Ethnogonical Myths and Historical Imaginary Regarding the Genesis of the Romanians and Vlachs[*]

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Abstract: *Ethnogonical Myths and Historical Imaginary Regarding the Genesis of the Romanians and Vlachs.* The study offers a presentation of the ethnogonical myths and historical imaginary regarding the genesis of the Romanians and Vlachs by successive micro-analyses dedicated to the topic. Thus, we analyse: 1. the specific terminology used in this approach (*ethnogony, ethnogenesis, eponym heroes, ethnonyms, endonym and exonym, mythonym*); 2. the historical and mythical sources of the Romanian "dismounting" (*descălecat*) and the evolution of the scholars' preoccupations dedicated to the genesis of the Romanians; 3. the study case of the ethnogonical myth of the eponym heroes Roman and Vlahata, compared to further medieval legends about people founding brothers, based on the foreign written testimonies and on pan-Romanian ethnogonical ballads and legends; 4. the mythical significance attributed to Romanian ethnogony, comprising the utilitarian function, the spiritual meaning, the moral responsibility and the transcendental sense connected with the foundation of the people, as well as the historical imaginary of the Romanian ethnogenesis, insisting on: the ontological value of the name by which people found their existence, the politicization of geography and the nationalization of geographical differences, the teleological interpretation with regard to the Romanian ethnogenesis and the Vlach "colonization".

Keywords: ethnogonical foundation myths, historical imaginary, Roman and Vlahata, Romanian ethnogenesis, Vlach "colonization"

Rezumat: *Mituri etnogonice și imaginar istoric privind geneza românilor și vlahilor.* Studiul ce înfățișează miturile etnogonice și imaginarul istoric privind geneza românilor și vlahilor conține o succesiune de microanalize dedicate subiectului. Sunt analizate: 1. terminologia specifică utilizată în

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demersul de faţă (*etnogonie, etnogeneză, eroi eponimi, etnonime, endonim şi exonim, mitonim*); 2. izvoarele istorice şi mitice ale *descălecatului* românesc şi evoluţia preocupărilor savante dedicate genezei românilor; 3. studiul de caz al mitului etnogonic despre eroii eponimi Roman şi Vlahata, prin comparaţie cu alte legende medievale despre fraţii întemeietori de popoare, în baza atât a mărturiilor scrise străine, cât şi a baladelor şi legendelor etnogonice panromâneşti; 4. semnificaţiile mitice ale etnogoniei româneşti, incluzând funcţia utilitară, rostul spiritual, responsabilitatea morală şi sensul transcendent atribuite întemeierii neamului, precum şi imaginarul istoric al etnogenezei româneşti, cu referire la: valoarea ontologică a numelui cu care popoarele îşi întemeiază existenţa, politizarea geografiei şi naţionalizarea diferenţelor geografice, interpretarea teleologică a etnogenezei româneşti şi a ″colonizării″ vlahe.

Cuvinte-cheie: mituri etnogonice, imaginar istoric, Roman şi Vlahata, etnogeneza românească, ″colonizarea″ vlahă

Terminology

Ethnogony, a compound word derived from the Greek terms ἔθνος (nation) and γονία (from the word family: γονεῖς = parents, γόνος = offspring, descendant, seed), is the creation or making of a people. The concept of ethnogony applies to mythology, unlike its synonym, *ethnogenesis* (< ἔθνος + γέννηση, genesis), preferred by historians.[1] If the ethnogenesis represents a unique, nonrepetitive phenomenon, the ethnogony is a continuous process of enrichment with new myths, due to the permanent mythogenesis. Between the ″real historical ethnogenesis″ and the ″mythical ethnogenesis there is no explicit parallel evolution″ (între *etnogeneza istorică reală* şi *etnogeneza mitică nu există o evoluţie paralelă şi explicită*), explained Romulus Vulcănescu.[2] He went on: ″Ethnogony thus becomes a mythical version of the Romanians' ethnogenesis″ (*Etnogonia românilor devine astfel o replică mitică a etnogenezei românilor*).[3] The ethnogonical legends, which concern the ethnical genesis of the Romanians, were denominated in many ways by the Romanian historians; as a matter of fact, Dimitrie Onciul called them

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[1] Explanation of the Greek terms in: *Νέοελληνικό-Ρουμανικό Λέξικο / Dicţionar neogrec-român*, δεύτερη έκδοση αναθεωρημένη και επαυξημένη / ediţia a doua adăugită şi revizuită, γενική επιμέλεια και τελική αναμόρφωση / coordonare şi redactare finală Lia Brad-Chisacof, συντάκτες / autori Margarita Kondoghiorghi, Eugen Dobroiu, Ştefan Stupca, Aniţa Augustopoulos-Jucan, Bucureşti, Εκδόσεις / Editura Demiurg, 2000.

[2] Romulus Vulcănescu, *Mitologie română,* Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1985, p. 267.

[3] *Ibidem*, p. 270.

