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***THE IMAGE OF THE TATARS IN THE ROMANIAN
CHRONICLES OF THE 15TH-18TH CENTURIES***
Summary of the doctoral thesis

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SUMMARY

Proclaiming them in the 13th century the divine punishment for Christian sinners “pulpits of all churches became genuine centers of anti-Tatar propaganda, the effects of this systematic action of negative advertising being still felt nowadays by the Tatars”¹, This image of terror they have inspired and which the Christian church, especially the Catholic one, has nurtured along the centuries, was adopted and preserved along the centuries, being present also in the historical sources of the 18th century, although it no longer displayed the same invaders with whom the crusaders had dealt. After the disintegration of the Golden Horde, the Tatars in Crimea remain to continue the fame of their predecessors until 1783, when the Crimean Khanate is dissolved as it is incorporated in the Russian Empire. These Crimean Tatars are studied in the present thesis which envisages the analysis and synthesis of the manner in which the Tatars, famous people of the Middle Ages, are reflected in the chronicles of the Romanian principalities along the 15th to 18th centuries. The choice of this topic is justified by the absences of a similar scientific endeavour in the Romanian historiography. The research work done on the Tatars, a rather important minority from the demographic point of view in nowadays Romania, did not constitute the research topic of the representation of alterity, the image of “the other”.

The Turkology studies progressively gained increased interest in the European writings and further in the Romanian ones ever since the beginning of the Ottoman expansion in the 15th century. These focused on the need to present and understand, nonetheless portraying this people as the fiercest enemy of the Christian world, engendering a common front of the latter in front of the heathen conquests and implicitly instilling a continental anti-Ottoman feeling². In these works, the Tatars have usually been considered as part of the Turkish world and mainly perceived as instruments for retaliation or inducing fear, being seldom acknowledged independently from the rest of the Turkic peoples. Although along the 19th and 20th centuries there have been numerous historical works on the Golden Horde and the Crimean Khanate, their impact on the Romanian collective memory has not been studied.

¹ Tahsin Gemil, “The Issue of Tatars’ Ethnogenesis”, in Tahsin Gemil (ed.), *Tătarii în istorie și în lume*, Kriterion, Bucharest, 2003, p. 32;

² Călin Felezeu, *Imaginea otomanului și a civilizației otomane în cultura românească*, Bybliotek, Cluj-Napoca, 2013, p. 15.

The topic chosen has a secondary motivation that lies in the need for understanding through the imagological incursion the growing interest paid to the national minorities and their community integration alongside the identity preservation. Although the narrative sources studied do not register any interethnic conflicts between the autochthonous and the Tatars settled in the Romanian territories, one might consider attractive to follow their integration.

Structured on five chapters, the dissertation begins with the general presentation of the historical relations between the Crimean Khanate and the three Romanian principalities: Transylvania, Moldova and Wallachia, taken in chronological order, during the over three centuries of the Crimean Khanate's existence (1441-1783). The first chapter, entitled *Historiography and Methodology*, presents the existing historiographic studies on Tartars, on the Khanate of Crimea, as integrative part of the Ottoman or independent studies, such as the image of the other in Romanian culture. The chapter will also discuss some of the most significant works of the Western world, works that align with the Romanian historical publications. In the second half of this chapter, we will show the methodological concepts and the techniques used in delivering this presentation, concepts which pertain to the field of historiography, of historical imagology, to sociology or to social psychology. We have worked with these particular concepts in the fourth and fifth chapter, which constitute the most consistent part of our study.

The second chapter, entitled *The Statute of the Crimean Khanate and that of the Romanian Principalities under Ottoman Suzerainty*, briefly presents the judicial statute of the Crimean Khanate in relation to the Romanian principalities, some political and economic relations that will later on have influenced the interface between these political entities, which were under Ottoman suzerainty in different periods of time. We have added to the Romanian historiographic works in the field some Western studies, especially French and Polish, by invoking corpora of Ottoman documentary sources that present the documents exchanged among the Romanian princes and the Crimean khans, or documents issued by the Sublime Porte, which regarded the Romanian principalities or the Crimean Khanate and the relations between the two. The most consistent part is given to the analysis of the tax paid by Wallachia and Moldova to the Khanate of Crimea, as well to the role the Khanate had within the Ottoman Empire.

