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Correspondence, manuscripts and books should be sent to: Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Doctoral School in History, Bdul Victoriei nr. 5-7 550024 Sibiu, Romania.

e-mail: ioan-marian.tiplic@ulbsibiu.ro,

anamaria.tudorie@ulbsibiu.ro



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Radiocarbon data from the archaeological site of Turdaş-Luncă (preventive research of 2011)(IV)¹

Sabin Adrian Luca

Tiberiu Bogdan Sava, Maria Ilie, Andreea Dima,
Daniela Pascal, Gabriela Sava, Cristian Mănăilescu

Florentin Perianu

Raluca Teodorescu

Keywords: *eneolithic and classic dacian period, radiocarbon dates, Turdaş-Luncă, preventive research campaign of 2011, Transylvania, Romania.*

Abstract: *The preventive archaeological researches of 2011 led to sensational discoveries. These include evidence for the extraction of radiocarbon data. We analyze new evidence from the periods: neolithic and eneolithic (Turdaş culture), eneolithic (Petreşti culture) and classical dacian period (1st century AD).*

Radiocarbon research of the Turdaş-Luncă archaeological site is the result of a collaboration between Brukenthal National Museum and „H. Hulubei” Institute of the Romanian Academy.

First direct collaboration between the two institutions was carried out in order to analyze a lot of archaeological materials collected from the site of Tărtăria-Gura Luncii² which came to light in the wake of preventive research from 2014³.

The good development of the collaboration, as well as the acuity and fineness of the obtained scientific results, made it necessary to continue the collaboration at an even faster pace.

Thus began the preprocessing of lots, much more numerous, from Turdaş-Luncă. Some of these (on absolute dating on some stratigraphic parts of the site) have been – already – published⁴.

¹ Articolul este realizat ca rezultat al proiectului *Primul oraş preistoric datat cu mijloace moderne din România*, cofinanţat de Administraţia Fondului Cultural Naţional (contract nr. PI 145/4.06.2019). Proiectul nu reprezintă în mod necesar poziţia Administraţiei Fondului Cultural Naţional. AFCN nu este responsabilă de conţinutul proiectului sau de modul în care rezultatele proiectului pot fi folosite. Acestea sunt în întregime responsabilitatea beneficiarului finanţării.

² Luca 2016.

³ Luca *et alii* 2016.

⁴ Luca *et alii* 2017b; Luca *et alii* 2017d; Luca *et alii* 2018.

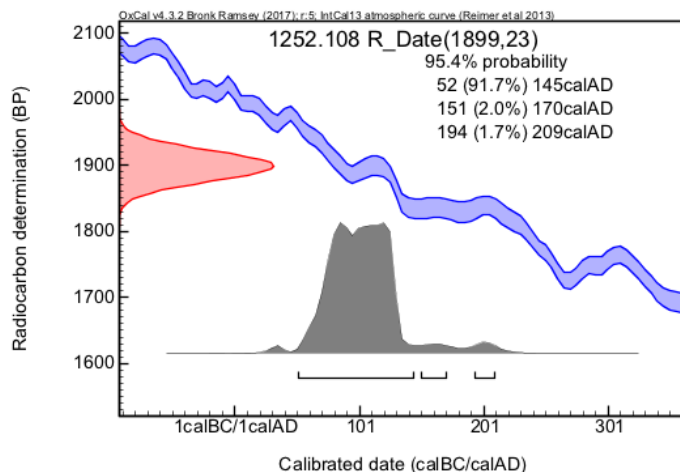


Fig. 1. Turdaș-Luncă. 2011 campaign. RoAMS-1052.108. Classic Dacian civilization.

Classical dacian culture

Apart from the neolithic and eneolithic archaeological materials, other archaeological materials have been discovered on the site which is the occasion of these lines⁵. We knew this from the first synthesis made on the excavations of Zsófia Torma by the researcher M. Roska from Cluj⁶.

To our satisfaction, in the research area called A₁ a part of a ritual field of the dacians during the classical period of development of their civilization came to light⁷.

And in this part of the research we proceeded to extract coal from the archaeological feature 1003. As can be seen in Table I, the obtained date is within the time period relatively granted to the discovery (centuries I-II AD).

Table I. Turdaș. Absolute data for Classical Dacian civilization.

Number	Dating	BC Dating	Sector	Feature	Relative Dating	Dated material

⁵ We have already reported this kind of discoveries, from all ages, in the synthesis work published immediately after the 2011 research: Luca *et alii* 2012. Other works have been carried out by 2019. Archaeological materials from roman or medieval times have always appeared and, rarely, from the Bronze Age or Hallstatt.

⁶ Roska 1941.

⁷ Luca (coord.) 2012, p. 119-130; Natea *et alii* 2012; Natea *et alii* 2013.

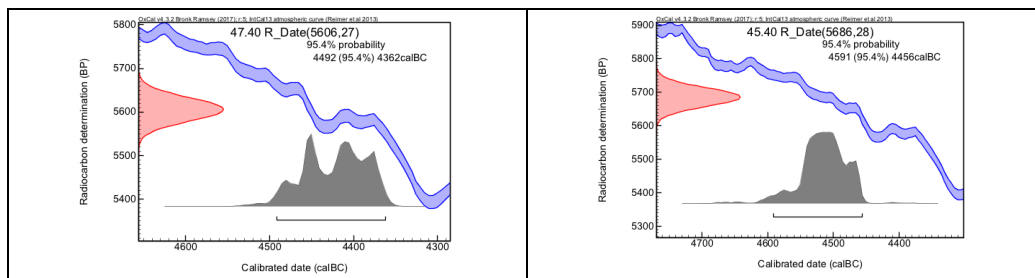
RoAMS-1052.108, fig. 1	1899±23	2σ (95,4% probability) - probability of 91.7% of the age being between 52-145 calAD - probability of 2.0% of the age being between 151-170 calAD - probability of 1.7% of the age being between 194-209 calAD	A ₁	1003	Classical Dacian epoch	Coal
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Petrești culture

Phase I

Archaeological materials taken from platforms (surface dwellings) and other types of deepened archaeological features have already been published (radiocarbon data). They belong – in our opinion – to an early horizon of culture with this name. However, the data show that it is not about a contemporaneity with the Turdaș culture here, in the eponymous site of the culture with this name⁸.

We have already published details about the cultural expression of the Petrești culture from Turdaș⁹.



⁸ Luca *et alii* 2017d; Luca *et alii* 2018.

⁹ Luca 2018a.

Fig. 2. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. RoAMS-47.40. Petreşti culture, phase I.	Fig. 3. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. RoAMS-45.40. Petreşti culture, phase I.
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Table II. Absolute dates for Petreşti culture, phase I.

Number	BP Dating	BC Dating	Sector	Feature	Relative Dating	Dated material
RoAMS-47.40, fig. 2	5606±27	2σ (95,4% probability) between 4492-4362 calBC	B	1878	Petreşti, phase I	Animal bone – 446.18 gr. with packaging
RoAMS-45.40, fig. 3	5686±28	2σ (95,4% probability) between 4591-4456 calBC	C	403	Petreşti, phase I	Animal bone – 325.27 gr. with packaging

Turdaş culture Phase III

Unfortunately, so far we do not have radiocarbon data for the Turdaş III horizon (surface dwellings with floor). One of the reasons is the shortening of the dwelling time, but also the destruction of the ruins of the Turdaş III demolition infrastructure by the Petreşti culture to create the elevations, the platforms, on which they built their houses.

We have noticed that – at least after the composition of the forms of the house pillars and the way of their digging – there would be two forms of foundation architecture. In phase III the houses have a „classical” foundation form, and in phase II/III it is a mixed type of foundation. Some of the pillars are not buried in rectangular pits with rounded corners, but in „classic” round pits.

From this phase, III we have once, RoAMS-1251.108, which is about 5850 BP which is – after us – the one of the beginning of the phase III.

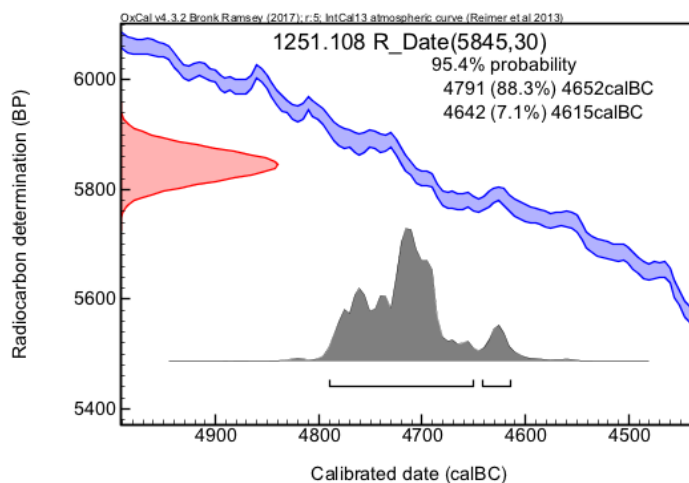


Fig. 4. Turdaș-Luncă. 2011 campaign. RoAMS-1251.108. Turdaș culture, phase III.

Table III. Absolute date for Turdaș culture, phase III.

Number	BP Dating	BC Dating	Sector	Feature	Relative Dating	Dated material
RoAMS-1251.108, fig. 4	5845±30	2σ (95,4% probability) - probability of 88.3% of the age being between 4791-4652 calBC - probability of 7.1% of the age being between 4642-4615 calBC	C	1512	Turdaș, phase III	Coal

Turdaș culture

Phase II. 5850 represents, according to us, between the last years of phase II of the Transylvanian culture. Both typologico-stylistic and as absolute years, this phase lasts over 50 years BP.

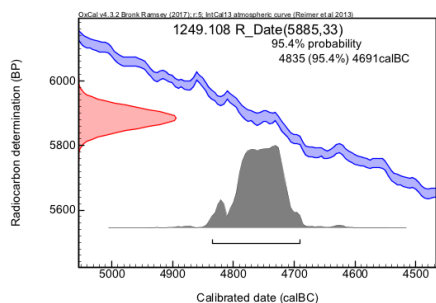


Fig. 5. Turdaș-Luncă. 2011 campaign. RoAMS-1249.108. Turdaș culture, phase II.

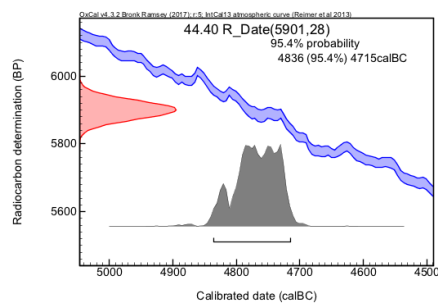


Fig. 6. Turdaș-Luncă. 2011 campaign. RoAMS-44.40. Turdaș culture, phase II.

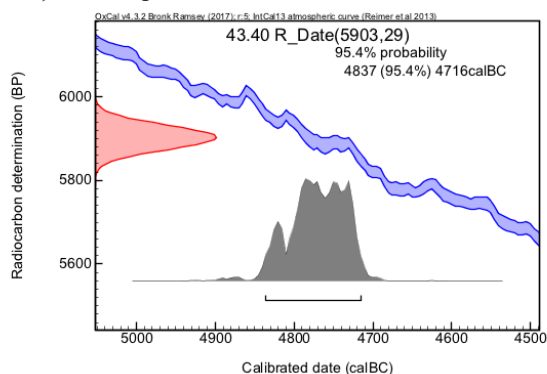


Fig. 7. Turdaș-Luncă. 2011 campaign. RoAMS-43.40. Turdaș culture, phase II.

Table IV. Absolute date for Turdaș culture, phase II.