"historiographical myths" (*mituri istoriografice*), while Gheorghe Brătianu dedicated a book to the "historical tradition about the foundation of the Romanian states" (*tradiţia istorică despre întemeierea statelor româneşti*).[4]

The *eponym* heroes (< ἐπονομασία = surname) - that is one, two, three or more heroes, in which case they are all blood brothers - give the name of the founded citadel, city and country, becoming the kin forefathers (*moşii de neam*), respectively the founding heroes.

As regards the *ethnonyms*, the Romanians - like other people - have two ethnical names, that coexisted throughout history in all their territories of dwelling and habitation: "Romanians" (*români*), "Aromanians" (*armâni*) etc., as a self-denomination, an inner name or *endonym* (< ἔνδον = in, inner, inside + ὄνομα = name), and "Wallachians", "Vlachs", "Vlochs", "Vlash" (*v(a)lahi, volohi, vlaşi*) etc., as a name given to them by foreigners, that is an external name or *exonym* (< ἔξω = out, outer, outside + ὄνομα = name). Unlike some of the big people (Ruthenians or Rusyns) considered to have come "from nowhere" as they were devoured by history together with their name[5], but just like other victorious nations (Germans, Poles, Hungarians, Jews), the Romanians refuted the exonym, that was perceived increasingly with a pejorative connotation over time, and succeeded to impose their endonym. This issue was definitively settled by the formation of the modern national state (1859), and with the official proclamation of the endonym as a state name, Romania (*România*, 1866). If the ethnonyms of the Romanians and Vlachs were better studied (by Gustav Weigand[6], Toli Hagi-Gogu[7], Ioan-Aurel Pop[8], Thede Kahl[9]), a detailed analysis of all

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[4] Dimitrie Onciul, *Scrieri istorice,* Bucureşti, Editura Ştiinţifică, 1968; Gheorghe Brătianu, *Tradiţia istorică despre întemeierea statelor româneşti*, edited by Valeriu Râpeanu, Bucureşti, Editura Eminescu, 1980.

[5] Pavlo Robert Magocsi, *Poporul de niciunde. Istoria în imagini a rutenilor carpatici,* site of the Cultural Union of the Ruthenians in Romania, http://www.rutenii.ro/.

[6] Gustav Weigand, *Die Sprache der Olympo-Walachen nebst einer Einleitung über Land und Leute,* Leipzig, 1888; idem, *Vlacho-Meglen. Eine ethnographisch-philologische Untersuchung,* Leipzig, 1892; idem, *Die Aromunen. Ethnographisch-philologisch-historische Untersuchungen über das Volk der sogenannten Makedo-Romanen oder Zinzaren,* Leipzig, 1894-1895; idem, *Ethnographie von Makedonien. Geschichtlich-nationaler, sprachlich-statistischer Teil*, Leipzig, 1924.

[7] Toli Hagi-Gogu, *Romanus şi Valahus sau ce este romanus, roman, român, aromân, valah şi vlah,* Bucureşti, 1939.

[8] Ioan-Aurel Pop, *The History and Significance of the Names "Romanian" / "Vlach" and "Romania" / "Wallachia",* Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2014; Ioan-Aurel Pop, Alexandru Simon, *Re de Dacia. Un proiect de la sfârşitul Evului Mediu,* Cluj-Napoca, Editura Şcoala Ardeleană, 2018.

the Romanian Lands' ethnonyms is still expected. The importance of imposing the endonym "Romanian" (*român*) and the intrinsic connection between the endonym and the foundation of the Romanian Lands are also emphasized by the *mythonyms* (mythical names), which are a constant presence of our ethnogonical legends.

Sources

The Romanian sources use a specific notion, *descălecat* ("dismounting", descending)[10], to designate both the genesis of the Romanians by Romanization (called "first dismounting", *descălecatul cel dintâiu*), and especially the foundation of the medieval states of Moldavia and Wallachia ("second dismounting", *descălecatul de-al doilea*) by voivode Dragoş, respectively by voivode Negru (the Black).

The term was introduced by the first chronicles in Romanian language, authored by the Moldavian chronicle writers Grigore Ureche (before 1647), Miron Costin (1677-1691) and Nicolae Costin (before 1709)[11], followed by the Wallachian chronicles (1690-1763)[12]. The word and the field it covers are genuine Romanian. *Descălecatul* (dismounting) was not imported from Old Slavonic, Medio Bulgarian or Russian, as *Cronica moldo-polonă* (Moldo-Polish Chronicle, in the 16th century) talks about the "beginning" of the Land of Moldavia, and *Letopiseţul Cantacuzinesc* (Chronicle of the Cantacuzins, 1690) translates by *descălecat* the form *za planinski* = "from the mountains". On the other hand, none of the Romanian chronicles assumes the translation of the German and Hungarian terms *Landnahme* or *honfoglalás*, both of them meaning "conquering (occupation) of a country".

Preoccupations related to the genesis of the Romanians appear since the beginnings of the old Romanian literature and historiography. This topic was discovered in the 17th century by the humanist chronicle

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[9] Thede Kahl, *Ethnizität und räumliche Verteilung der Aromunen in Südosteuropa,* Münster, Institut für Geographie der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster, 1999; idem; *Etnonime la aromâni*, in: "Spaţiul lingvistic şi literar românesc din perspectiva integrării europene", Iaşi, 2004, p. 264-273.