The third part of the dissertation, entitled *The Image of the Tartars in Romanian Chronicles from Stephen the Great to Dimitrie Cantemir*, analyses the presence of the Tartar element during four centuries, in the Romanian, German and Hungarian writings, as well as in the first Slavonic chronicles which regarded the Romanian principalities. The narrative sources are analysed in a chronological order, beginning with the Moldavian ones, respectively with *Letopiseşul de la Putna* (“The Chronicle of Putna”), with a significant subchapter on the erudite Moldavian prince Dimitrie Cantemir and his works. The relevance of this subchapter referring to the Cantemirian works is given by the rich information found there on our precise topic of interest – the Tartars; the subchapter is relevant also for the balance given by the works aforementioned which significantly elaborate the previously written chronicles. The last subchapter of the analysis of chronicles discusses the alleged Tartar bloodline of the prince, which Cantemir uses in order to acclimate himself to the court of Peter the Great. In elaborating this subchapter on this genealogic subject, we turned to the works of the erudite Moldavian prince, while trying to identify those fragments which present episodes of or reference to the Tartar bloodline of the Cantemir family, respectively to three of his works: *Istori’a Imperiului Ottomanu, creşterea şi scăderea lui* (“The History of the Ottoman Empire, Growth and Downfall”), *Hronicul vechimei romano-moldo-vlahilor* (“The Chronicle of the Durability of Romano-Moldo-Wallachians”) and *Istoria ieroglifică* (“The Hieroglyphic History”). In writing the dissertation, we particularly turned to Moldavian and Wallachian sources, especially the most relevant for the period we analysed. A subchapter is, then, focused on the Hungarian and Transylvanian Saxons chronicles dated in the 17th-18th centuries, because they complete the unitary image of Tartars in the collective memory of the inhabitants of the Romanian principalities. The source that we considered most relevant to this was *Cronica Transilvaniei (1608-1665)* (“The Chronicle of Transylvania (1608-1665)”), written by the Sighişoara-born Georg Kraus, a work which is abundant in events including the Tartar element. We then used two other Saxon historians, who continued the work of Kraus, Michael Moses and Johannes Kremes. For the Hungarian sources, we chose only the most important ones or those which

were available to us in Romanian: Szamosközi István's *Historiae Rerum Hungaricarum*³ and *Cronica de jale a lui Ioan Szalárdi*⁴.

Given that the thesis seeks to determine the historical Tatar alterity and the deconstruction of elements which are, mostly, the basis for this representation of the other's identity, the fourth chapter, *The Dialectics of the self in contrast to the other. (De)constructing the image*, we analyzed the manner in which the image and the representation are constructed and can be used as instruments for impression in the collective mentality. Hence, we studied the various the Tatars representations in the Romanian chronicles chosen, briefly conveying the portraits of other allogeneic elements present, such as Russians, Poles, or Greeks. The Tatars representation is influenced by three elements that outline the negative sketch: **surprise, violence and fear**, elements that are corroborated with three major factors interfering with the chronistic objectivity: **the religious, the ethnic and the personal elements**.

The fifth chapter, *The Tatars of the late Middle Ages in the memoirs and collective memory in Transylvania* is divided into two parts. The first part is destined to the memorial writings elaborated in relation to the Tatars. As an addition to the narrative sources analyzed in the previous chapter, we have resorted here to memoirs of the Transylvanian principality, namely the second half of the 17th century and first half of the 18th century. These periods correspond to one of the most famous captivity periods in Bağçesaray, the one of the future Transylvanian prince Ioan Kemény (1 January 1661-22 January 1662), who had been captured by the Tatars subsequent to the defeat suffered by the Transylvanian army in its attempt to gain the Polish crown in 1657. Kemény had spent almost two years in the Crimean capital until his ransom in 1659. We used his memorial writings⁵, and the documentary novel written by his descendant Ștefan J. Fay, a collection of the notes of the Transylvanian general and prince on his captivity in Crimea revealing data on the Crimean life and the treatment of the enslaved noblemen.

³ We used the partial translation in Ioan Crăciun, *Cronicarul Szamosközy și însemnările sale privitoare la români 1566-1608*, Institutul de Arte Grafice "Ardealul", Cluj, 1928.

⁴ In the translation and with the comments of Liviu Borcea, in Liviu Borcea, *Cronica de jale a lui Ioan Szalárdi. Studiu critic*, Editura Arca, Oradea, 2007, 138 p.

⁵ Ioan Kemény, *Memorii 1607-1662. Scrierea vieții sale*, Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, 331 p.; Ștefan J. Fay, *Cronologia lui Ioan Kemény (Caietele unui roman care nu s-a scris)*, Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, 247 p.