Number	BP Dating	BC Dating	Sector	Feature	Relative Dating	Dated material
RoAMS-1249.108, fig. 5	5885±3	2σ (95,4% probability) - 4835-4691 calBC	B	217	Turdaș, phase II	Coal
RoAMS-44.40, fig. 6	5901±8	2σ (95,4% probability) - 4836-4715 calBC	A (area A ₁)	1021A	Turdaș, phase II	Animal bone – 867.75 gr. with packaging
RoAMS-43.40, fig. 7	5903±9	2σ (95,4% probability) - between 4837-4716 calBC	B	1827	Turdaș, phase II	Animal bone – 427,25 gr. with packaging

Turdaş culture

Phase I/II

This phase of Turdaş culture has been defined by us in last years, in several articles¹⁰.

It draws attention to the painting of Tăualaş type, as a component part of the Turdaş culture, but also its use in at least two typological-stylistic phases, I/II and II. These two parts of the same time (II) are at least 100 years old BP.

From the point of view of architecture we notice the deepened houses, having several (two-three) pits used for living.

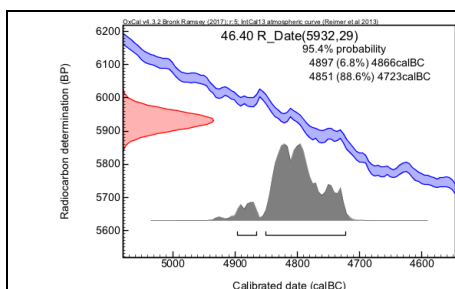


Fig. 8. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. RoAMS-46.40. Turdaş culture, phase I/II.

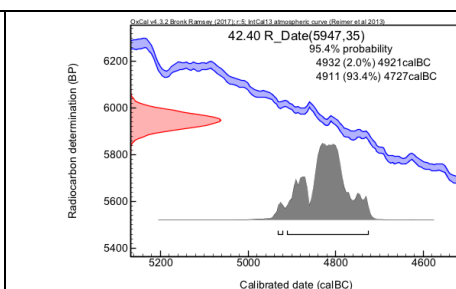


Fig. 9. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. RoAMS-42.40. Turdaş culture, phase I/II.

Table V. Absolute date for Turdaş culture, phase I/II.

Number	BP Dating	BC Dating	Sector	Feature	Relative Dating	Dated material
RoAMS-46.40, fig. 8	5932±29	2σ (95,4% probability): - probability of 6.8% of the age being between 4897-4866 calBC - probability of 88.6% of the age being between 4851-4723 calBC	A	23	Turdaş, phase I/II	Animal bone – 367.05 gr. with packaging
RoAMS-42.40, fig. 5	5947±35	2σ (95,4% probability):	A	33	Turdaş, phase I/II	Animal bone –

¹⁰ Luca *et alii* 2017; Luca *et alii* 2017a; Luca *et alii* 2017c.

9		- probability of 2.0% of the age being between 4932-4921 calBC - probability of 93.4% of the age being between 4911-4727 calBC				322,43 gr. with packaging
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Turdaş culture Phase I

This chronological and cultural horizon was one of the least known in terms of the beginning of the culture and the site. Absolute chronological data, but also the typological-stylistic approaches necessary to define the place of the beginning of the culture within the surrounding contexts, were missing.

More. The reports of this culture to the great neolithic and eneolithic culture in this part of Europe, Vinča, were not well known and led to groundless theories today¹¹. The notions of Vinča -Turdaş and Turdaş- Vinča are undoubtedly outdated.

The following data undoubtedly shows an unexpected reality for many researchers. First, we see that this phase is also at least 100 years old BP.

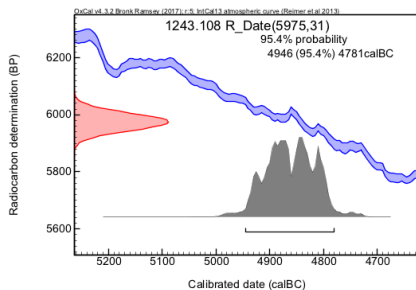


Fig. 10. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. RoAMS-1243.108 Turdaş culture, phase I.

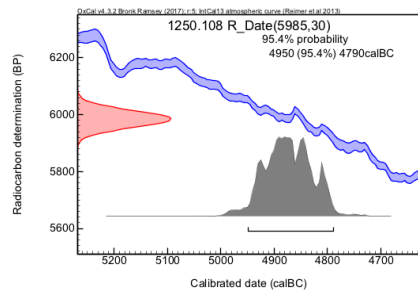


Fig. 11. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. RoAMS-1250.108. Turdaş culture, phase I.

¹¹ Our last position: Luca 2006.

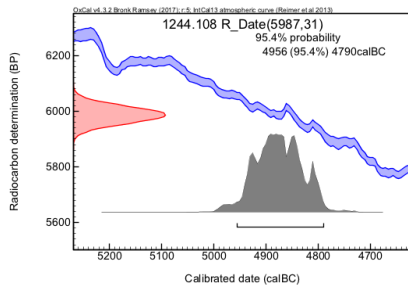


Fig. 12. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. RoAMS-1244.108. Turdaş culture, phase I.

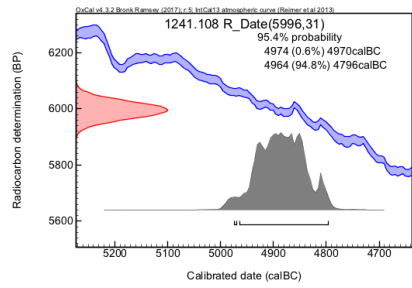


Fig. 13. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. RoAMS-1241.108. Turdaş culture, phase I.

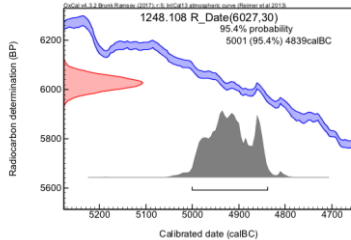


Fig. 14. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. RoAMS-1248.108. Turdaş culture, phase I.

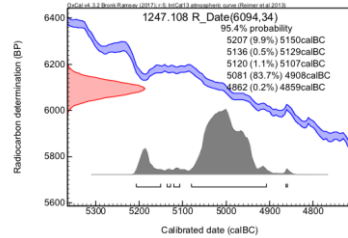


Fig. 15. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. RoAMS-1247.108. Turdaş culture, phase I.

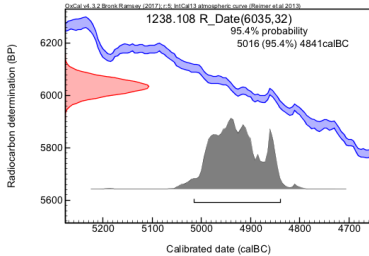


Fig. 16. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. RoAMS-1238.108. Turdaş culture, phase I.

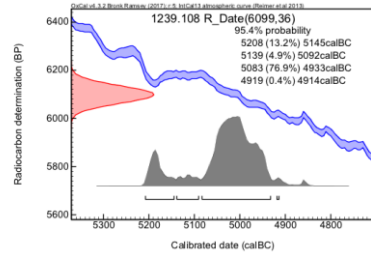


Fig. 17. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. RoAMS-1239.108. Turdaş culture, phase I.

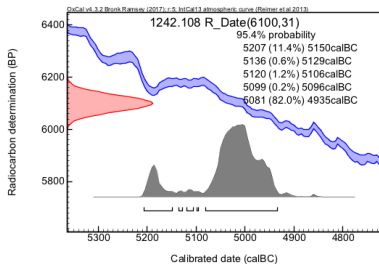


Fig. 18. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. RoAMS-1242.108. Turdaş culture, phase I.

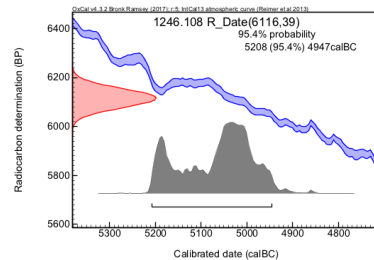


Fig. 19. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. RoAMS-1246.108. Turdaş culture, phase I.

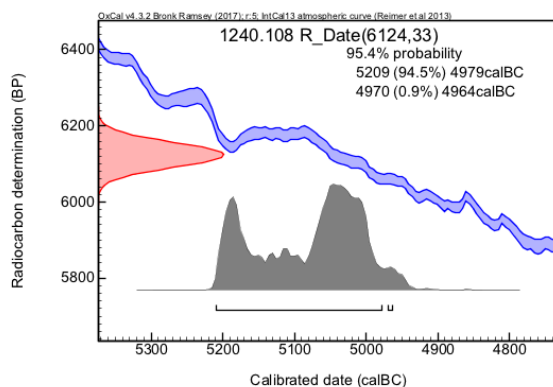


Fig. 20. Turdaş-Luncă. 2011 campaign. RoAMS-1240,108. Turdaş culture, phase I.

Secondly, we find an unexpected correlation between the fortifications discovered by us during the research¹² and the very old phases of the site.

Table VI. Absolute date for Turdaş culture, phase I.

Number	BP Dating	BC Dating	Sector	Feature	Relative Dating	Dated material	m
RoAMS-1243.108, fig. 10	5975±31	2σ (95,4% probability): - 4946-4781 calBC	B	351	Turdaş, phase I	Coal	
RoAMS-1250.108, fig. 11	5985±30	2σ (95,4% probability): - 4950-4790 calBC	C	1673	Turdaş, phase I	Coal	
RoAMS-1244.108, fig. 12	5987±31	2σ (95,4% probability): - 4956-4790 calBC	A	88	Turdaş, phase I	Coal	
RoAMS-1241.108, fig. 13	5996±35	2σ (95,4% probability): - probability of 0.6% of the age being between 4974-4970 calBC - probability of 94.8% of the	B	238	Turdaş, phase I	Coal	

¹² Luca (coord.) 2012, p. 33-45; Luca et Suciú 2014; Luca et Suciú 2015.

		age being between 4964- 4796 calBC				
RoAMS- 1248.108, fig. 14	6027±3 0	2σ (95,4% probability): - 5001- 4839calBC	B	218	Turdaş, phase I	Coal
RoAMS- 1238.108, fig. 16	6055±3 4	2σ (95,4% probability): - 5016-4841 calBC	A	146	Turdaş, phase I	Coal
RoAMS- 1247.108, fig. 15	6094±3 4	2σ (95,4% probability): - probability of 9.9% of the age being between 5207-5150 calBC - probability of 0.5% of the age being between 5136-5129 calBC - probability of 1.1% of the age being between 5120-5107 calBC - probability of 83.7% of the age being between 5081- 4908 calBC - probability of 0.2% of the age being between 4862-4859 calBC	B	194	Turdaş, phase I	Coal
RoAMS- 1239.108, fig. 17	6099±3 6	2σ (95,4% probability): - probability of 13.2% of the age being between 5208- 5145 calBC	B	267	Turdaş, phase I	Coal

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - probability of 4.9% of the age being between 5139-5092 calBC - probability of 76.9% of the age being between 5083-4933 calBC - probability of 0.4% of the age being between 4919-4914 calBC 				
RoAMS-1242.108, fig. 18	6100±31	<p>2σ (95,4% probability):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - probability of 11.4% of the age being between 5207-5150 calBC - probability of 0.6% of the age being between 5136-5129 calBC - probability of 1.2% of the age being between 5120-5106 calBC - probability of 0.2% of the age being between 5099-5096 calBC - probability of 82.0% of the age being between 5081-4935 calBC 	B	210	Turdaș, phase I	Coal
RoAMS-1246.108, fig. 19	6116±39	<p>2σ (95,4% probability):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5208-4947 	A	83	Turdaș, phase I	Coal

		calBC				
RoAMS-1240,108, fig. 20	6124±33	2σ (95,4% probability): - probability of 94.5% of the age being between 5209-4979 calBC - probability of 0.9% of the age being between 4970-4964 calBC	B	187	Turdaş, phase I	Coal

This batch of radiocarbon data is beginning to put order in the long-speculated chronological and cultural realities over time.