[10] In Romanian, *a încăleca* = to mount a horse; *a descăleca* = to dismount a horse; *descălecat* = horse dismounting (litteral sense), descending from the mountains (figurative sense).

[11] Moldavian chronicles in Romanian are those written by: Grigore Ureche, *Letopiseţul Ţării Moldovei* (1642-1647); Miron Costin, *Cronica polonă* (1677); idem, *Poema polonă* (1684); idem, *De neamul moldovenilor* (1686-1691); Nicolae Costin, *Letopiseţul Ţării Moldovei de la zidirea lumii până la 1601* (before 1709).

[12] Wallachian chronicles in Romanian are: *Letopiseţul Cantacuzinesc* (1690), *Viaţa preacuviosului părinte Nicodim sfinţitul* (1763), and others.

writers, defended with arguments in the 18th century by representatives of the Enlightenment (Dimitrie Cantemir, 1714-1722[13]), retrieved and enthusiastically embraced by the Romanian romantic revolutionaries of the 19th century, and then it passed to a severe historical register during the positivism at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, which shaped throughout Europe the period of great national history syntheses.

Nevertheless, the proper historicity of the Romanian ethnogenesis is doubled by a rich mythical background of ethnogonical legends, scarcely approached by researchers. The first massive folklore collections date from the last part of the 19th century and the beginning of the following one. They were carried out by Simion Florea Marian, A.R. Budakov, Tudor Pamfile, Dumitru Furtună and republished in late 20th century by Tony Brill, V. Adăscăliței.[14]

The ancient "first dismounting" (*primul descălecat*) is illustrated and explained exclusively by Romanian literary historians (George Călinescu) and ethnologists (Romulus Vulcănescu, Ion Taloş), by revealing the ethnogonical traditions connected to Roman emperor Traian and the ethnogonical legends about Traian and Dochia[15], whereas the Romanian historians dedicated a greater deal of interest to the medieval "second dismounting" (*cel de-al doilea descălecat*) of Moldavia and Wallachia, and to the genesis of the Romanians according to the eponym myth of Roman and Vlahata, which is to be illustrated hereinafter. Apart from the analyses of the mythonym *Ardeal* (Transylvania), signed by Gheorghe Brătianu, Romulus Vulcănescu[16], ethno-historical border approaches are still deficient, and Romanian research regarding the pan-Romanian ethnogenesis and ethnogony is

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[13] Dimitrie Cantemir, *Descriptio Moldaviae,* 1714-1716, first published in German, Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1771.

[14] Romanian folklore and ethnogonical legends were collected by: Simion Florea Marian, *Tradiţii poporane din Bucovina,* Bucureşti, Imprimeria Statului, 1895; A.R. Budakov, *Legende din istoria românilor cu traducerea în ruseşte,* Chişinău, Imprimeria Statului, 1920; Tudor Pamfile, *Sărbătorile la români. Sărbătorile de toamnă şi postul Crăciunului. Studiu etnografic,* Bucureşti, 1914; Dumitru Furtună, *Cuvinte scumpe. Taclale, povestiri şi legende româneşti,* Bucureşti, Socec & Sfetea, 1914; and republished by Tony Brill, *Legende populare româneşti. Legende istorice,* Bucureşti, Editura Minerva, 1970; V. Adăscăliței, *De la Dragoş-vodă la Cuza-vodă. Legende populare istorice româneşti,* Bucureşti, Editura Minerva, 1988.

[15] Romulus Vulcănescu, *op. cit.*, p. 268-277, 332-335; Ion Taloş, *D'Italica à Sarmizegetusa. Réflexions sur la culture populaire romaine*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române, 2016.

[16] See footnotes 2 and 4.

missing completely. The latter is substituted by the foreign historiographies from the North-Western Carpathians and from the South of the Danube, which are consensual in their stereotypes concerning the ″colonization″ of the Northern and Southern Vlachs by their immigration from the North Danubian and intra-Carpathian areas.[17]

The ethnogonical myth of the eponym heroes Roman and Vlahata
Roman and Vlahata's legend is related to several medieval legends about brothers who founded people. Such legends circulated in cultured, courtly areas, neighbouring the Romanian one. The oldest preserved East Slavic chronicle, *Повѣсть времяньныхъ лѣтъ* (Tale of Bygone Years), written by monk Nestor (around 1113), narrates the history of Kievan Russia between 850-1110. Kiev's founders are three brothers: Kii (Кий), Shtchek (Щек) and Horiv (Хорив), sometimes together with their sister Libidi (Либидь, the ″Swan″). The oldest brother gives his name to the city, his smaller brothers give their names to the ″mountains″ (hills) in Kiev: Shtchekavytsia and Horevytsia, and Libidi gives her name to the river flowing through Kiev, tributary to the Dnieper. Then, the legend of Lech and Czech, other times together with Rus, constitutes the founding myth of the West Slavs, namely of the Poles (Lechites), Czechs and Ruthenians or Rusyns (not of the Russians, as Paisie Ligaridis asserted in his *Hrismologion* of 1656). The legendary brothers, chasing the white eagle (present in Poland's coat of arms), set out in three different directions: northward (the Poles), westward (the Czechs) and eastward (the Rusyns). They were mentioned for the first time in *Chronica Poloniae maioris* or *Kronika wielkopolska* (Chronicle of Greater Poland). This work compiled at the beginning of the 14th century recounts the tradition since the Polish foundation until 1273. The variants of the legend also include two brothers (Lech and Czech) or only one hero (Lech). Finally, there is the eponym legend of the hunter brothers Hunor and Magor, who go in quest of the white doe (horn dear). The ethnogonical legend of the Hungarians was recorded by Simon de Kéza (around 1282) and illustrated in *Cronicum pictum vindobonensis* (Vienna Pictured Chronicle, after 1358).

