collaboration with Gheorghe Șincai), *Istoria și lucrurile și întâmplările românilor* (1805), Gheorghe Șincai – *Hronica românilor și a mai multor neamuri...* (1811), Petru Maior – *Istoria pentru începutul românilor în Dachia* (1812) and the joint work *Lesicon românescu-latinescu-ungurescu-nemțescu or Lexiconul de la Buda* (1825) recourse is made to the *strictly* Roman origin of the Romanian people.

Seemingly simple works of history (and philology), those listed above have designed ideologically - especially in Transylvania, at the beginning of the 19th century - the concept of nation (at the phase A of the Hroch-Rusu perspective The Transylvanian School, for example, appealed to the Roman origin of the Romanian people as a reparatory gesture towards the exclusion of Romanians from social-political life through the *Unio Trium Nationum* (1437). The Latin hypothesis was launched with no declared scientific purposes, but with the political purpose (ideologically fueled) to put Romanians in equal rights with the other nations of Transylvania. The works of the Transylvanian Enlighteners aimed to prove by historical facts and especially by language the noble origin and continuity of Romanity on the left of the Danube, responding to a wave of works by the revisionists Fr. Joseph Sulzer, I.C.Eder, Bella Marton or I. Chr. Engel, who had fed the idea of the uninhabited space of the Carpathian arch at the arrival of the Hungarians, the *terra deserta* theory. In the absence of substantiation with incontestable scientific arguments, the works of the Transylvanian School were ideologically used by the new wave of revisionists (among them the German philologist Robert Rösler) against the very idea of continuity and Romanian national identity with Roman roots. The Rösler turn was made possible by feeding the two antagonistic theoretical approaches with ideas from common studies, also devoid of scientific consistency:

One of these studies, known probably not in its depth by all the representatives of the Transylvanian School, given the takeover “in waves” of the ideas proliferated, is *De regno Dalmatiae et Croatiae of Ioan Lucius (Lučić)* (1604-1679).¹ Lucius believes that the name *vlah* is an appellate first used by Bulgarians to determine a people formed south of the Danube from the mixture of Roman captives with “other ethnic remnants” in the Empire, left after the Aurelian withdrawal or displaced by other peoples before the invasion of the Bulgars. The Revisionists, headed by Engel, take over the idea of the formation / displacement of Romanians south of the Danube, given the lack of “ideological resistance”. As a matter of fact, the representatives of the Transylvanian School, starting with Maior, overlook the interpretations related to the subject of the Aurelian withdrawal. Perhaps Lucius's theory, for example, would not have been so important as a landmark if it did not constitute a reference in consolidating the Latinist theory. The Latin-Romanian comparisons of Ioan Lucius's work² are resumed by Șincai and Maior (and used, by reference to other studies by the other representatives of the Transylvanian ideological movement). Obviously, neither Șincai nor Maior could mistakenly regard the intention prefigured in the source of *De regno Dalmatiae et Croatiae* source as long as they fed their ideology from Lucius's Latinist hypothesis, and neither could they combat the revisionist ideology. Historical truth could not be made up of half-truths, “convenient” to the proposed goal (Lesenciuc, 2016: 106-107).

But the Röslerian works are also devoid of scientific arguments and they are full of contradictions, and in this phase of scholastic interest, confrontation could only be carried out at the ideological level. The Enlightenment exaggerations of the Transylvanian School are rooted in the reality of the epoch, the first half of the nineteenth century, sometimes bypassing historical truth from political reasons, but this perspective led to parallel developments: a later recourse to the scientific instrumentation of many historiographers, respectively a retention within the projection of the ideologically based path, pursuing political goals, in the case of some of the foreign historiographers:

¹ “Lucius's theory has been widely known to Romanian historiography starting with Petru Maior and his descendants up to the present day” (Armbruster, 1993: 180).

² Ioan Lucius notes, among others: “Valachi autem hodierni quicunque lingua Valacha loquuntur seipsos non dicunt Vlachos aut Valachos sed Rumenos et a Romanis ortos gloriantur, Romanaque lingua loqui profitentur (...)” (Armbruster, 1993:180).

(...) to a large number of modern historiographers of Slav, German and Hungarian nationality, the political character seems to form today as in the past the environment of scientific investigations, the background of the historical study, when it comes to the origin of our ancestry (Pop, 1999: 194) .

Under these conditions, “the need for a correct understanding of the context of the Transylvanian School emergence is fundamental” (Lesenciuc, 2016:114) and therefore a balanced situation away from any ideological deformation produced by certain exaggerations is necessary in the study with the scientific tools at its disposal of the relationships between the ideological and factual levels of propagating the idea of national identity.