If we are to refer to the cultural realities of Hungary – which is often referred to – we see that, in Transylvania, Turdaş culture, phase I, is largely contemporary (according to the radiocarbon data in this article) with the old Tisa¹³ culture, and phases I/II, II and II/III with the classic Tisa culture¹⁴.

These data could be seen, at large, and so far in the database created on <http://arheologie.ulbsibiu.ro>¹⁵.

From Z. Torma¹⁶ to M. Roska¹⁷ or other authors¹⁸, over time, the Turdaş site has been more speculated – chronologically and culturally – than researched. And we, based much on the axisting literature, have speculated – without necessarily wanting to – the data of our own research¹⁹, but, always, have no solid basis. Today, however, we are getting closer and closer to the truth closest to reality, of these times, using intensely everything that current technology offer us.

We hope that the publication of the data extracted from the soil in the last period, as well as the research of new evidence by the radiocarbon

¹³ Yerkes 2009, p. 1097-1098.

¹⁴ Yerkes 2009, p. 1096-1097.

¹⁵ Luca et Suciú 2007; Luca et Suciú 2007a.

¹⁶ Luca 2001, p. 19-27; Luca 2012 (coord.), p. 11-15.

¹⁷ Roska 1941, p. 7-15; Luca 2001, p. 27-29; Luca 2012 (coord.), p. 15-16.

¹⁸ Luca 2001, p. 2929-32; Luca 2012 (coord.), p. 16-18.

¹⁹ Lazarovici *et alii* 2014; Luca 1993; Luca 1996; Luca 1996a; Luca 1996b; Luca 1998; Luca 2001; Luca 2003; Luca 2010; Luca et Spânu 2001; Luca *et alii* 2009; Luca *et alii* 2009a; Luca *et alii* 2012.

method, will bring us closer to the known truth about a civilization so much scientifically speculated, that of the Turdaş culture.

Acknowledgement

On this occasion, I have to thank, once again, to the team from the Institute „H. Hulubei”, but also to all those who worked in the field, to really get to know the Transylvanian culture Turdaş.

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Fig. 7. Turdaş-*Luncă*. 2011 campaign. RoAMS-43.40. Turdaş culture, phase II.

Fig. 8. Turdaş-*Luncă*. 2011 campaign. RoAMS-46.40. Turdaş culture, phase I/II.

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Table VI. Absolute date for Turdaş culture, phase I.

Abbreviations

ActaTS	- <i>Acta Terrae Septemcastrensis</i> , Universitatea „Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu
AnB(SN)	- <i>Analele Banatului. Serie nouă</i> , Muzeul Banatului, Timișoara
Apulum	- <i>Apuulum. Acta Musei Apulensis</i> , Muzeul Național al Unirii, Alba Iulia
Banatica	- <i>Banatica</i> , Muzeul Banatului Montan, Reșița
BB	- <i>Bibliotheca Brukenthal</i> , Muzeul Național Brukenthal, Sibiu
BCMI	- <i>Buletinul Comisiei Monumentelor Istorice</i> , București
BMA	- <i>Bibliotheca Musei Apulensis</i> , Muzeul Național al Unirii, Alba Iulia
BrukAM	- <i>Brukenthal. Acta Musei</i> , Muzeul Național Brukenthal, Sibiu
BS	- <i>Bibliotheca Septemcastrensis</i> , Universitatea „Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu
ForVL	- <i>Forschungen zur Volks- und Landeskunde</i> , Institutul de Științe Socio-Umane al Academiei Române, Sibiu
SIC.SH	- <i>Studia Universitatis Cibiniensis. Series Historia</i> , Universitatea „Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu

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COLLECTORS AND COLLECTIONS AN UNEXPECTED CASE (I)

Marius-Mihai-Ciută²⁰

Keywords: criminal investigation, collector, stolen artefacts, forgeries, counterfeits.

Rezumat: În perioada imediat următoare a evenimentelor din 1989, unii cetățeni români care au beneficiat de câștiguri financiare mai mult sau mai puțin neașteptate, au decis să investească/tezurizeze fonduri considerabile din câștigurile lor în bunuri de patrimoniu cultural, punând bazele unor colecții particulare. Studiul de față dorește să surprindă o parte din mecanismele prin care au fost alcătuite unele din colecțiile de acest gen, de către persoane care nu aveau cunoștințe de specialitate în domeniu, ce au căzut victime traficantilor de antichități, care au pus în vânzare fie artefacte sustrate din situri arheologice fie falsuri, unele de foarte slabă calitate. Fenomenul a fost unul destul de răspândit, deoarece funcționa în conformitate cu mecanismul oricărei piețe: cerere-ofertă, într-o societate în care, dorința de a accede în "straturile înalte" printre altele și prin deținerea unor artefacte cu valoare deosebită, nu era completată de cunoașterea legislației de protejare a patrimoniului cultural și, din nefericire, nici de capacitatea de a distinge piesele autentice de cele contrafăcute.

During the judicial actions, generically known as the *Dacian Gold Files*, the investigators faced, very often, incredibly unusual situations, unexpected, even paradoxical, which accumulated aspects that showed the absurd and the ludicrous, but which, in the last instance, describe, in an inspired way, we can say, details of the structure of the individual and collective mind of those involved in trafficking the cultural assets, stolen from archaeological sites. The herby study wants to bring to the attention of the public interested in the issue of national cultural heritage that has been subject to financially motivated criminal acts (theft, trafficking), in particular the

²⁰ Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, mariusciuta@yahoo.com

problem of “occasional”²¹ collections and collectors which appeared in the Romanian landscape in early 2000’s, a unique case, located in Hunedoara County, atypical at first sight, but symptomatic for that period.

In 2003, on the archeological-school site of the University of Sibiu, situated in *Orăștie-Dealul Pemilor* (Hunedoara County), a somewhat *exotic* character²² appeared, repeatedly. He was the owner of a gas station located at the entrance to the city, on DN 7 from Romos village, immediately under the second terrace of Mureș (the place where the archaeological excavations were carried out). As he was going through a period of significant financial profits, the character decided to invest and to treasure these profits in cultural heritage assets, as he heard of from various sources that do not lose value over the years²³. In order to satisfy this wish, he got in touch with various individuals, part of the underworld of Hunedoara county (especially from Deva and Orăștie city), involved at that time in trafficking such objects, about which he did not know (or may have known, but took the risk!) that are involved in illegal activities of carrying out unauthorized surveys in archaeological sites, digging and stealing archaeological artifacts and their trafficking on the black market of antiques²⁴. Once he purchased several object, the natural need of *quality confirmation* and money worth guarantee arose. This is why, in the year indicated above, relying on the common sense and the specialized knowledge of the archaeologists on the site, located in the immediate vicinity of his business, the man wanted to know their opinion on the recently acquired objects. If at first the archaeologists were willing to give him certain indications regarding the significance and value of the presented goods, perceived exclusively from the perspective of the curiosity and the good

²¹ Or “cardboard collectors”. We will use this phrase designating those persons concerned with the realization of a collection of cultural assets, with which they try to optimize their image within the high-life society, who do not have the minimum training required for such an endeavor.

²² For obvious reasons, we will not indicate in this article the name of that collector. However, it appears in the indictment of the criminal case of the Prosecutor's Office attached to the Alba Iulia Court of Appeal (initially the criminal case 172 / P / 2005, disjunctive in D.P. 151 / P / 2005, and later in D.P. 440 / P / 2008).

²³ The collection of objects of archaeological origin, preferably of rare metals and of the highest age, was a sign of good taste, frequently encountered in the environments of people recently enriched by activities within the limits of the law, in a county in which the old state-owned companies that exploited natural resources went bankrupt or struggled to survive. Other constant buyers of such objects, found in the agendas of traffickers, were also members of rich professional categories, par excellence: doctors, architects, lawyers, administrators of companies, politicians. It was enough that a representative member of these guilds to insist on the collection of cultural goods, so that the activity would become an attractive one, generating “good image”, imitated by the other brethren.

²⁴ According to the *Indictment* from criminal file 151 / P / 2015 (also taken from file 400 / P / 2008): *in July 2003, the team Crișan-Sîmu and Corhan Călin, sold them to PN, at the West Oil gas station from Orăștie, 160 antique silver coins, priced at 2000 US dollars.*

natural belief of the scientific researcher²⁵, later, seeing the reluctance with which the owner refuses to specify their provenance, noting that some pieces had specific features of recent removal from archaeological contexts (*in situ*), but also the fact that some pieces appeared to be recent forgeries, they made clear to him that they won't let him take advantage of their good will, since they cannot assess the pieces, as long as their source was hidden from them *on purpose*²⁶.

Since July 2005, during the investigations in the file *The Dacian Gold*, reopened in the same year by the prosecutors of the Prosecutor's Office attached to the Alba Iulia Court of Appeal, a series of descriptions and home searches were started, especially in the city of Deva, but also in other cities of Hunedoara county and Alba county, in which the persons involved in the above-mentioned criminal activities were targeted. It was a moment intensely publicized in local and national mass-media, which caused very strong emotions and reactions, at different levels, given that the phenomenon of archaeological poaching and trafficking with *antiquities* had been going on for many years already within the local society. Not just the Hunedoara society was involved at different levels in this phenomenon. Obviously, the strongest emotional impact struck the people who owned such objects.

That was the moment when the person above mentioned, who has been collecting cultural assets of archaeological origin for more than two years, being an *active and well known player* on this market, noticed the risks he was exposed to when buying objects from the people who were just investigated, charged, detained and even arrested. If initially he preferred to remain unknown, hoping that he would not be affected by the legal proceedings, slowly, but surely, the feeling of reason and guilt took effect, so that, on January 25, 2006, P.N. presented on his own initiative to the Prosecutor's Office of the Alba Iulia Court of Appeal, bringing and indicating to the judicial investigators a lot of objects, justifying that they are goods bought by him, as *a person of good faith*, from various persons. With

²⁵ According to the same **Indictment**: *in order to be convinced that the coins were original, P.N. presented to witness P. S-I, professor at the Faculty of History and Heritage of the Lucian Blaga University in Sibiu, who found that the examined pieces were original, unclean, with the appearance of pieces discovered soon. In the autumn of the same year of May had an attempt to present a statue to the archaeologists, who informed them that they were circumspect about its authenticity.*

²⁶ The **Indictment** also shows that: *whereas the witness P.N. (suspicious, because he had found out that it was possible to buy fake pieces as well) he wanted to recover the money invested, the accused Corhan Calin took back 93 coins with the promise that he would return the money. Later, to his dismay, he led him to his home where he exchanged two silver Dacian necklaces (torques, one with a broken end), stolen by illegal excavations from the archaeological site of Sarmizegetusa Regia.*

undisguised pride, invoking *the large amounts of money* he invested, as well as his situation as a *victim*, the citizen presented a diplomatic briefcase, in which there was a heterogeneous collection of artifacts: statues, coins, jewelry, decorative elements etc. (fig. 1-6).