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[17] Gheorghe Şişeştean, *Români care s-au stins. Valahii din Carpaţii Nordici şi românii din Ungaria,* Cluj-Napoca, Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2012; *Colonizarea valahă în Slovacia şi colonizarea slovacă în România / Valašska kolonizácia na Slovensku a slovenská kolonizácia v Rumunsku*, Múzeum Slovenského Národného Povstania, Banská Bystrica, 2014.

Roman and Vlahata, the two eponym brothers of the Romanians and Vlachs, appear in two foreign written sources (Pian di Carpine's record of 1247, and *Cronica moldo-rusă* / Moldo-Russian Chronicle after 1500). If the former source testifies an early chronology, the value of the second derives from its object, purpose and intention, meaning not to define two distinct people, but to conciliate the Romanians' endonym (Roman) with their exonym (Vlahata).

Written 35 years before Simon de Kéza, more than 50 years before *Kronika wielkopolska* and 100 years earlier than the proper foundation of Moldavia and Wallachia, the report of the Italian Franciscan Giovanni del Pian di Carpine (Plano Carpini) - envoy of pope Inocentius IV in Ukraine occupied by Tartars (1245), chief of the mission sent to the great khan's court (1246) - has an impressive age. His *Ystoria Mongalorum* (Mongols' History) contains the oldest European description of the Tartars. Returning from mission (1247), on his way out of Cumania, Pian di Carpine meets both duke Roman, coming from the Tartars accompanied by his entourage, and duke Olaha (mentioned also with the inverted form of his name: Aloha), entering the territory with his convoy: "*Et in exitus Comaniae invenimus ducem Romanum qui intrabat ad Tartaros et societatem ipsius, et ducem Olaha qui exhibat et societatem ipsios (...); et omnes isti sunt duces rutheni.*"[18] The report asserts that Roman and Olaha are "Ruthenian" dukes, namely from Ruthenia (just like the prince from the Ruthenian city Tchernigov), thus they are Orthodox. Even if they are no blood brothers, they still are ethnically kin related, as suggested by the Romanian double ethnonym, whereby the exonym Olaha shows a Hungarian-Latin form. The duality of the Romanian ethnonyms had already occurred in the 12th century's narrative attributed to Hungarian king Béla's Anonymous Notary (*Blachi ac pastores Romanorum*), and later it recurred in Italian documents of 1314 (*i Rumeni e i Valacchi*), 1345 (*Olachi Romani*), 1499 (*Vlachi, chiamati Rumenj, id est Romanj*) etc.[19]

Cronica moldo-rusă (Moldo-Russian Chronicle), belonging to the *Руская лѣтопись съ Воскресенскаго списа* (Russian Chronicle in the Voskresenski Script), was donated by Patriarch Nikon to the monastery Voskresenski (1658) and published by the Imperial Academy in Sankt Petersburg (1793). One of the Russian chronicle's chapters, entitled "Short story about Moldavia's princely rulers, since the Land of

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[18] Victor Spinei, *Moldova în secolele XI-XIV,* Chişinău, Editura Universitas, 1994, p. 230.

[19] Ioan-Aurel Pop, *op. cit.*, 2014, p. 34-36.

Moldavia began, in the year 6867[20] (= 1359)" (*Povestire pe scurt despre domnii Moldovei, de când s-a început Țara Moldovei, în anul 6867*), starts with the legend of Roman and Vlahata, continues with the legend describing the "dismounting" (*descălecat*) of voivode Dragoş across the mountains in Moldavia, and closes with the reign of Steven the Great (*Ştefan cel Mare*)'s son, Bogdan the Blind (*Bogdan cel Orb*, 1504-1517). That is why the beginning of the 16th century is considered to be the moment when *Cronica moldo-rusă* was compiled in Moldavia, and then exported to Russia.[21]