The upper limit of the thesis was inspired by the commemoration of the inhabitants of a Transylvanian village severely affected by the last magnitude passing of the Tatar army on the principality territory in 1717, which took place during the Turkish-Habsburgic war of 1716-1718. Therefore, to the memorial writings, we added a sociological inquiry carried out in Sic [Szék], Cluj county, on a number of 27 respondents. The survey was meant to identify the mode in which the Tatars remained imprinted in the local collective memory, simultaneously analyzing the transformations performed by the community on its identity elements, e.g. the costumes or the religious costumes, for which we used the instruments of the sociological inquiry, mainly the interviews and the direct observation. In this last chapter of our scientific endeavour, we used sources such as ethnological works that treated the manner in which the alterity (including the Tatar one) was preserved in the collective mentality as is the volume of Gazda József, *Igy tudom, így mondom: a régi falu emlékezete* (1980)⁶. Also, we used monographies that discuss the topic, e.g. Szabó Márton, *Szék község monográfiája: néprajz és néphagyomány* (2010)⁷. The main instrument discovered and used was the unedited paper which is utilized by the pastor of the Protestant church in the deployment of the commemorative mass that is set for August 24. The paper written by Nádai Aina and Sándor László Zoltán, on 1st of August 2002, is a key-instrument for disseminating the same image of the 18th century thus influencing the collective memory.

The two main objectives of the thesis are: **analyzing and systemizing the image of the Tatars** and **the deconstruction of their representation in the Romanian chronicles**. Either settled on the Romanian territories or considered part of the Ottoman Empire, the Tatars have been constantly and frequently portrayed by the Romanian chroniclers since the 15th century and more meticulously by the end of the 18th century.

Despite the rather strong interaction with the Tatars, the Romanian historiography mainly studies the relations of the Romanian principalities and the Sublime Porte in the formers' attempt to preserve their autonomy, presenting the antithesis of two civilization with unequal forces hence exaggerating the proportions of their confrontation to such extent that the fall of Belgrade

⁶ Gazda József, *Igy tudom, így mondom: a régi falu emlékezete* [I say it as I know it > remembering the old village, our translation] (1980), 372 p.

⁷ Szabó Márton, *Szék község monográfiája: néprajz és néphagyomány* [The Monography of the Sic Settlement: Ethnography and traditions, our translation], Stúdium, Kolozsvár, 2010, 352 p.;

in 1521 and the defeat of Mohács in 1526 are considered “the passage from light to darkness”⁸. All of the above contribute to an eminently negative image in regards to the muslim elements.

The thesis entitled *The Image of the Tatars in the Romanian Chronicles of the 15th-18th Centuries* aims at rendering the manner in which the image of the Tatars is influenced by the relations that the Romanian principalities had with the Porte and the various administrative structures of the Tatars, from the Golden Horde to the Crimean Khanate along different historical periods, considering the priorities of the various political moments, the subjectivity of the chroniclers and the alignment to the European context.

The chronological period settled for this analysis begins with the 15th century and reaches the Enlightenment, being synchronized with the entire scenery of the image that the Ottoman Empire had from its zenith to its decline, also comprising the rich period of events on the territories pertaining to the empire. Therefore, we can observe different countenances of the Tatars as allies of the Turks and the Romanian rulers or insubordinate vassal, uproarious neighbours respectively. The first Romanian chronicles of the 15th century mostly record the accession of the Ottoman Empire, marked by the impact that the fall of Constantinople was to have on Europe. The Turks are mentioned more frequently in the Romanian writings since the impoverishment with the tribute seen as a ‘ransom for peace’⁹ and the desire to preserve the state independence required particular relations with the Sublime Porte thus requiring a better understanding of the “heathen languages”¹⁰. The Tatars arrive as atrocious elements that reinforce the submitted and fearful position of the Romanian territories. In the attempt to asphyxiate any desire for rebellion, the Tatars continue to have the image of retaliation element of the Ottomans.

A general overview of the thesis reveals the attempt to surprise the portraits of the Crimean Tatars in the most relevant narrative sources of the 15th-18th centuries. We tried to prove that the general image of the Tatars is willingly outlined or influenced. We do not argue that this

⁸*Cronica lui Macarie*, in *Cronicile slavo-române din secolele XV-XVI*, published by Ioan Bogdan, Romanian Academy Publishing House, Bucharest, 1959, p. 230;

⁹Tasin Gemil, *Romanians and Ottomans in the XIVth-XVIth Centuries*, Translated by Remus Bejan and Paul Sanders, Editura Enciclopedică, Bucharest, 2009, pp. 30-50.