The investigators wanted to find out the source of the objects batch, therefore quite quickly, their illegal source became a certainty, as *the owner* mentioned that the *sellers* were part of the defendants from the file of looting in the Orăștie Mountains, and also their associates. Given the suspicions about its illicit provenance, the artifact batch was seized by prosecutors, and a series of issues related to its provenance, the identity of the sellers, the location of the sites/points from which they had been stolen had been clarified. Initially, P.N. wished to benefit from protection and a *hidden identity*²⁷, as he feared some eventual unpleasant repercussions following his identification as *informant*²⁸; thus, later, during the criminal investigation, he gave it up.

Firstly, the goods were presented to archeology specialists²⁹, on which occasion two major categories emerged in the lot: **authentic pieces** (of certain archaeological origin and likely to belong to the national cultural heritage) and **fake pieces**, gross counterfeits, which they tried to render, without success, ancient artifacts with an iconography already known. Thus, a series of 5 statuettes, 2 round plates (phaleras?), a plate representing a noble Dacian's head and a zoomorphic statuette, all metallic, were obviously detached within the presented batch. The statuettes represented female characters (possibly Greek-Roman Gods?). The round plates, with two holes each, represented characters (female and male³⁰) and a representation of a wolf riding a (?) *phallus*³¹. The "quality" of the patent of the pieces - which,

²⁷ With the name Nedelcu Ioan.

²⁸ The same **Indictment** showed that the *sellers* soon learned of P.N.'s gesture, from a telephone discussion between the two, that P.N. handed over the judicial investigators "*and those stupid things*" ... in other words, the fake pieces.

²⁹ First, the expert archeologist Horia Ioan Ciugudean from the National Museum of the Union of Alba Iulia was invited to rule on the batch of pieces, and then, about 2 hours later, the new officer of cultural heritage was invited, author of the herby study. It was practically verification of the artifacts but also of the skills. An aspect worth remembering is how the prosecutor perceived the situation in which the two archaeologists, without being aware of the fact that they were asked to rule on the same lot, "*used the same expressions, words and terms to describes and characterizes the artifacts, the two versions coinciding in the finest details.*"

³⁰ The characteristics of the referred characters, lead to the conclusion it was an intention to imitate the female character from one of the treasures form Lupu (Alba County)(Aurul 2013, p. 83), and that the male character, imitated the one from the Bucharest-Herastrau Phalera (Aurul 2013, p. 84).

³¹ It is a subject completely unknown to the Dacian iconography, of which the craftsman inspired, but it is possible to be inspired from a frequent theme in Scythian craft, in which wild animals appear in motion, with the mention of a complete lack of phallic representation, meaning it was a personal license of an uninspired manufacturer. Is possible

with all the efforts made by the designer and the patent work, was not all what it should have been - supplemented by the awkwardness of the artistic achievement, having a childlike character, which went so far as to be grotesque³², were the basis of their first evaluation. For a connoisseur of history, whether he is a non-specialist in ancient minor statues, it is difficult to conceive that one could believe that they could have been ancient objects, or even, representations of mythological characters, with aesthetic value, rarities or even one of a kind objects...

Later, these pieces were separated from the group of the authentic ones, treated separately, and for a complete and definitive certainty for the judicial inquiry - especially since at that time it was already fashionable to challenge the authenticity of some artifacts tracked / recovered - they were the subject of a metallographic analysis, that revealed that the alloy used in their manufacture had nothing to do with the one identified in ancient pieces³³. The buyer was somewhat offended when, during the course of the criminal investigation, he was informed that some of his pieces are contemporary forgeries. Even when the results of the metallographic analyzes definitively confirmed the attribute as a *contemporary forgery*, P.N. proved to be dissatisfied, accusing even the judicial authorities of having replaced the pieces handed over to them - *which he spent large sums of money on, because they were presented to him as one of a kind objects - with fakes (?)*. The documents drawn up for the seizing of the pieces and especially the judicial photographs have removed any doubts related to this aspect.

By the *Resolution* of January 27, 2006, from the criminal file 172/P/2005, at the surrender of the complete lot of objects in the custody of the National Union Museum of Alba Iulia, a first expert report by the experts of the institution was imposed. The expert report was going to show the following aspects about the authentic pieces: *what the presented goods represent; whether they are likely to belong to the national cultural heritage; whether they can come from newly discovered archaeological contexts; what*

that he had an catalogue which contain the representation of the roman zoomorphic fibula from Noviodunum-Isaccea from the 2-nd century (Aurul 2013, p. 122),

³² If we were to use images to define the concept of anti-talent, these achievements could be successfully used to illustrate this "trait". They are produced without the slightest idea of harmony, symmetry, balance or aesthetics, and the person who "created" them only proved that he had a history manual at hand, from which he tried to reproduce, in an unfortunate way, some ancient artifacts that seemed to him to be more representative by the pictures. The intention of misleading is obvious, but the way he put it in practice was less than fortunate.

³³ The metallographic analysis, ordered by the Resolution of May 2006, was carried out at the Laboratory of metallographic analysis of the Mechanical Factory in Cugir. For comparison, a sample was taken from the head of the Artemis statue.

*is the circulation value of these objects?*³⁴. The first evaluation was carried out by experts from the museum in Alba Iulia³⁵, who concluded that the analyzed pieces (67 coins, 2 torques, 3 fibulae, 1 medallion (phalera), 1 miniature figurine head, 1 fragment of situla, 1 box handle, 4 rings, 1 bell fragment and 3 appliques), *are artifacts of a certain archaeological origin, which belong to the national cultural heritage*³⁶ (fig. 9-18).

On February 8, 2006, shortly after handing over the lot, the chance was that the investigators came in possession of some operative information, based on which a house search was carried out, at the domicile of Rusu Silviu, from the town of Merișor, Bănița commune, Hunedoara county. The "workshop" where these objects were made was identified. Inside, they found clay molds and plaster casts of statuettes and platelets (fallers), bought by the man *in good faith and a lot of money*. The investigators had at that time the certainty that P.N. was the victim of antique dealers. The typological and stylistic features of the models ceased from Rusu Silviu, showed that they were made by the same person (fig. 7-8). During the searches, molds, patterns, crucibles, metal plates etc. were discovered, proving that he practically performed, the entire chain of operation: from modeling in clay, casting the model from gypsum (plaster) and then casting the bronze in the molded form. A series of chisels and other tools found there showed that the process of decoration and retouching was done in the same workshop, for the *finished products*. All the ceased objects were deposited in the custody of the Museum of Alba Iulia, and by *the Resolution* of February 9, 2006, all the objects were subject of an expertise, in order to establish *if there was any connection between the objects delivered by P.N. and the tools seized from Rusu Silviu*. The result was, that there was an obvious connection between it. Moreover, the latter acknowledged his "creations", when presented to him during a judicial procedure for objects display, thus he denied having anything to do with their marketing. Most likely, those who offered for sale the objects, made by the "craftsman" from Bănița, were the same poachers of the archaeological sites, transformed in "dealers"

From the moment the pieces were handed over, on January 25, 2006, until the completion of the criminal prosecution, P.N. was a witness. In the

³⁴ Extras of *Rezoluția PCAI* of 27. 01. 2006,

³⁵ Dr. Viorica Suciu was designated to establish the identification and primary evaluation of the coins, and Dr. Vasile Moga was designated for the artifacts.

³⁶ The part of the collection composed of authentic pieces, will be the subject of a separate study, which is in progress.

Indictment of 05.08.2008 of the criminal file 151/P/2005, the prosecutors proposed not starting the criminal prosecution of P.N. Thus, because the goods he bought were the product of committing crimes (including fraud), the criminal prosecution was dissolved for the facts related to the way of discovery and trafficking of the original artifacts (in the criminal file 440/P/2008), and because the authentic goods, *bought in good faith*, however, were stolen from sites belonging to the Romanian State, according to the law, there was civil action that continued, about establishing the property, as the State claimed the rightful ownership over them. File 440/P/2008 was sent to court in 2010, and since then it is in the trial phase. On April 23, 2010, in the civil case, on trial at the Hunedoara Court (no. 5750/97/2008), the *Expertise Report* signed by the expert Dr. Ernest Oberländer-Târnoveanu was submitted, regarding exclusively the assets that may belong to the national cultural heritage. The result was an evaluation of a prejudice of 30.606 euro, claimed by the State of Romania through the Ministry Of Culture. Several objects delivered by P.N. proved to have an exceptional heritage value, as, for instance, the two silver torques³⁷. The head of feminine statue (Artemis), the *situlae* fragment, the appliques, fibulae, silver phalera as well as antique coins (Greeek & Roman) proved to be extremely valuable³⁸.

The false pieces, subjected to a metallographic expertise, were returned to P.N. in December 2010, as they were not assets likely to belong to the national cultural heritage. He filed a criminal complaint regarding the *fraud*, for which he could have been compensated by the ones who sold him contemporary objects as antique ones. Although it cannot claim to be considered goods likely to belong to the cultural heritage, not even handicraft products with an aesthetic value, we think that it would be necessary to insist a little on the pieces that have been proven to be contemporary, knowingly sold.

In Romania, in the absence of a market for antiques, there were not, at least not recently, famous cases of counterfeiters of cultural goods, at least for

³⁷ One of them, the complete one, was presented in the Catalog of the MNIR exhibition: *Gold and antique silver of Romania*, of Bucharest, 2013 (Aurul 2013, p. 393). The rods of its extremities, with a quadrilateral section and with the decoration in the form of circles with a point in the middle, drawn downwards towards the end, where the bar widens with a relatively spherical projection, which suggests the prominent muzzle of an animal, having two circles pointed on these extremities. The second one had two broken ends, more precisely the unstitched rods, with a quadrilateral section and with the outline decorated in the form of a running spiral, which narrows towards the end in the form of a vertical flattening, marked with two points on each side, suggesting a whole animal head. If one of the rods can be glued, having the entire body preserved, the second, shorter, lacks a limb.

³⁸ Oberländer-Târnoveanu 2010.

the ancient artifacts. For example, in Bulgaria from 2000-2010 the acquaintances of *Sofia I and Sofia II*, made coins of the highest quality, difficult to differentiate from the original ones, which invaded the markets. In Europe, a few cases are known of the famous counterfeiters, but the attention has fallen mainly on the works of art (paintings, sculptures, etc.), much better sold on the market. There was a problem in establishing the authenticity of some new artifacts. The experts were facing difficulties, as it was expected, one of the recent cases in establishing the authenticity of the Dacian spiral gold bracelets being still fresh on the subject³⁹. On the same occasion, there was a rumor circulating that the artifacts were forged by a jeweler from Călan, (who, obviously died shortly after the criminal prosecution began) without any convincing arguments. The idea of using the gold resulting from melting of Koson coins had a real *boomerang effect*, seriously shaking the arguments of the opposite group. Another case of a so-called forged artifact was the sculpture of a young man's head, made in marble from Bucova, taken from a collector in Alba Iulia in 2006. One of the local dealers stated that it was his creation, obviously with the purpose to protect the collector, who was a public person.

There is recent information about the idea that coins from the collections of several national museums, were allegedly replaced with forgeries. This makes it hard to believe that inside persons are not involved. Until specific evaluations shall be conducted, regarding the numismatic collections, we hope the rumors will not be confirmed. Another phenomenon, that cannot be contested, is the reduced number (at least!) of the numismatic experts from the public institutions, with very good knowledge, who can prove to be at the same level of preparation as the numismatic experts of European or American auction houses. Sooner or later, a confrontation between them shall appear, inside the Romanian Courts, and, the perspective is not fortunate, from this point of view.