The legend of the eponym brothers Roman and Vlahata narrates how, running from persecution of the "heretics against the Christians" in Venice (*Veneția*), they went to Old Rome (*Roma Veche*), where they founded the citadel Roman, named after one of the two brothers. Here Roman and Vlahata with their kinfolk (the Romanovich or *românenii*) lived together in "Old Latiny" (*lătinia veche*), until the separation of the Christians in two churches: the Western church and the Eastern one, that happened during pope Formosus's time. Then the Latins founded the citadel New Rome (*Roma Nouă*), inviting the descendants of Roman to the "New Latiny" (*lătinia nouă*). But the Romanovich refused and started against the Latins "a great war" (*război mare*), that lasted until Hungarian king Vladislav's time. The legend also says that Vladislav, nephew of Sava, archbishop of the Serbians, was baptized by his uncle, keeping Orthodoxy "under the rose" (*în taină*), although he was Latin by "royal language and regulation" (*limbă şi orânduială crăiască*). During his reign, Tartar *knez* (prince, khan) Neimet turned against the Hungarians, storming across the rivers Prut and Moldavia, across the Carpathians, into Transylvania, unto the river Mureş. Vladislav seeks help both from "emperor and pope" (*împăratului şi papei*) in New Rome, and from the Romanovich. When the Old and New Romans gathered in Hungary, the latter wrote to Vladislav a secret letter, asking him to send the Old Romans in the first lines of the battle, in order to be decimated, because: "The Old Romans have war with us for faith, they did not want to be with us in the New Roman Law and lived in the Greek faith, in Old Rome. (...) Yet we and you keep the same law (*lege*, faith)." If God would

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[20] Medieval Orthodox monastery chronicles and church inscriptions (*pisanii*) on Romanian soil indicated "the year from the genesis of the world" (*anul de la facerea lumii*), which - according to Orthodox tradition - had happened 5508 years before Christ. So, the year 6867 from the world genesis means 1359 *post Christum natum*. The anachronism refers to the "dismounting" (*descălecat*) of voivode Dragoş in 1359.

[21] Petre P. Panaitescu, *Cronicile slavo-române din secolele XV-XVI publicate de Ion Bogdan*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1959, p. 154.

still spare them in the battle, the king was asked to "settle" (*aşeze*) the Old Romans in Hungary, and to convert their women and children in Old Rome (Roman) to the "Latin law" (*legea latină*). Indeed, a great battle took place against the Tartars, who were beaten first by the Old Romans, then by Hungarians and New Romans. Filled with joy, the king granted many privileges to the Old Romans for their bravery, also showing them the deceitful letter, inviting them to serve him and not to return to Old Rome anymore, so as to escape from the hands of the New Romans. The envoys sent out by the Old Romans learned that the citadel of Old Rome had been destroyed, and their women and children forced to turn Catholics, to "Latin law" (*legea latină*). Then the Romanovich submitted to the king, asking him for land and for the right to preserve their Greek Christian law. Vladislav gave them land in Maramureş and in the place at the Criş, between the rivers Mureş and Tisa. The Old Romans settled down here and got Hungarian wifes, who turned from the Latin law to the Greek law.[22]

The circulation of Roman and Vlahata's legend is restrained; there is no evidence of its oral character; its only source is *Cronica moldo-rusă*. Because of the unusual sequence of "dismountings" (*descălecări*, Venice - Old Rome - Transylvania - Maramureş, Crişana), of real characters - both individual (pope Formosus, king Vladislav or Laslău), and collective (the Old Romans / Romanovich / Orthodox Romanians, the New Romans / Roman Catholics), the interpretation of the complex elements of the legend's structure differ from researcher to researcher.[23] The historians look for and find more and more arguments in favour of the legend's veracity and historicity.

The eponym hero Roman is mentioned as the sole founder of Rome (*Râm*) in the folk novel *Alexandria*. The *Nibelungenlied* (around 1200) also makes reference to the Vlachs: "Among *Riuzen*[24] and Greeks many a man there straddled on horseback,/ and Poles and Vlachs could be seen popping up..." (*Von Riuzen und von Kriechen reit man vil manic man,/ den Polânen un Vlâchen den sach man schwinde gân*...) At this point the eponym character shows up: "Duke Ramunc from the Land of Vlachs,/ with seven hundred men, quickly comes to help them." (*Der herzoge Râmunc uzer Vlâchen lant/ mit siben hundert manen, kom er für sie*

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[22] *Ibidem*, p. 158 sq.

[23] See most recently: Ioan-Aurel Pop, Alexandru Simon, *op. cit.*, 2018, p. 40-42.

[24] Gheorghe Brătianu, *op. cit.*, p. 160, translated the old German word *Riuzen* by "Russians", yet I consider the real meaning is "Ratzen", that is "Serbians".

gerant.)[25] The last examples lead Ovidiu Pecican to the fundamental intuition that the eponym brothers' legend emanated from a previous tradition with a unique hero: Roman.[26]

The correctness of this hypothesis is proven and demonstrated by appeal to folklore. The Romanian ballads and legend, identified on this topic, mention not two, but one single eponym hero, who bears the names Roman, Românaş (Little Romanian), Roman-Copil (Child Roman), Copil Român (Romanian Child) or, in the Greek folklore recollected by Tache Papahagi, Vlahul cel Mic (Little Vlach).[27]