2.2 Linguistic approaches. Along with the expression of the historical arguments for the Latinist foundation of national identity, a remarkable activity of promoting it was achieved by printing books and publications in Romanian. In the vicinity of Orthodox churches and schools in Romanian - as is the case with the first Romanian school near the Church of St. Nicolae from Șcheii Brașov - printers were set up. The whole affirmation of national identity by linguistic arguments is based on the founding work of Coresi, who saw in the Romanian prints not only a way of destroying the Slavic “darkness”, destroying the Slavonic barriers that comprised the Romanian language and writing, but also a way of approaching the Romanians through the liturgical practice to a sort of community identity, which underpinned the ethnic and then national identity. The edifier is Coresi's continuous reference to the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians: “In the holy church better to speak 5 words with meaning than 10 thousand words misunderstood in the foreign language” (*Preface to Întrebare creștinească*, 1560, v. and *Epilogue to the Tetraevanghelul* of 1561, and *Preface / Polojenie at the Molitvenicul rumânesc* (1567) and *Epilogue to the Psaltirea românească* of 1570, etc.), which transforms from the coresian typographical approach into a substantive approach in terms of national identity through language. Coresi's action in the second half of the sixteenth century was one that “polarized the unity of speech, thought and feeling of a nation” (Oltean, 2009: 20), a concerted action of drawing attention to the role of language in the formation of cultural consciousness:

And if I read and learned that all are interpreted and testified and strengthened with the Holy Scriptures, and I was very fond of writing and I printed for you

my Romanian brothers, to teach you, and I pray that you my brothers will be honest and honorable, that you will see yourself the way the pearl is and the hidden treasure you will learn / reveal ... (Coresi, 1998: 187)

Having the intuition of the literary language, Coresi laid the foundations for the subsequent settlements, most of them in the same cultural centre of Brasov, which also benefited from the freedom of expression and the printing infrastructure needed to promote cultural unity through language. Extending from religious writings to secular ones - see the work of priest Petcu Șoanul from Șcheii Brașovului, which printed in 1733 the first almanac in Romanian - was the natural step before the rigorous grammar foundation, starting with the first *Gramatică românească* (1755-1757), of Dimitrie Eustatievici, the Brașovian, which was the basis of the Romanian grammar of the enlightener Radu Tempea, but also of the one written in Latin by the Transylvanian Schoolmen, Gh. Sincai and S. Micu, *Elementa linguae daco-romanae sive valachicae*. Remaining in this area of language-based foundations, the work of 1780 produces important graphical mutations and the removal of Slavonic writing, for the purposes of later influencing and phonetics, for example: replacing the semivowel *î* with *i* in the beginning of the word (eg. *imperat*), i.e. with the *e* and *a* inside of the word: (E.g. *Fen, camp*), replacing the velars *k* and *g* in the current graphics *ch* and *gh* with *cl* and *gl* (e.g. *clau, glație*), of the sound *c* followed by a vocal with the latin *qv* (e.g. *qvand*), the doubling of the liquids (e.g. *terra*), noting the wheezing *ș* with *s* (e.g. *resina*), of the hissing *ț* with *ç* or *ti* (e.g. *fație, tiene*), the replacement of *z* with *d* (e.g. *diu*), of the group *pt* with *ct* (e.g. *lacte*), of the group *șt* with *sc* or *st* (e.g. *crescere, esti*), but also the call to the initial prosthetic *h* (e.g. *hom*) (Rosetti *et al.*, 1971:452-453).

The most important steps in expressing the national identity through the written word were the printing of the first Romanian publications in the first half of the nineteenth century: *Chrestomaticul românesc* of Theodor Racocce from Cernăuți (1820), *Foaia duminicii* of Ioan Barac of Brașov (1837), which started the extensive translation program from Shakespeare, Marmontel, Gessner, Schiemann, Kotzbue, etc., including from *Halima* or *1001 nights* and from the *Odyssey*, but especially through *Gazeta de Transilvania* - the first Romanian political publication - and by *Foaie pentru minte, inimă și literatură* of George Barițiu

(1838). The publications of Brașov do not help by chance to develop the national identity, but are part of a program undertaken to continue the founding work of Coresi, as evidenced by George Barițiu's essay from the 25th number of 1840 of *Foaie pentru minte, inimă și literatură*:

However, the language is more pronounced on which nationality is founded. And let's not forget that speaking a language one way or another does not depend only on the outside elements, but more due to some inward features that all of you have and one who lives in closer relationship with each other. Therefore nationality, after my own account, is a natural need, and the language is the fortune, the holy property of a nation. (Barițiu, 1840, *apud* Hangiu, 1968:76-79).

The assertion of identity through language and literature led, with the emergence of the first Romanian publications, to Phase B of the Hroch-Rusu model, that of the ideological proselytism through "patriotic agitation", through programs of development of national consciousness.