Epilogue

What is the lesson learned from all of the above? A market base Law, even for the black antiques market (!) is that if there is no *claim*, there is no *offer*! There were situations when, due to greed- one of the seven major original sins- "the collectors" were facing situations when they asked for

³⁹ I still find followers of the ideas of two great representatives of Romanian archeology of the 20th Century, as were Alexandru Vulpe and Constantin Preda, who publicly expressed, during the criminal prosecution (!), a series of deductive statements, which put the question mark on the authenticity of the artifacts recently recovered at that time.

much more than the dealer could supply. The dealers depended on the poachers from the field (excepting the cases when they were the same person). Sometimes “*there was no merchandise*”. In such situations, someone had the great idea- it proved to be good, as it was very useful, on many occasions- to offer forgeries, counting on the fact that the rich collector has a great financial situation, and has no knowledge in identification of authentic items. The greed and competition, fed by ignorance and incompetence, started a phenomenon that gave a taste of their own medicine to the “cardboard collectors”. Our collector suffered from multiple prejudices: he lost his collection (according to his statement, he grew very attached to his collection), he lost the money he invested and he strongly believed that he was deceived and justice was not served. He did not have the chance to recover any of the prejudices, as his health was severely affected by this episode. However, he did a noble gesture: he made possible the recovery of great value property, which, otherwise, might have reached international collectors or at auction houses that did not care about the *uncertain* origin of the objects. The repeated sale would have made them legal, meaning through *artifact laundering*, a particular form of money laundering⁴⁰.

Between 1990-2005, encouraged by the lack of reaction of authorities, many people considered a good idea to secure their financial earnings by investing in cultural objects, heritage objects, therefore creating an increased *claim* of such objects. The poachers took the role of the *claim* in this matter. The easiest sources were the archaeological sites, unsupervised, with material deposits that were not part of a previous inventory (data base, inventory, photography, publication, etc.), which could prove the theft.⁴¹ They ignored the fact that there are other methods and means by which an artifact, recently extracted from the soil, can be identified as being stolen, with all the *laundering* efforts, both literally and figuratively, deposited by those involved in this traffic. The equation of this chain is synthesized inspired by a recent analysis by the experts in the cultural heritage field in Northern area: (*different thieves, one financial motivation!*) However, we cannot help but wonder, with the risk of appearing malicious, how many collections of this kind, held by rich people and vanities inversely proportional to their level of knowledge of the domain, do not contain fake pieces, *generously* offered by

⁴⁰ Lazăr 2008; Lazăr 2009; Duțu et alii 2018; Deppert-Lippitz 2009.

⁴¹ As I mentioned above, the source of public collections, museums, which have proved to be, as appropriate, another source quite easy for thieves should not be overlooked.

dealer service experts, self-taught experts, *white-collar* fraudsters, existing in most large cities or overlapping archaeological sites?

We also focus on an aspect frequently observed in the case of antique markets, namely on the so-called *gray market*. It is named the grey market because it is perceived as being between the black, obviously illegal and the white, legal market. The cultural assets, likely to belong to the cultural heritage, stolen from their original contexts, represent *new entries*, previously unknown to the experts, not taken into account in previous records or inventories. The interfaces through which they are sold are the gray market, illustrated in the table in figure 19. *The private collections*, designed in the turbulent years after 1989, not mentioned in the records of the public institutions (impossible due to their illegality), represent, today, *the intermediaries*, or *the vehicles*, between the black and the white markets.

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Fig. 1. Bronze statuettes and round plates, seized by prosecutors



Fig. 2. Coins, rings, bell fragment and appliques seized by prosecutors



Fig. 3. Silver and bronze coins (67), seized by prosecutors.



Fig. 4. Bronze statuettes and fragmentary statuettes, seized by prosecutors.



Fig. 5. Bronze statuettes with female representations seized by prosecutors



Fig. 6. Plate representing a noble Dacian's head (1), feminine statuette (2), round plates (phalerae) with "antique" characters (3-4)



Fig. 6. Zoomorphic statuette (phalliphormic).



a

b



Fig. 7. The "workshop" of the counterfeiter with molds and plaster casts seized at the domiciliary search



Fig. 8. The molds and patterns exposed at the Alba Iulia Museum



Fig. 9. Two dacian silver necklaces (*torques*), with zoomorphic extremities (II-I a. Chr century)



Fig. 10. Silver *phalera*, with vegetal and geometric ornaments (roman - I p. Chr century)



Fig. 11. Bronze fragmentary statuett, head of Artemis (hellenistical tradition, III-II a. Chr)



Fig. 12. Bronze *situla* fragment, head of aquatic bird (swan) (I p. Chr. century)



Fig. 13. Bronze fibula, with polychrome vegetal ornaments (II p. Chr. century).

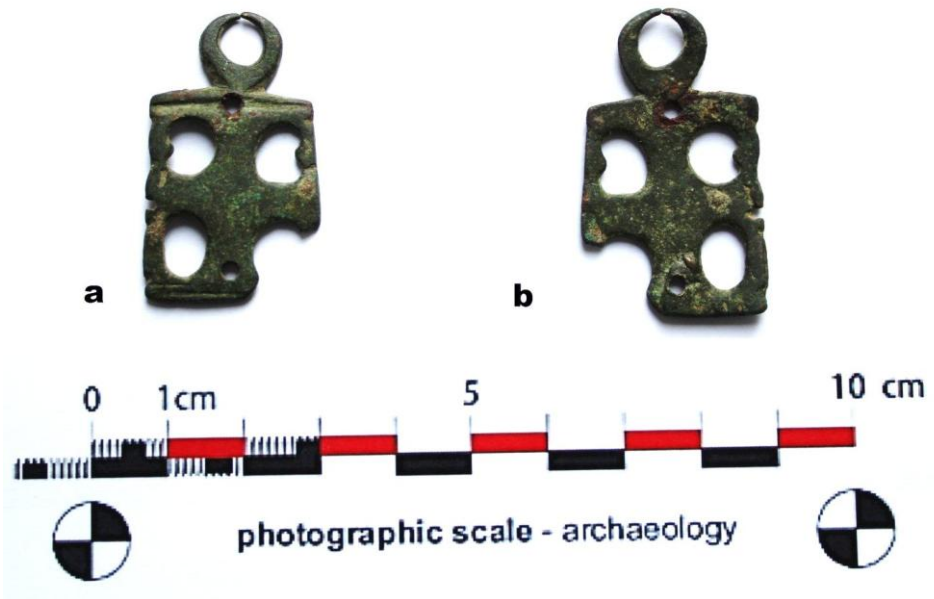


Fig. 14. Bronze belt applique (II-III p. Chr. century)



Fig. 15. Bronze applique (fibula?) with vegetal ornaments (III p. Chr. century)



Fig. 16. Silver belt applique with gold, vegetal stylized ornaments (X-XI century)

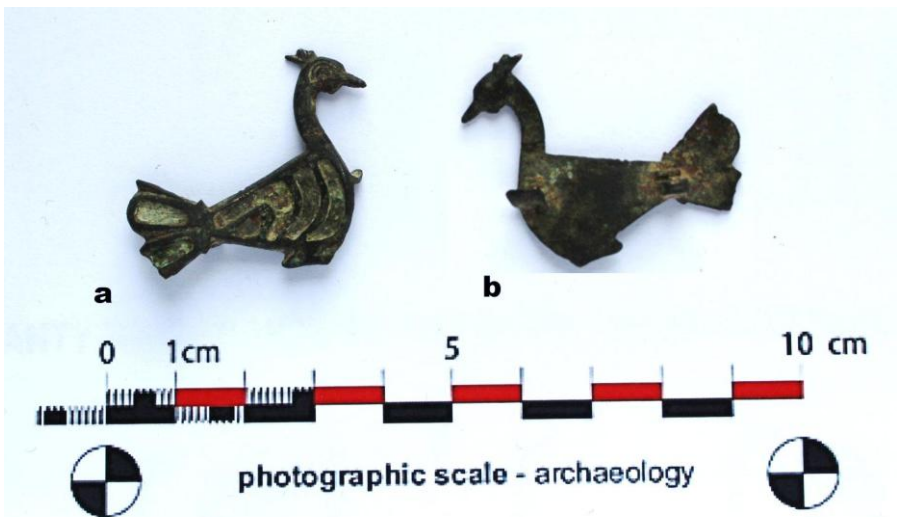


Fig. 17. Zoomorphic bronze fibula (peacock), with ornaments (II p. Chr. century)



Fig. 18. Medieval bronze and copper rings (XII-XV century)

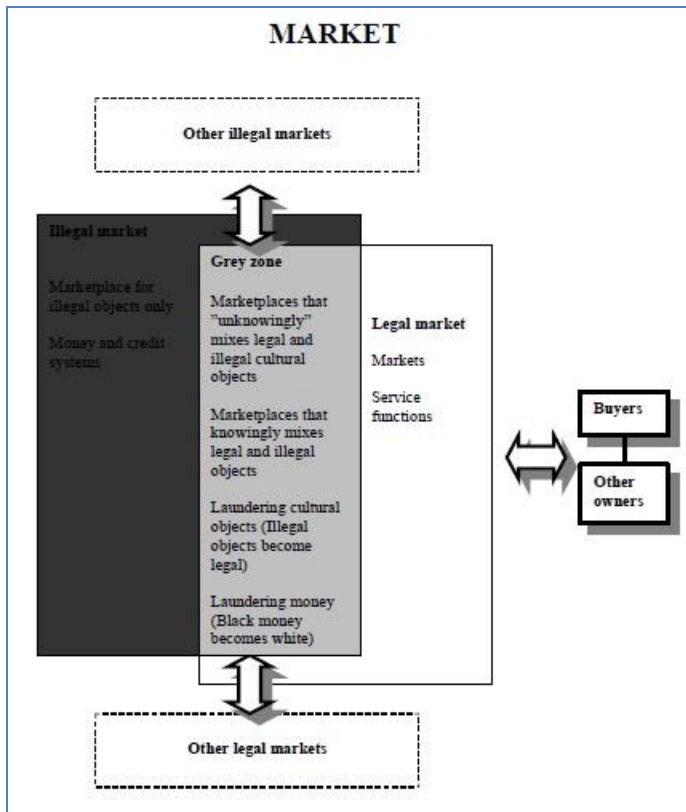


Fig. 19. The structure of antiques market and the relation with money laundering (after Cultural Heritage Crime 2006, p. 24)

The Making of a Holy Nation: Pastoral Activity, Pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and Nationalism in Interwar Romanian Orthodoxy

Gheorghe Gelu Pacurar
Indiana University, Bloomington, U.S.A.

Abstract

After the end of World War I and the creation of Greater Romania, various actors tried to influence the official policy of the state by proposing political visions suitable to consolidate the Romanian identity and character of the country. The Orthodox Church, one of the most vocal of these actors, envisioned a variety of activities and programs with the goal of promoting the future development of the country alongside religious principles. In particular, in 1925 the Metropolitan of Ardeal organized the first “mass” pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the history of the Romanian people. Among the participants was Iosif Trifa, a close collaborator of the Metropolitan and the initiator and organizer of a widespread spiritual movement called the Army of the Lord. During the pilgrimage Trifa wrote notes that later constituted the basis of his travelogue *Pe urmele Mântuitorului* [In the Footsteps of the Savior], a book that, I will suggest, proposes a national – spiritual model for the building of the new political project inspired by the mythical image of the holy places. Trifa vested these pastoral concerns with political preoccupations that ultimately claimed the Holy Land as an ideal pattern for Greater Romania. Through a gradual literary process that morphed Palestine into the Christian Holy Land and reclaimed it for Orthodox Christians only, Trifa established a close connection between the holy sites and Romania by presenting the group of pilgrims and their itinerary as a symbol of the nation walking in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. A close reading of the narrative will show that Trifa aimed at using it as an exhortation to prompt Romanians’ commitment to Orthodoxy as the only successful solution to the national project.