The ballad of Roman-Copil (Child Roman) has numerous pan-Romanian variants north and south of the Danube that follow the same pattern. Dan, Constantin and Roman, three brothers or "three Romanian valiants" (*trei voinici români*, in the variant from Banat collected by Gheorghe Cătană), defy a foreign army (Turkish in the Danubian variants and Tartarian in the Moldavian ones). After the victorious confrontation with the enemies, Roman has a strange behavior. Not recognizing his brothers, he kills them. "But who sat there in the tent?/ It was Din, and Constantin,/ and the little child Roman." (*Dar în cort cine şedea?/ Era Din şi Constantin/ Şi cel mic copil Roman.*) The latter "drank and made good cheer" (*bea şi gostea*) with the emperor's girls, kidnapped and taken away by sword (*luate cu sabia*) from Constantinople (*Ţarigrad*, Tsar City). The hero warns his brothers to keep clear of him, as, after chopping Turks for three days, his "dun horse raged and dreaded" (*murgul a turbat, s-a-nspăimântat*) and he is afraid not to defile (*să nu spurce*) his sword against them. The fratricide caused by the *furror* (mad anger) of the warrior, in Mircea Eliade's well-known phrase, leads to the resolution of a hegemonic crisis, and in the end Roman remains the only victor.[28] The nearly 20 variants recorded at the beginning of the 20th century in the Danubian Plain (*Câmpia Dunării*), from Wallachia to Oltenia and Banat, also explain the Balkan dissemination of the motif, especially among Greeks and Albanians, where the hero always bears the name Vlahul cel Mic (Little Vlach).

There is another Wallachian folk legend, collected and possibly revised by Constantin Rădulescu-Codin under the title *Copil român*

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[25] *Ibidem*.

[26] Ovidiu Pecican, *Troia, Veneţia, Roma. Studii de istoria civilizaţiei europene,* Cluj, EFES, 1998, p. 95.

[27] Tache Papahagi, *Paralele folklorice (greco-române),* Bucureşti, Monitorul Oficial şi Imprimeriile Statului, 1944, p. 62-64.

[28] Ela Cosma, *Ideea de întemeiere în cultura populară românească,* Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2000, p. 360.

(Romanian child, about 1925), later republished as *Romănaş* (Little Romanian).[29] It is said that Romănaş fought with Turks and Tartars, then killed his bigger brothers, Din and Constantin (like in the most famous Romanian ballad, *Miorița,* unlike in the ballad of Roman-Copil), to whom the little brother addresses with *neică* (big brother or uncle). The bravery of the eponym hero is praised by artistic means specific to fairy tales: Romănaş ʺfought against the whole horde, so he also killed the terrible son of Ciupăgeț, with a steel hand and a wooden footʺ (*s-a luptat cu urdia-ntreagă, de a răpus şi pe grozavul feciorul lui Ciupăgeț, cu o mână de oţel şi un picior de lemn*). The cause of crime is envy (as in *Miorița*, not in Roman's ballad). Din and Constantin ʺin a fit of pique against Romănaş, seized the right time, cut him to pieces, but still feared he would return from the deadʺ (*au prins ciudă pe Romănaş şi, când le-a venit bine, l-au tăiat, făcându-l ciopârți-ciopârți; tot le mai era teamă că o mai învia*). The big brothers compete for the love of the three emperor's girls fetched by Romănaş from Ţarigrad (Constantinople). They have good time together, but the girls have an inkling of the weird death of the hero. The smallest of them brings ʺdead waterʺ (*apă moartă*) and ʺlive waterʺ (*apă vie*) from the River Jordan. The girls ʺgather the bones togetherʺ (*au strâns ciolanele la un loc*), pouring above dead water, then live water. Suddenly Romănaş ʺrecovers again in flesh and bones, starts to move and rub his eyes: - Alas, what a deep sleep I've slept! - You'd have slept for good and all, unless we were around here, say the girls and take him with them to Ţarigradʺ (*s-a înfiripat iar în carne şi oase, a început să se mişte şi să se şteargă la ochi: - Măi, da' greu somn mai dormii! - Ai fi dormit tu mult şi bine, dacă nu eram noi p-aci, zic fetele şi-l iau cu ele la Ţarigrad*). Jordan is the water of the Christic baptism and the primary spring, too, while ʺ Ţarigrad is for the people a whole world, the citadel of citadels, the emperor's seat, the wonder of wonders, the heaven's gateʺ (Nicolae Iorga).

As we have seen, the foundation of the Romanian people is mythologically portrayed by creating the eponym founding hero. The endonym in ballads and legends is a diminutive and an endearing name, for the use of the Romanians (Roman-Copil, Romănaş). Its translation for the use of the Greeks and Albanians comprises the Romanians' exonym (Vlahul cel Mic). The conversion of the name Roman into Vlahul cel Mic proves its value as an ethnic symbol, otherwise the interest had been directed towards the hero's deeds and no importance had been attached to his name.[30] Moreover, the epithet always refers to the smallest brother,

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[29] Tony Brill, *op. cit.*, p. 19-20; V. Adăscăliţei, *op. cit.*, p. 33-34.
[30] Ela Cosma, *op. cit.*, p. 367.

who is *par excellence* the main and positive hero in most traditional folk cultures.

