

THE LATIN CULTURAL ORIGIN OF THE ROMANIANS. SOME CONSIDERATIONS

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Abstract

The Latin cultural origin and the statehood are defining elements of "the East Roman researchers". Among these traits the idiorhythmic of monastic life and architecture of the XIV century are to be found.

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In his foreword of the IIIrd volume of the academic collection, *The History of the Romanians*, Academician Răzvan Theodorescu states that two are the defining elements of "the East Roman researchers".

These are the Latin origin and the statehood. The problem of the Latin origin is too well known in terms of linguistics and literary history, but still too little known in terms of the history of mentalities.

From this perspective the contributions of cultural history in recent decades, have managed to throw some light mostly on the relation between the Roman and Romanian origin. As Academician Răzvan Theodorescu notices, while in a country of great intellectual and political tradition such as the UK, the scholar Nikolaus Pevsner could write a famous book entitled "The English Character of the English Art" in our country all sorts of inferiority complexes and fears prevent us from talking about "the Roman character of the Romanian art and culture".

But precisely this "Romanian character" that descends from the "Roman one" is the basis of our "national soul" that Lucian Blaga, Mihai Ralea, Vasile Pârvan, George Călinescu, Mircea Vulcănescu and Camil Petrescu have looked for, to name just a few. And as I have mentioned the art argument can be added - as Răzvan Theodorescu points out in his essay "Sobra armonie", "maybe just and only the Latin language spoken here for two millennia is a more

obvious argument than art, for our fundamental Roman origin ("Roman origin meaning the essence of life", wrote Focillon, in a finding coming from the field of art history and being just as valid for the entire Latin Europe).

To better clarify this cultural Roman origin, I will emphasize on one hand that the Latin spirit involves an anthropocentric turning to good account of the individual, that is an individualism marked in everyday life as well as in social life, and on the other hand a marked taste for calm and harmony, a rejection of unrest and of the morphological overload.

Two examples may be given in this respect and both of them come from the time of the country founders from the south Carpathians space, of the Romanian Country.

In the 70s of the XIV century, an earlier known Slavonic text informs us that the Roman monks who went to Mount Athos, more precisely to Cutlumuz monastery, came back to the Wallachia Country ruled by Vladislav I, because they could not bear that coenobitic way of life there. To throw light upon things I will remind that at the Holy Mountain, since the tenth century, there were two kinds of settlements corresponding to two types of religious life. On the one hand coenobitical life or 'chinoviala' which means living together in a community - the type of community life greatly appreciated especially by Slav origin monks (Russians, Bulgarians, Serbs but also Greeks) and the idiorhythmic lifestyle (idioritmic- which means according to each individual's rhythm of life) which involves an individual living style less prevalent in Athos, characteristic especially to hermits living separately from the rest of the community.

This idiorhythmic way seems to be very common especially in the Romanian Country,

before the appearance of the first Romanian monastery in Oltenia, at Vodița, and this peculiar feature came, no doubt, from the mood for isolation and individualization which was strongly felt in the Romanians' contact with the cenobitism of the Holy Mountain cannot be considered but a defining feature of the Latin character of these religious people.

This state of things is pointed out by the fact that the Romanian monasticism, unlike the Slavic one involved only a small number of monks until the eighteenth century when just the Slav influence coming from Neamț monastery through Paisie Velicikovschi caused an unusual increase in the number of monks in the great Moldovian lavra (a big monastery where the monks live in small rooms which are situated apart, at a distance, the same way the houses in a village are).

As a counterpart of this situation in which the Romanian Latin origin could be identified in a way of life, we have another case, strictly contemporary with the former one identified in the field of visual arts, more precisely, in architecture.

It is well known that the foundation and the necropolis of Mircea cel Bătrân on the Olt Valley, at Cozia represents the point of view of architecture – plan, the structure of facades, stone carved decoration - a replica of the Serbian churches on the Morava Valley, quasi - contemporary, from Krusevac, Kalenic, Resava.

The analogies are striking and they have been studied by scholars such as George Bals, Grigore Ionescu, Virgil Vatanu, Emil Lazarescu and Răzvan Theodorescu but there is a major difference: while the upper part of the Serbian churches has an almost pyramidal spiers of the nave and narthex, at Cozia monastery there is a single tower that gives calm to the architectural forms, unlike the formal bustle of Slav churches.

Academician Răzvan Theodorescu explains this through the Latin origin of Romanian spirit, contrasting with the the bustle of the Slav spirit by calling upon the words of a famous French Byzantinologist who was talking about Cozia as the "spirit of wisdom " (it is Gabriel Millet with his "Esprit de Sagesse").

Because we are in this field of medieval age and ecclesiastical atmosphere I will mention

another feature that in the past differentiated the Romanian Latin origin from the surrounding Slav world. Until the very recent era (the 50s of the last century), the Romanians did not turn historical characters into official figures, images unlike the Orthodox Serbs and the Catholic Poles who have sanctified all their leaders.

Attached to a clear realism and even to a critical spirit characteristic of the Latins, the Romanians paid their princes respect, but they did not take them into the transcendent sphere as the Serbs did, with their leaders of NEMANJA, HREBELIANOVICI or BRANCOVICI dynasties.

I have mentioned above Acad. Răzvan Theodorescu's essay about harmony. I go on quoting his observations especially on the area of visual arts, where the Latin classic origin of the Romanians can best be seen: "The simplicity of an old sedentary people - contrasting sharply with the need of loud and compensatory ostentation of the former nomads - found in the severe simplicity of the Dacian and Daco-Roman fortress or sanctuary wall in the elegance of medieval dwellings in the retreated severity of peasant beam houses from under the mountains, beams or of mud walls in the plain, belongs in a way, yet to the pre-Latin spirit and especially Latin, simple, clear, of an art that was neither rhetorical nor violently glowing ("the brilliance" of the founders of Stefan cel Mare about who the scholar and writer Bishop Dosoftei was writing about two hundred years later, was the silence of the stone and brick rhymed by colored discs and the decorative fresco that joined the architectural facades with the endless clour of the surrounding protective nature).

An introvert and quiet art, an art of temperate harmony is the same, in fact, from the sophistication of Cucuteni pottery to the folk costume in Muscel county, from the ineffable majesty of the fresco covering the Luca Arbore's foundation to the science of colors of Pallady's or Petrașcu's paintings.

Finally, a spirit of ordering geometry, lasts throughout the entire Romanian art cycle from ancient times until today, the Adamclisi metropolis, to Brâncoveanu architecture, from the work of Brâncuși to Vida's contemporaries.

And all of them - simplicity, inwardness, harmony – bear witness to a classicism that is

itself continuity, lasting, without hiatus in the visual field of art.”

CONCLUSIONS

The Latin origin together with the statehood is with defining feature of Romanian civilization.

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