Introduction

As Alphonse Dupront suggests, pilgrimage is one of the intense temporal dimensions of the individual and collective experience that has characterized religiosity from ancient Abydos in Egypt to modern day Lourdes in France (Dupront 1547-1553). In Christianity and, in particular, in the Orthodox Church, pilgrimage has a longstanding tradition encompassing rituals and practices enacted by believers traveling to holy places as expressions of spiritual fervor. Although over the course of time there developed many pilgrimage sites both at local and regional levels, the geography associated with biblical events and especially with the life of Jesus, has made the Holy Land the favorite destination for pilgrims. Apart from ancient and medieval evidences of pious travelers to these places, modern Orthodox Christians

have continued to regard this practice as a desired religious achievement, as studies on contemporary Orthodoxy show⁴².

In his analysis of the practice of pilgrimage in post-communist Romania, Mirel Bănică indicates that the sacred journey is a complex phenomenon that percolates not only into the deep structures of society, but also into the political and institutional life of the country engaging tens of thousands of people⁴³. It is also a fact that this period witnessed an increase in individual and organized pilgrimages to the Holy Land, given the liberalization of traveling outside the Romanian borders. At a first glance, the Communist atheism and isolationism that ruled over the Romanian people for almost half a century suggests that pilgrimage to the Holy Land is a new phenomenon that has sprouted only after 1989. Yet, a historical survey of modern Romania shows that the sacred journey to Jerusalem was a common practice among many individual locals, from the noble Elina Cantacuziono in 1682 to merchants, theologians, and clergymen in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, to organized groups in the 1920s and 1930s⁴⁴.

As these examples show, Romanian pilgrimages to the Holy Land could be either individual or organized in larger groups. Several elements ascribe the 1925 pilgrimage a singular place in this history. It was the first mass pilgrimage encompassing common believers and clergy, well organized in advance, and publicized in newspapers. Furthermore, it was led by important hierarchs such as Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan, who were involved in current debates on national issues. And lastly, it included the central figure of the widespread interwar Orthodox revival movement called Oastea Domnului [the Army of the Lord], Father Iosif Trifa, who further advertised the event through notes sent to his newspaper *Lumina Satelor* [The Light of the Villages] and eventually published it in the book *Pe urmele Mântuitorului* [In the Footsteps of the Savior]⁴⁵.

Given this complex constellation that characterized the 1925 pilgrimage to the Holy Land, it is arguable that an analysis of Trifa's travelogue could offer glimpses into the interface between religious experience and national ideals in interwar Romania. Studies of pilgrimage have pointed that this phenomenon could perform many functions simultaneously, from satisfying a personal need to setting the stage for cultural diffusion of new ideas⁴⁶. A close reading of *Pe urmele Mântuitorului* will show that Trifa tried to limn the pilgrimage as a national event with important consequences for Romanian identity. Moving from the personal level of the narrator to the immediate context of the eyewitnesses that accompanied him to

⁴² Limor and Stroumsa; Stavrou; Trandafir.

⁴³ Bănică.

⁴⁴ Păcurariu; Trandafir.

⁴⁵ Gogan.

⁴⁶ Thayer 169ss.

the larger setting of the Romanian nation, the narrative endeavors to propose the ideal image of the Holy Land as the supreme model to be achieved by the new people of God, the Romanians, in the new promised land, Greater Romania. Accordingly, it could be demonstrated that Trifa presents himself as a religious mystagogue who pleads for the national appropriation of the Holy Land model as the only means to the spiritual renewal of the nation and the subsequent success of the new Romanian political project. As such, the focus on figures like Father Trifa encourages the study of the relationship between religion and nationalism in interwar Romania from new perspectives able to evade the beaten track of radical politics and extremist ideologies that characterizes much of current scholarship.

To this end, the text will be examined from two major perspectives. On one hand, the focus will center on the meanings of pilgrimage in order to uncover both the various planes of this phenomenon, in particular the dialectic between personal and social impact⁴⁷, and the intertextuality between pilgrimage, narrator, readers, and historical, cultural, and ideological circumstances⁴⁸ (Coleman and Elsner 9-10). On the other hand, recent studies of the relationship between Orthodoxy and nationalism (Strickland) will inform the understanding of prescriptive ideas expressed by the text with reference to the national ideal. After a brief appraisal of the literary aspects of the narrative, the attention will first move to the exploration of religious themes as part of Trifa's pastoral concerns, then to the investigation of possible political tropes, in order to eventually conclude with an assessment of Trifa's national ideology.

Pe urmele Mântuitorului as a pilgrimage narrative

Scholars dealing with the phenomenon of pilgrimage have drawn increasing attention to pilgrimage narratives as a gateway to the mental universe that was shared by their authors and readers. In this sense, Trifa's travelogue is part of an "elaborate, intertextual discourse in which the journey to the Holy Land serves as an occasion" for conveying common concerns shared by both sides (Bowman 153-154).

As far as the narrator's mentality is concerned, one should employ what Victor Turner calls the "individual questions" suitable to reveal the primary motivation, reasons, intentions, and needs that prompted him to undertake such a long, dangerous, and costly task (Turner and Turner xiv-xv; Morinis 18). As noted above, Trifa published his pilgrimage experiences in successive articles in the weekly newspaper *Lumina Satelor* between 1925 and 1927, and a book, *Pe urmele Mântuitorului*. The latter, which appeared in two interwar editions in 1926 and 1928, was assessed by Trifa as a pastoral success (Trifa 6), a fact that was confirmed by its republication after 1989 with the blessing of the Metropolitan of Ardeal in a

⁴⁷ Morinis 21-28.

⁴⁸ Coleman and Elsner 4-5.

significant gesture of Trifa's rehabilitation into the Orthodox Church and appreciation of his important activity.

The structure of the book is organized around two major tropes which ultimately share the same symbolic meaning. The physical journey, which begins with preparations, descriptions of the way to the Holy Land, and portrayal of Jerusalem, reaches its climax at the moment of entrance into the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. On the other hand, this temporal culmination leads the way to the apex of the spiritual pilgrimage that is embodied by the description of Jesus' passion story, a section that encompasses half of the entire narrative and as such constitutes its center. These two tropes that guide the narrative are interwoven with, on the one hand, descriptions of the travel, scientific information (climate, geography, history, and archaeology), details regarding the everyday life in Palestine, and curiosities, and, on the other hand, biblical pericopes and their interpretation, personal religious experiences, exhortations, and sermon-style passages, which form the bulk of the book. The particular combination of all these factors throughout the narrative indicates not only that Trifa envisioned the book as a polysemy of informative, religious, and political meanings, but also that he employed the informative passages only to shed light on religious, and possible, political issues, as the strong exhortative conclusion of the book shows.

Having illuminated these literary aspects, it could be stated that Trifa's goal in writing the book was foremost pastoral: the narrative appears as a parenthesis that urges the Romanian readers to engage in the spiritual pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem. This shows that for Trifa the physical pilgrimage and its narration constitute one process in which the retelling is at least as important as the actual trip because it makes available to the audience the same religious experience the author encountered at the holy sites. In this sense, the dialogical level that connects the author with his readers is further clarified by Trifa's commitment to the pastoral cause as his ultimate mission in life⁴⁹.

The pastor and his flock

The connection between the immediate situation of Trifa's individual experience and the cultural context of the readers is made possible by the image of the narrator as an "ideal type" of pilgrim whose travel is an act of worship that engages the audience in a religious ceremonial⁵⁰. To this end, Trifa employs two main pastoral mechanisms.

In a first place, it should be mentioned that Trifa does not understand his role of narrator in passive terms, but actively, as a mystagogue who initiates the reader

⁴⁹ Gogan 14-16.

⁵⁰ Coleman and Elsner 12.

into a spiritual journey to the heavenly Jerusalem⁵¹. Given the multiplicity of literary forms and meanings interwoven in the narrative, this process entails a complex fabric that reveals different layers of knowledge. While geographical and historical information aided by numerous maps and pictures restages for the reader the physical background of the *Heilsgeschichte*, and the detailed description of the holy sites serves as a guide through the Christian tradition, the plethora of biblical texts, hagiographies, and exhortations provide moral teaching and mediate spiritual experience. This is made possible by the fact that Trifa claims credibility⁵² both for himself and the Bible through first person accounts (direct witness), modern expertise (archaeology, maps), biblical and post-biblical traditions, and an intimate knowledge of the Scriptures whose accounts are proven to be entirely valid throughout the narrative⁵³. Thus, in an ontological-epistemological movement that recalls the patristic tradition, the reader is guided through a progression that advances from physical landscape to loci of divine presence to the pure spiritual realm⁵⁴, which taken together form a cosmic unity that is specific to Orthodox Christianity.

Having created this sacred space that resembles so much the Orthodox notion of the church⁵⁵, Trifa employs a second pastoral mechanism, that of presenting his narrative as a liturgical act⁵⁶. This requires a further sublimation of physicality through the construction of a Christian mythscape⁵⁷ that reveals Trifa's ultimate religious beliefs⁵⁸. First and foremost, the narrator tries to subsume geographical differences to the familiarity of religious texts. Though he enters a very different geography punctuated by a new climate, deserts, or strange flora⁵⁹, the dense presence of the Bible in the landscape he encounters metamorphoses Palestine into the familiar Holy Land: "The mapping of sacred places is still the same today [as it was in the time of Jesus Christ], only the political configuration has changed"⁶⁰. This translucent geography is made possible by a sort of anamnestic approach that enables Trifa to recall the things he has already seen in the Bible while in Romania. Indeed, the Holy Land becomes a "realistic icon"⁶¹ and coming to Jerusalem is, in a way, coming home⁶².

⁵¹ Williams.

⁵² Williams 28.

⁵³ Trifa 84.

⁵⁴ Trifa 53-54, 57.

⁵⁵ Stăniloae.

⁵⁶ Williams 20.

⁵⁷ Bowman 153.

⁵⁸ Cohen-Hattab and Shoval 10-11.

⁵⁹ Trifa 16, 24, 343-344.

⁶⁰ Trifa 24.

⁶¹ Bowman "Christian Ideology" 110.

⁶² Trifa 29-30.

The liturgical display of geographical data is further emphasized by the physical and spiritual presence of erstwhile and present saintly figures. In particular, the venerable image of Jerusalem's Patriarch Damianos, who is depicted as a living saint and apostle, the presence of holy sites such as St. Sabbas Monastery where saints of the church lived before, and the very places that witnessed the presence of biblical figures, denote that the Holy Land is like a church where continuous worship is given to God⁶³.

This celebration is joined by the group of Romanian pilgrims whose journey actually displays strong liturgical goals. The entire program of the pilgrimage is devised to follow Christ's itinerary to Jerusalem, from Bethlehem to Jericho to the Via Dolorosa and up to Golgotha, as it is related in the Gospels⁶⁴. As the text records, the pilgrims worshiped at key points on their route, while Trifa himself raised personal prayers, prayers for the readers of *Lumina Satelor*, and described intense mystical experiences, particularly at the site of the Holy Sepulcher where his life underwent a turning point⁶⁵. As a result, the entire journey appears as a worship that takes place in a sacred space and Trifa can use the physical act of the pilgrimage as a paradigm for holiness and piety capable of inspiring the readers⁶⁶. The narrative, on the other hand, could be employed as the interpretation of this act that conveys both the true meaning of physical gestures⁶⁷ and the spiritual importance of words⁶⁸, in the same way that Orthodox priests combine symbolic acts and their hermeneutic utterances during the liturgy.