So, depending on the inner or outer dissemination of the ethnogonical pattern, in fact two different legends exist: one about Roman alone, the other about the eponym brothers. The inner Romanian folk traditions, of a multisecular age, with echoes lasting until today, recall only Roman / Românaş, characterized by opposition to both his brothers, Din and Constantin, who are irrelevant in ethnogonical context. The eponym hero's main feature is his peerless heroism in the fights against Turkish-Tartar hordes. But then, the legend of Roman and Vlahata, spread outside the Romanian area, is shaped after the example of the Slavic and Hungarian eponym brothers. The explanatory key of the motif of Roman together with his brother Vlahata is "the ingenious interweaving (...) of the two appellations of the Romanians, the inner: *român* (Romanian) and the outer one: *vlah, valahus* (Vlach)" (ingenioasa îmbinare (...) a celor două denumiri ale românilor, cea internă: *român* şi cea externă: *vlah, valahus*), as Adolf Armbruster appreciated.[31] The two eponym brothers are medieval heroes emerged at the beginnings of the Romanian state foundations, out of the need to champion a fabulous ethnic origin, in consensus with the myths of the age. Roman and Vlahata, but chiefly the former, do not stand out in relief by their qualities as warriors, yet they represent perfect symbols of founding heroes and kin forefathers (*moşi de neam*).

Mythical significance of ethnogony and historical imaginary of the Romanian ethnogenesis

The analysis of the mythical ethnogony in parallel with the historical ethnogenesis reflects a special significance attributed to both concepts in the Romanian area.

The ethnogonical myths evince an obvious pragmatism. They have a utilitarian function: of building a proper foundation and of establishing a domestic or ecclesiastical edifice, a human settlement, even a country. But the sense of architecture is not limited to the utilitarian function, as it includes a variety of further symbolic and aesthetic levels, too.[32] From a long-term perspective, the folk traditions

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[31] Adolf Armbruster, *Romanitatea românilor. Istoria unei idei,* ediţia a II-a, Bucureşti, Editura Enciclopedică, 1993, p. 80.

[32] Umberto Eco, *Function and Sign: The Semiotics of Architecture*, in: "Rethinking Architecture. A Reader in Cultural Theory", edited by N. Leach, London, 2001, p. 187-189.

regarding the genesis of the Romanians also reflect the spiritual meaning and the moral responsibility implied by the "good beginning" of all foundations. The mythical vision reveals the deep roots and the transcendental significance of the Romanian ethnogony. By laying a solid basis, both the prosperity of the land and country, and the persistence over centuries of the descendant folk generations are ensured.

Thus, the significance of the Romanian ethnogony comprises the utilitarian function, the spiritual meaning, the moral responsibility and the transcendental sense connected with the foundation of the people and country.

As regards the significance of the historical ethnogenesis, we have to add the ontological value of the name by which people, just like human beings, found their existence. Even the name of the nation and state - an apparently ineffable, immaterial category - has a huge importance, because the name is "sometimes almost as important as the existence itself of the respective people and state" (*uneori aproape la fel de important ca însăşi existenţa poporului şi statului respectiv*), becoming "part of the ethnical, national and state identity, often shaping silently or openly the very destiny of its holders" (*parte a identităţii etnice, naţionale şi statale, adesea modelând tacit ori făţiş însuşi destinul purtătorilor săi*).[33] The indissoluble link between the endonym and the national state results from the name of Romania (*România*), too, "a kind of Rome transferred in the area bordered by the River Danube, by the Carpathian Mountains and by the Black Sea" (*un soi de Romă transferată în spaţiul mărginit de Fluviul Dunăre, de Munţii Carpaţi şi de Marea Neagră*), a "strong and durable identity mark, naturally created" (*marcă identitară puternică şi durabilă, zămislită natural*) during the middle ages and "historically-ideologically forged" (*forjată istorico-ideologic*) by the Romanian intellectuals, "artisans of the modern nationalism and of the national ideology" (*artizanii naţionalismului modern şi ai ideologiei naţionale*).[34] The Romanians' ethnonyms are charged with ontological value, as shown by the dual use of the endonym and exonym in texts from the 13th-15th centuries. Such testimonies are precious, all the more as the medieval ages were dominated by the name of Vlachs, used by the foreigners to nominate the Romanians. The fight for obliteration of the undesirable name of Vlachs was won in modern times, when the Romanians imposed their selfname.

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[33] Ioan-Aurel Pop, *op. cit.*, 2014, p. 9-10.
[34] *Ibidem*, p. 73-74.