3. THE "PATRIOTIC AGITATION" PHASE THE THEORY OF FORMS WITHOUT THE SUBSTANCE

The design of national consciousness, reached in the second phase, was realized on a discursive level through partisan substantiation, through aspects related to the projection of the present critical discourse. In order to define the national identity, it was necessary to distinguish between 'us' and 'them' - a discursive element specific to the nineteenth Romanian century, culminating in an active level with the Revolution of 1848 (as a reverberation of phase A, previously analyzed) and ideologically with the Maiorescian program of *Convorbiri literare*, based on Mihail Kogălniceanu's *Dacia literară* program. But the phase of "patriotic agitation" was not characterized by action against the other, but by amending the allogeneic element in relation to its own direction, with the national path, with the natural course of modernization with internal resources. Even though the "imitation" has been amended by previous studies, including those of George Barițiu, or by the cultural program of *Dacia literară*: "The desire for imitation has become a dangerous mania for us, because it kills in us the national spirit ..." (Kogălniceanu, 1840/1967:127), the true expression of the protection of national identity through an "inward" journey has been produced by the Maiorescian theory of forms

without substance: "The form without substance not only does not make any use, but it is quite ruinous, because it destroys a powerful means of culture" (Maioreescu, 1868/1989: 129). The greatest danger, from this perspective, is the loss of identity through cultural dilution, by deviating from the natural course of culture:

For without culture a nation can still live in the hope that at the natural moment of their development this beneficial form of human life will emerge; but with a false culture a nation cannot live, and if it persists in it, then it gives an example more to the old law of history: that in the struggle between true civilization and a resilient nation the nation is destroyed, but never the truth (Maioreescu, 1868/1989: 130).

Basically, we are in the pre-institutional foundation of nationalism, in a phase of cultural nationalism that sometimes overlooks or develops in parallel with political nationalism, aiming, in summary, to "achieve or maintain the autonomy and political individuality of a group that considers itself - in a larger or smaller proportion - a potential or actual nation" (Dungaciu, 2018:105), serving the national state/ the future unitary national state. Unfortunately, this nationalism, that can be analyzed in the context of the era, is decontextualized and interpreted, in one direction or another, in the light of various current interpretative interests. And if Maioreescu's theory of forms without substance is not directly amended, Mihai Eminescu's theory of superposed layer, derived from the Maioreescian one is the subject of many contemporary commentaries, most of which decontextualizing the projection. For Eminescu, the theory of forms without substance is not a theoretical framework usable in explaining some aspects of the society, but rather an explanatory principle of the society affected by the presence of a "superposed layer" that takes advantage of the transformations of society, allowing non-critical copying of western institutional forms. "The national character is not founded by public morality" (Eminescu, 1989:110), and imitate leads to weakening of the substance. A weak substance means, in fact, the weakening of national consciousness, because empty forms cannot serve to the cultural regeneration and the strengthening of the nation.

The theory of forms without substance, applicable to "all "peripheral delayed" societies, in the condition of "dependent development", societies in transition to a model already developed in developed societies" (Georgiu, 2000: 154) is the

one serving as a catalyst in the development of national consciousness, pervading and fueling nationalist political traits, such as the narrative one, developed under the sign of the national project. Without these projects, without these polarizations, the nationalist discourse would not have probably been possible. The phase of "patriotic agitation" in the ideological substratum corresponds to the foundation of "national consciousness", which according to Ernest Renan's meaning actually represents the nation. The ideological foundations of the two incipient phases are those that have, in fact, allowed the establishment and foundation of the concept of national identity. The simple popular actions of 1859 and 1918 could not have taken place without such a rigorous foundation, deeply rooted in national history, and leading to the crystallization of national consciousness.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Ideologically, the first phase of the Hroch-Rusu model begins in the second half of the 16th century and continues until the beginning of the nineteenth century. The second phase extends during the nineteenth century and during the first two decades of the 20th century. There is no clear demarcation between them, but only a form of organic continuity. The factual expression of these two phases, continuing with the third, that of the institutionalization of nationalism through the political programs in the Kingdom and Transylvania, occurred on a scale that allows historical analysis and chronological rendering. From this point of view, according to Otto Bauer's view, of the nation seen as a "community of destiny" (more precisely with the Romanian expression of the "community of destiny" in the meaning of Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, 1942/1998:569-582) without a solid ideological projection, without the appropriate steps in the ideological underground of phases A and B of the Hroch-Rusu model, we could not have talked today about Romanian national identity in the same terms. In other words, without the Romanian nation in the pre-politic sense (projected in the phases of scholastic interest and ideological proselytism), the nation in political sense would have been an inoperative concept.

Summing up the ideological path of the evolution of the national idea, the consolidation of a relationship with the past gradually led to the genesis of the Romanian ethnic consciousness, which materialized in the unification programs of the Romanian nation.

There were also voices who argued that the history was artificially invented and rewritten to give meaning and content to collective memory in support of the creation of states. The conspiratorial and destabilizing theories of this kind, which had the purpose of defeating the common effort, did not have the power to counter the collective effort of unification and the national spirit.

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