Imagining the Orient

A close reading of Trifa's travelogue reveals, however, the existence of a polemical thrust throughout the narrative that vests the pastoral concerns with a politicized dimension. Trifa's understanding of religious experience along the lines of the fundamental interdependence between Orthodoxy and Romanianness eventually narrows his Christian construction of the Holy Land to national concerns. The process is, nevertheless, complex. To begin with, the literary mechanisms harnessed in subsuming differences to religious familiarity have a negative side as well. Whereas, as it has been previously pointed out, the intimacy with the Sacred Scriptures allowed Trifa to see geographical otherness as something familiar, the encounter with the human other became less embracing. It could be seen that the

⁶³ Trifa 87-90.

⁶⁴ Trifa 71.

⁶⁵ Trifa 6.

⁶⁶ Coleman and Elsner *Pilgrimage* 91; Preston 41.

⁶⁷ Trifa 132.

⁶⁸ Wuthnow 316.

figures of the Arabs, Africans, and Jews raised serious questions for Trifa's perception of the Holy Land with the result of reclaiming it for Christians only.

In this encounter with the other Trifa employs "forms of definition and classification which elevated the western model of society and religion"⁶⁹. More specifically, two methods seem to guide the narrator's perception of alterity. On one hand, characterology determines Trifa to conclude that "different peoples exhibit essentially different characters"⁷⁰. The first encounter with black people in the port of Jaffa is quite memorable for the major part of the pilgrims:

Many of us see black people for the first time. We look at them and wonder and, unwillingly, start laughing at them (and they wonder and laugh at us). Some of them are so black that they shine as if they were polished with shoe cream. In particular, a black with flattened face draws our attention. If people from our villages were to see him neither one nor the other they would chase him with pitchforks as if he were the devil ('bată-l crucea')⁷¹.

The image of the Arabs is more nuanced. While some of them are indeed Christian⁷², Muslim Arabs generally seem to be sympathetic toward Christians⁷³ and to profess many beliefs that support Christian teachings about Abraham and the Day of Resurrection⁷⁴. Yet, more important, their presence is extremely helpful to the understanding of biblical customs and manners: "People mounted on donkeys and camels move hastily. Almost everyone wears long coats. Only now we begin to understand the vestments from the time of our Savior that we can see in icons"⁷⁵. Indeed, this biblical outfit emphasizes the spiritual state of these people, as was the case with the Christian women of Bethlehem: "Women living here have an appearance of great religious beauty and this beauty is amplified by their beautiful vestment. They wear long coats, from top to bottom and on their head a veil like Virgin Mary has"⁷⁶. Trifa nevertheless sometimes accuses the Muslim Arabs for being fanatics⁷⁷ or unbelievers that irreverently sit as "pagan" guards at the gate of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher⁷⁸.

As regards the Bedouins, Trifa compares them with the gypsies in Romania: they are dirty, unwashed, lazy, and unreligious.

⁶⁹ Coleman and Elsner *Pilgrimage* 75.

⁷⁰ Coleman and Elsner *Pilgrimage* 76.

⁷¹ Trifa 22-23.

⁷² Trifa 63, 79.

⁷³ Trifa 24.

⁷⁴ Trifa 308-310, 367.

⁷⁵ Trifa 23.

⁷⁶ Trifa 79.

⁷⁷ Trifa 36.

⁷⁸ Trifa 242.

This Bedouins are different from the Arabs. They are a sort of ancestors of the gypsies, having many similar things in common, among them laziness, idleness. Many of them are nomads, that is, tent travelers, like gypsies. As regards religion, they are Mohammedans, like the Arabs, but they do not bother themselves with it (123).

A particular place in the narrative is devoted to descriptions of the Jews. While in most instances Trifa uses the terms “Jew” and “Hebrews” and the post-communist editions (the editions of 2002, 2010) employ only these two terms, the first edition of the book used the disparaging terms “jidān” and “jidov” as well (the edition of 1926: 13, 107, 196). In any case, strong anti-Jewish stances punctuate the narrative in many places. From the very first day after landing in Jaffa, Trifa presents the Jews as a people despised by the Arabs. Most commonly, the image of the Jew is depicted from a religious standpoint as anti-Christian: they are the murderers of Jesus and of Christian martyrs, live in spiritual blindness lacking true knowledge, and continue their existence under God’s curse⁷⁹. Yet, this theological anti-Judaism is complemented by anti-Semitic myths, some of them deriving from medieval polemics. In the central part of the book where he discusses Jesus’ passion, in what is intended to be a sensitive moment of mnemonic representation of suffering, Trifa recalls the story of Ahasverus, the impious Jew (“jidov”) who persecuted Jesus without mercy:

O, how anguished and painful our Lord looks! Yet, the Jews are not moved by his suffering; they continue to beat him ruthlessly and mercilessly. As I was proceeding on this place I remembered the story of the Jew Ahasverus (a beautiful religious novel) who, while staying in front of his house, saw the Lord going to Golgotha in great anguish and pain, but, instead of showing mercy, he kicked the Lord with his foot shouting with a hateful grin: ‘Go on, Jesus!’ (186).

In the same context of the passion story Trifa condemns the Jews for attempting to bribe Pilate to spread the lie that Jesus did not resurrect from the dead. According to the author, the Jews tried to do then the same thing they try to do today, that is, to control and distort the truth with money. He thus concludes that “Since those times it seems that corruption, bribery were in the nature of some of those who are part of the Hebrew people”⁸⁰.

Apart from these myths inspired by ancient stories, Trifa describes the modern conspiracy of the Jews as it could be seen in the actions of the Bolsheviks. Although he admires Jews’ enduring love for Zion and the preservation of their identity in the Diaspora, he nevertheless criticizes them for tainting this God-given

⁷⁹ Trifa 170, 230, 316-320.

⁸⁰ Trifa 231.

ideal by “religious and national chauvinism”⁸¹. More precisely, the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem unites the Jews in a global anti-Christian conspiracy as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion clearly show⁸². One of the most compelling evidence of the Zionist conspiracy is, in Trifa’s eyes, Bolshevism with its emphasis on “internationalism, revolution, anarchy, atheism”⁸³. Indeed, the Jews are so much more dangerous as they control the world finances, the press, and the alcohol industry, which they use to harm “the soul of Christendom”⁸⁴.

The spiritual and political blindness of the Jews materializes in the disfigured appearance of their bodies. This could be seen in their worship in front of the Wall, where they “pray, cry, and lament” loudly and with their back hunched⁸⁵. Trifa even distinguishes several types of Jews according to their physical appearance:

Here is the Jew of Galicia, the ugliest type, hunched and with curls over his ears; here is the Jew of Turkey, the one from Asia, the one from Russia together with the one from Romania, the one from Hungary with the one from Poland, Germany, etc. . . . Their appearance, however, is the same: ugly and repellent. As if the sentence and punishment they bear are written on their faces (315-316).

On the other hand, Trifa’s encounter with the Orient is modulated by theology with the aim of appropriating its foundational religious traditions for the cause of Christianity. It has been previously shown that the familiarity with the Bible helped Trifa transfigure the geography of the Holy Land into a mythscape. He nevertheless goes further and tries to reclaim for Christianity the sacred time as well. Given the chasm that separates the Old Testament history from the spiritual blindness of the Jews, the author concludes that the Hebrew Scriptures belong to the religion inaugurated by Christ: “Prophet Isaiah belongs to Christianity. He was the prophet chosen by God to predict the life of the Savior to the smallest detail”⁸⁶. Thus, the orientalizing gaze that first reifies the figure of the other eventually elevates Christianity to the position of the sole religious model that is entitled to define the Holy Land.

The Christian Orthodox Holy Land

Although Trifa imagines the Holy Land as a site that is essentially Christian, he nevertheless claims it entirely for the Orthodox tradition. The ideological

⁸¹ Trifa 320.

⁸² Trifa 320-321.

⁸³ Trifa 321.

⁸⁴ Trifa 321.

⁸⁵ Trifa 314.

⁸⁶ Trifa 282.

underpinnings of the narrative show that Orthodox exclusivism is an active factor that influences Trifa's view of Christianity, religious leadership, and pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Indeed, the author challenges the reader to view Eastern Christianity as the true spiritual inheritor of the holy sites and traditions that stands against the false pretensions of a degenerate western civilization.

First and foremost, Trifa emphasizes the privileged role of Orthodoxy in the development of Christian traditions of the Holy Land. In a veritable spirit of Orthodox theological understanding, he underlines the continuity between biblical and post-biblical traditions that actually developed into an organic unity. Sainly figures highly appreciated in Eastern Christianity, such as Helen and her son, emperor Constantine, are credited by Trifa with a special care for the rediscovery and introduction of the Palestinian holy sites into the circuit of Christian spirituality through their divinely inspired patronage. Thus, the narrator apporions large sections of the text to descriptions of the erection of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher⁸⁷, the miracle of the finding of Jesus' cross⁸⁸, the building of the Monastery of the Holy Cross near Jerusalem⁸⁹, the construction of the Church of Nativity on the spot of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem⁹⁰, or the building of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher of Virgin Mary, which, as the author proudly remarks, "entirely belongs to the Greek Orthodox Church"⁹¹. It should be noted that all these accounts connect the biblical time of revelation with the early church, a period of special importance for the formation of Orthodox tradition, by means of miracle stories that attest the divinely ordained continuity between them. Although in a few cases Trifa acknowledges the presence of other Christian confessions in the Holy Land, overall he nevertheless extols the superiority of Orthodoxy.

To remove any trace of doubt regarding the eminence of Orthodoxy, Trifa contends that Christian Orthodox possess the best churches and oldest monasteries among the holy sites in Palestine. Hence, the Greek Orthodox Church within the architectural ensemble of the Holy Sepulcher is "the largest and prettiest church"⁹². The different Orthodox churches also are the custodians of the Monastery of the Holy Cross built on the original site of the tree out of which the cross was carved⁹³, the monastery on the site of Elijah's cave⁹⁴, the Monastery of St. John the Baptist near the river Jordan⁹⁵, the church built on the place where St Stephen, the first

⁸⁷ Trifa 46-47.

⁸⁸ Trifa 65-66.

⁸⁹ Trifa 73.

⁹⁰ Trifa 81-82.

⁹¹ Trifa 269.

⁹² Trifa 61.

⁹³ Trifa 73.

⁹⁴ Trifa 74.

⁹⁵ Trifa 112.

martyr, had died⁹⁶, or the St. Sabbas Monastery, “a nest of Orthodoxy”⁹⁷, which the tradition linked to anti-heretical figures such as St. Sabbas, St. Theodosius, and St. John of Damascus⁹⁸. On the most holy site of the cross the Orthodox erected an altar with the help of Russia’s tsars⁹⁹. Yet, the Orthodox know how to administer these places as true Christians, as the case of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher of Virgin Mary shows, since they “proved to be here as well highly tolerable with other confessions”¹⁰⁰. Apart from these examples, most likely one of the major illustrations of the divine legitimacy of Orthodoxy comes from the miracle of the sacred light at the Easter. Though Trifa did not visit the Holy Land during that period of the year, he nevertheless describes the liturgy that takes place in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher at Easter and the light that miraculously springs out of the Tomb and does not extinguish for a whole year.

Second, the Holy land belongs to Orthodoxy because the western civilization betrayed its Christian legacy. At the sight of English policemen who behave irreverently in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher¹⁰¹ or contrasting the holy biblical women with modern women that show no interest in pious life¹⁰², Trifa reiterates a trope commonly used in his exhortations in *Lumina Satelor*. However, the most important evidence of the fraying of the western social fabric lies in the nature of its major religious vector, the Catholic Church. The critique of Catholicism is built in contrast with the commendation of Orthodoxy. More precisely, the former is depicted as a heresy anchored in the Pope’s pretention of being the representative of Christ. Its rupture with the biblical teaching is evident in the fact that while Peter repented of his haughtiness, this sickness continues to be present today in the one who calls himself the heir of Peter, in the Pope of Rome . . . This aberration (rătăcire) and this illness of haughtiness went so far that the Pope of Rome started to call himself: ‘the vicar (substitute) of Christ on earth’ (o, what an aberration!)¹⁰³.