The historical imaginary of the Romanian ethnogenesis involves the existence of a given territory and the formation of a local identity (*spiritus loci*). Historical imaginary intersects not merely *symbolical geographies* (synthesized by Sorin Mitu[35], Carmen Andraş[36], Sorin Antohi and Corin Braga[37]), but also the actual political geography. It is known that medieval sources used "to confer to the name of a population a rather geographical than ethnical understanding" (*să dea numelui unei populaţii un înţeles mai degrabă geografic decît etnic*), as Gheorghe Brătianu observed.[38] The habit is prevalent in modern sources, as well, which is revealed both by the conjoint exonym designating Moldavia and Wallachia (that were called together *Donaufürstenthümer, Дунайские Княжества, Principatele Dunărene*, Danubian Principalities instead of Romanian Principalities), and by the geographical subdivisions of the Romanians' endonym. In past and present, the Romanians (as an ethnic and national identity) often differentiated among themselves by criteria of geographical membership and provincial identity, in: Transylvanians (*ardeleni*), Banatians (*bănăţeni*), inhabitants from Bukovina (*bucovineni*), Maramureş (*moroşeni*), Oaş (*oşeni*), Romanian Transylvanians settled in Moldavia or Wallachia and called *ungureni* (those coming from the Hungarian Land) - described by Dimitrie Cantemir in *Descriptio Moldaviae* (1716) as "Transylvanians or, as they are usually called among us, *ungureni*" (*transilvăneni sau, cum se numesc de obicei la noi, ungureni*), Moldavians (*moldoveni*) and Bessarabians (*basarabeni*), Wallachians (*munteni, regăţeni*), Oltenians (*olteni*), Aromanians who came from Makedonia to Dobrudja (*machedoni*) etc. A few geographical groups of Romanians and Aromanians had an occupation different from agriculture, namely they are or were sheperds (*oieri*, sheep breeders) and had special non-geographical selfnames: *moţi, ţopi, mocani, colibaşi, gugulani, momârlani, fărşeroţi* etc.

But as soon as geography turns to politics and geographical differences are nationalized, artificial nations and states appear (Republic of Moldova), and absurd answers respond to senseless questions: "Why are the Moldavians no Romanians (?) - Because they didn't and don't want to be!" (*De ce moldovenii nu sînt români (?) - Pentru*

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[35] Sorin Mitu, *Europa Centrală, Răsăritul, Balcanii. Geografii simbolice comparate*, ediţia I, Cluj-Napoca, International Book Access, 2007, ediţia a doua, 2008.
[36] Carmen Andraş, *Geografiile simbolice,* Iaşi, Editura Institutul European, 2008.
[37] *Geografii simbolice,* coordinated by Sorin Antohi and Corin Braga, in "Caietele Echinox", vol. 5, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Dacia, 2003.
[38] Gheorghe Brătianu, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

că n-au vrut şi nu vor!)[39] Or questions arise with a tragical answer: Why are the speakers of the same Romanian language divided in Eastern Serbia (after 1970) in Romanians and Vlachs, and in Ukraine (nowadays) in Romanians and Moldavians? Because, by identity defragmentation and obliteration of the historical memory, the "Valachization" (*valahizarea*) and "Moldavization" (*moldovenizarea*) of the Romanians represent the shortest way to ethnical and national abolition.

As any beginning carries the end in itself, the eschatological vision belongs to the foundation topic, and the pan-Romanian ethnogenesis receives a teleological interpretation. The guarantors of the Romanian character of the people living inside the state borders are exactly the founded country and the state-nation, whereas the perpetuation and durability of the Romanians outside the state borders is extremely problematic. The Southern Vlachs (from Greece, Albania, Montenegro, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria) and the Northern Vlachs (from Moravia, Slovakia, Poland, Ukraine) are known due to their exonym. As long as their ethnogonical myths and ethnical identity are ignored, the foreign historiographies solve the Vlach ethnogenesis by one and the same stereotype: the "colonization", insisting that the Vlachs came to the territories where they live(d) in as a demographic minority either from the North of the Danube, or from Transylvania and Maramureş.[40] This *déjà vu* reminds us of the two "dismountings" (*descălecaturi*) of the extra-Carpathian Romanian Lands, Moldavia and Wallachia. But not totally. We must take into account that the immigrationist theories form today, as always, the preamble of the Vlachs' ethnical eradication and denationalization. Who did not begin and "dismount" (*descălecat*) a country, who does not have heroic origins and roots, will neither have a future.

The visionary pan-Romanian poet Mihai Eminescu knew that the opposite is also true, and magic. This made him, in his beautiful poem *Ce-ţi doresc eu ţie, dulce Românie* (What do I wish you, sweet Romania),

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[39] Vasile Stati, *De ce moldovenii nu sînt români,* Odesa, 2013, p. 2.

[40] A recent example illustrating the extension of the Romanian "colonization" on the territory of the medieval Polish Kingdom is offered by Grzegorz Jawor, *Aşezările de drept valah şi locuitorii lor din Rutenia Roşie în Evul Mediu târziu,* Iaşi, Editura Universităţii "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2012. Also see the Slovakian papers published in *Colonizarea valahă în Slovacia şi colonizarea slovacă în România. Lucrările celei de-a X-a reuniuni a comisiei mixte de istorie româno-slovace (Banská Bystrica, 25-27 septembrie 2012)*, Banská Bystrica, Muzeum Slovenského Národného Povstania, 2014.

give voice to his ardent desire: "for your past so great, great a future", too (*la trecutu-ți mare, mare viitor*).[41]

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[41] Mihai Eminescu, *Ce-ți doresc eu ție, dulce Românie,* in "Familia", Oradea, 2/14 April 1867.