¹⁰*Letopisețul anonim*, in *Cronicile Slavo-Romane din sec. XV-XVI* published by Ioan Bogdan, 1959, p. 230.

representation was not to a great extent real. On the contrary, the sources analyzed display clear coherence, both the Wallachian sources as well as the Moldavian ones, or even the Transylvanian redundantly present the same grim portrait of the Tatar element. The three elements presented in the third chapter (ethnic, religious and personal) are not completely altering hence we are not seeking a defence for the abominable deeds registered by the Middle Ages writings. Indeed, their notoriety is gained in the aftermath of their fear-seeking actions. In the context of an era where either part of a war resorted to the same violent techniques, the virulence against the Tatars should decrease. Nevertheless, the portraits we render are boldly sketched and emphasized among and by the elites of the epoch so that their print remains up to nowadays indelible. The hyperbola becomes the fundament of these images that difficulty pass over the imaginary inherited from the Antiquity and amplified by the Middle Ages dominated by religious superstitions.

The Romanian historiography boasts few works that highlight the qualities and aptitudes of the Tatar people. Nicolae Iorga, for example, narrates an instance pertaining to the early invasions of the Tatars following which “part of the Romanians remained under the Tatars from whom they learned the craftsmanship of archery and horse riding, as well as a system of customs that endures until the end of our medieval life”¹¹. The Wallachian and Moldavian chroniclers will also display impartiality in admitting the Tatars’ merits and abilities yet this usually occurs unaware and involuntarily. These positive features are understood from the various episodes where they appear as swift hunters.

We can observe at the same time that from this inevitable Ottoman – Tatar- Romanian interaction clear reciprocal influences will result. Thus, the Dobrudja Romanians will undertake traditions pertaining to the Muslims such as the celebration of Saint Phocas whose origin we find in Cantemir’s work¹². Or, as P.P. Panaitescu will remark the disputed collaboration of the 14th century between Basarab I (1319–1352) and the Tatars which leads to a confusion between

¹¹ N. Iorga, *Studii asupra evului mediu românesc*, edition by Șerban Papacostea, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, Bucharest, 1984, p. 45.

¹² D. Cantemir, *Istoria Imperiului Otthomanu*, p. 310 și D. Cantemir, *Sistema*, p. 244:

Wallachian and Tatars by the Byzantine army who believed the Danubian people were as good archers as the Tatars.¹³

To summarize the image that the Romanian historiography records and disseminates in relation to the Tatar element, as well as the relations between Tatars and Romanians or other peoples also vassal to the Ottoman Empire, we can resort to a legend found in Cantemir's works. Within the ethimologic and folkloric interpretations he makes, we find the example of a raven that can be seen as the epitome of these interethnic relations, even in relation to the notorious Dobrudjan tolerance, a raven that the Turks and Tatars call *ghiudgighin* ("owner of power" since *ghiudgi* meant "power" in Turkish and *ghin* "possessor" in Persian, according to the translation provided by the author). The feathers in this bird's tail were used to fabricate the finest and swiftest arrows. However, the popular belief was that such an arrow in the quiver would eat and strip the other regular arrows to the wood¹⁴, the comparison probably inferring the Ottoman yoke and the Tatar oppression.

We modestly consider that this thesis opens a gate to the investigation of the Tatar element switching from the historical research presented in the first chapter to the imagological and sociological research, thus aligning to the works already elaborated on the other minorities such as Jews, Saxons or Hungarians. The Tatar element is a singular one that needs to be considered also separately from the Ottoman one despite the common religious, military and ethnical pillars.

We wish to finish by acknowledging that the present thesis, a diffident first step in the investigation of the Tatar alterity in the Romanian collective memory, would not have been possible without the acceptance, encouragement and critical observations of Professor Tasin Gemil, the coordinator of this scientific endeavour, the guidance of the commission consisting of Acad. Prof. Ioan-Aurel Pop, Ph.D., Assoc. Prof. Ovidiu Ghitta, Ph.D., and particularly Prof. Călin Felezeu, Ph.D., a pioneer of the Romanian historiography in regards to the Ottoman Muslim alterity. We also express our gratitude to Assoc. Prof. Ioan-Marius Bucur, Professor Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont, Ph.D., Ștefan Lemny, Ph.D., Dan-Ioan Mureșan, Ph.D., Dr. Emanuel

¹³ P. P. Panaitescu, „Mircea l'Ancien et les Tartares”, în *RHSEE*, vol. XIX, nr. 2, 1942, p. 439.

¹⁴ D. Cantemir, *Istori'a Imperiului Ottomanu, crescerea și scăderea lui*, Edițiunea Societății Academice Romane, București, 1876, , p. 506.

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KEY-WORDS: Tatars, image and representation, imagological deconstruction, Romanian chronicles, 15th-18th centuries, Transylvanian collective memory.