Compared to this heretical attitude, Orthodoxy appears as the true faith because it is anchored in the Holy Land and Jesus. This privileged state is further confirmed by the contrast between the Orthodox monks who, devoting themselves to spiritual fervor, were acclaimed even by Catholic scholars as representatives of “the spirit of the true monastic life,” and the Catholic monks who live in gaiety and

⁹⁶ Trifa 327.

⁹⁷ Trifa 332.

⁹⁸ Trifa 330.

⁹⁹ Trifa 269.

¹⁰⁰ Trifa 269.

¹⁰¹ Trifa 64.

¹⁰² Trifa 352.

¹⁰³ Trifa 141-142.

wealth¹⁰⁴, on one hand, and by the disparity between Patriarch Damianos of Jerusalem, an apostle figure-like characterized by profound spirituality, love, zeal, and wisdom, and the Pope who, “carried by diabolical haughtiness” pretends to be Christ’s vicar and entitled to receive worship from Orthodox patriarchs¹⁰⁵.

The Making of Holy Romania

Seen against this background of pastoral, orientalist, and sectarian concerns, the dialogical level that permeates the whole narrative becomes much more complicated. It is hard to trace clear borders between these lines of thought. Indeed, they form an intricate web of relations that support and reinforce each other and consequently should be approached globally. Yet, this raises further questions regarding the relationship between the narrative and the primal pastoral concern which, as it has been pointed out, constitutes the reason for writing this travelogue. How did, in this situation, Trifa envision the impact of his narrative on the Romanian readers back home? And did he find a unifying principle to sensitize the readers to his message?

To answer these questions, it should be recalled that for Trifa the physical act of pilgrimage to Jerusalem is not only a symbol of the more important spiritual pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem, but also a motivation and help in this journey. Because of this, he wrote the book to be an aid for the reader and, to this end, he continually engaged the people back home through countless exhortations. A close look at the narrative shows that while these rhetorical devices often targeted individuals who needed spiritual regeneration, they ultimately aimed at a collective audience that could be identified with the Romanian nation.

More specifically, the pilgrimage is presented as an official mission of the Romanian Orthodox Church. In several notes regarding the organization of the pilgrimage published by Trifa in 1925, he reveals that initially the journey was planned as part of a larger ecclesiastical project regarding the organization of an ecumenical council of Orthodox churches in Jerusalem. By the beginning of 1925 the news of the pilgrimage was widespread at least due to Trifa’s newspaper. Because the council was postponed for a future date and the materialization of the pilgrimage was jeopardized, Trifa informs the readers in the summer of 1925 that the trip will still take place under the leadership of Metropolitan Bălan (Trifa “La Ierusalim, la mormântul Domnului;” Trifa “Vom merge la Ierusalim, la locurile sfinte – costul și durată.”).

It should be noted that the beginning of the same year marked an epochal event for the Romanian Orthodox Church by the establishment of the Patriarchate, which paralleled, from a religious standpoint, the achievement of political ideal.

¹⁰⁴ Trifa 332.

¹⁰⁵ Trifa 235-237.

Moreover, the 1925 pilgrimage was followed by the visit of the newly Patriarch Miron Cristea (1927) and the mass pilgrimage led by Metropolitan Nectarie of Bucovina (1930) to Jerusalem¹⁰⁶. The delegation lead by Metropolitan Bălan could be seen as an effort of affirmation of Romanian Orthodoxy's preeminence in the context of its elevation to the status of the most populous free Orthodox Church after the demise of the Russian Church in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution¹⁰⁷.

This official dimension of the pilgrimage is stressed by Trifa throughout the narrative by the description of the organizational details of the travel and the meetings of Romanian delegation with important religious figures such as the Patriarch of Constantinople, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and Metropolitan Basil¹⁰⁸. The speeches addressed by Metropolitan Bălan with the occasion of these meetings show the consciousness of living a historical and national event. Thus, at the meeting with Patriarch Damianos of Jerusalem, he states that "we were prompted here to Jerusalem by the gratitude of an entire nation (neam) that gives thanks to our good God for helping it to see its national ideal fulfilled. We came to Jerusalem to express our appreciation for all that the Lord has done for us"¹⁰⁹. Apart from this, Romanian Orthodox also aimed at enhancing the Romanian presence in the Holy Land. As Trifa indicates in one of the articles published in 1926, Metropolitan Bălan had plans to build a Romanian church at the site of Jacob's well, "a church that would be ours and would allow us to drink grace (dar) and power from the very source of the well" (Trifa "O biserică românească la fântâna lui Iacob").

Having presented the character of the pilgrimage as an epochal event in the history of his nation, Trifa points to the role of the Orthodox Church in the construction of Greater Romania. For him, the entire phenomenon of this pilgrimage, the religious leaders, the common people, the itinerary, and the practices performed throughout the journey and particularly in the Holy Land, have a symbolic function that signals that the church is the only institution capable of providing the ideological and cultural cohesion needed by the country to succeed in its new political project.

In particular, the initiative of the church in organizing the pilgrimage is seen as an occasion for symbolically uniting all Romanians into a religious endeavor. A glimpse into Trifa's appreciation of the group of pilgrims shows that he sees it as the Romanian society *in nuce*: apart from the clergy (prelates, priests, monks), there are professors, intellectuals, and common people, men and women, from both urban and rural areas from different parts of the country¹¹⁰. This perception was shared by the leader of the pilgrimage when Metropolitan Bălan is presented stating before

¹⁰⁶ Păcurariu 337.

¹⁰⁷ Ioniță.

¹⁰⁸ Trifa 16, 23, 38, 70.

¹⁰⁹ Trifa 70.

¹¹⁰ Trifa 12.

Patriarch Damianos that “he brought to Jerusalem the soul of an entire people . . . to worship and give thanks for all that God has done for us”¹¹¹. Hence, the “worshipping Romanians,” as they were called according to the official program of the pilgrimage¹¹², are seen as the embodiment of the nation going to worship God to Jerusalem. In other words, he identifies the church with the nation and Orthodox identity with the quality of being Romanian.

This liturgical image of the nation is better grasped in the context of Trifa’s pastoral concerns that morphed Palestinian geography into a biblical – Christian mythscape. This perspective indicates that Trifa introduces a new clarification in his narrative appropriation of the Holy Land: while he orientalized it in order to make it Christian, and made it Christian to underline its Orthodox legacy, he further claims the holy sites for the Romanian nation. Accordingly, Trifa specifies that the group of pilgrims followed in the steps of Jesus¹¹³ and worshipped at key sites and in key moments, appropriating thus the sacred space and time as a foundational basis for the destiny of Greater Romania. In particular, the author describes liturgical scenes as if “a whole nation (neam) seems to walk and sing with us”¹¹⁴ or the Romanian language is for the first time heard to bring praise to God.

It has to be mentioned that Trifa believes that he has to play an active role in this religious – national project. If the unifying principle capable to touch Romanians’ hearts could be located at the interface between a resolute imitation of Jesus, in the way the group of pilgrims did, and a strong belief in the bright future of the nation, the author identifies the means to shape Romanians’ national self-consciousness with the Orthodox Church’s action of backing the pastoral – missionary activity of the Army of the Lord. Accordingly, Trifa conceives his account of the pilgrimage as a relic that has the power to impart the sacred to those at home¹¹⁵. The urgency of sending informative and exhortative notes to his journal *Lumina Satelor* while on journey¹¹⁶ and his explicit goal of writing the book as to describe “all that I felt and sensed in Jerusalem”¹¹⁷ in order to prompt others to follow Jesus reveal Trifa’s sense of responsibility toward his nation:

I always feel overwhelmed by the great responsibility I have in regards with the grace (darul) showed to me by God to see the holy places. I always think that I have to repay this grace by writing in detail all things seen and experienced at the holy places as a means to spiritually bring others in the footsteps of the Savior (Trifa 37).

¹¹¹ Trifa 38.

¹¹² Trifa 38.

¹¹³ Trifa 70.

¹¹⁴ Trifa 80.

¹¹⁵ Williams 27-28; Preston 41.

¹¹⁶ Trifa 37.

¹¹⁷ Trifa 369.

Trifa himself confesses at the beginning of the book that the pilgrimage represents for him a “turning point” (“răspântie de hotar”) in life that prompted him to renew his decision to serve God (Trifa 5). The activity during the trip, his prayers for the Army of the Lord, the innumerable exhortations for the readers, and the sustained implication in renewing people’s commitment to Orthodoxy after returning home, all show that for Trifa the national project of Greater Romania cannot be conceived as successful without the spiritual model of a pious life in the Holy Land. Eventually, by means of a veritable *translatio religionis*, Trifa prompts his readers to look at themselves as the new chosen people and to their country as the new earthly Canaan:

When we saw for the first time these barren and poor places, all of 160 pilgrims exclaimed in unison: ‘Lord, what a rich land is our country Romania!... What a blessed country!... The Canaan is ours!... We do not know how to value the blessings we have in our own country...’

Indeed, what a blessed land is our country! Canaan moved here, to us, and we are the chosen people that God said: ‘I, the Lord, am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be their slaves no more, breaking the bars of your yoke and making you walk erect’ (Leviticus 26.13). . .

We, however, forgot this covenant and do not know how to value the Canaan given to us by God (347-348).

How could this appropriation of the Holy Land be interpreted in respect to modern nationalism? If this concept is defined as the affirmation of a socio-political communitarian organization that excludes or attributes religion a secondary place (Anderson, Hobsbawm), then Trifa’s national model does not fit into it. Trifa’s formation and concerns do not envisage a secular type of nation. On the contrary, he identifies the nation with the church. If, however, nationalism entails only the ideas of common ethnicity, territory, language, culture, and religion that develop within a polity (Hobsbawm), then Trifa could be categorized as a nationalist. It should, however, be stressed that he interpreted Romanian identity in terms of religious ethnogenesis, by stressing the Orthodox character of this people. This allowed him to equate the nation (“neam”) with the Orthodox Church and is most likely the reason for the strong critique of Catholics and Jews who, given their large numbers within the Romanian borders, represented a threat. On the other hand, when Trifa was pressed by Metropolitan Bălan to associate with Father Ion Moța’s radical nationalist newspaper, he hesitantly followed his superior’s directives and eventually separated from politicizing too much his pastoral-missionary activity in the name of Christian universalism. Thus, Trifa’s national model resembles more with the religious-based patriotism proposed by Strickland (Strickland xviii), though it is hard to define it without any reference to post-Enlightenment nationalist ideologies.

Conclusion

In the context of the development of the new political project of Greater Romania, when many contending views competed for monopolizing the trajectory of the country, Father Iosif Trifa emerged as an advocate of a Christian Orthodox vision of the nation. The pilgrimage to the Holy Land that took place in 1925 was seen as an occasion to encourage people to embrace this religious ideal as the exclusive approach to the national issue. By identifying the nation with the Orthodox Church and equating Romanianness with Orthodoxy, Trifa posited himself in an active role in this project, according to his pastoral-missionary activity embodied by the Army of the Lord movement. Trifa's national model eventually indicates that he was part of a larger ideological trend that encompassed many nationalists of interwar Romania, though his subsequent activity shows that he avoided engaging in radical politics.

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