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**Modulations of the concept of *Imperium* and its patrimonialization in
American political culture through architectural monuments**

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The research activity we undertook during the years of doctoral study led us through the world of symbols and shaped the way we decipher the meanings that objects, gestures, or rituals contain. The profile of the activity involved the systematic collection, selection and finally the coherent and chronological framing of some avatars of the political discourse exposed by the great leaders of Euro-Atlantic history.

Through this paper we propose to the reader a historical study of the discourse of power. From the title, our intention is stated explicitly: we follow the modulations of a political concept, so we accept that it has undergone mutations and historically conditioned adaptations. On the other hand, we are convinced that there is a vein of political discourse that does not accidentally use certain lexemes, manifests certain gestures and emphasizes through ceremonies and protocol a framework that evokes the symbolic legacy of power.

Our case study focuses on the patrimonialization of this concept of power - Imperium¹ - in the North American space. The Founding Fathers of the United States of America were part of deeply intellectualized environments, connected to European higher education, where, in the midst of the Modern Age, Rome and its virtues became a source of inspiration for absolute monarchs and their advisers, who often sought management solutions. which they found in the legal and political genius of the Romans. Following the break-up of the British Empire, the creators of the Constitution and the American State wanted a political formula antipodal to the Crown of London, and the Roman-inspired republic and Italy as the hearth of European civilization were the two branches through which Americans linked at the dawn of nationalism. of classical European identity. Moreover, the Christian devotion of these politicians was noted in the symbolic acts they patrimonialized.

But the most spectacular heritage reminiscent of their cultural hemisphere is the symbolic direction they give to American architecture. In addition to free architectural currents, there has always been a strong tendency to build public buildings that look like true temples of the spirit of

the law and the newly founded republic. These, together with the anthropization of the landscape, will often give the visual sensation of passing through the northern part of the Mediterranean basin.

The chosen theme was the catalyst for the interpretation of a historical-legal concept, *translatio imperii*. The symbolic nature of Roman imperial power prompted us to observe a potential *translatio* even in our time and a not coincidental resemblance of the capital of the United States of America to Rome. With the deepening of the bibliography and the observations on the architectural monuments, the facets of the symbols, until then a little eloquent in this sense, gave us the necessary motivation and fueled the enthusiasm of the research.

The role that history has prepared for the United States of America, through the political project of the Founding Fathers, can lead us to state without hesitation that the twentieth century can bear the nickname of the "American century." Once American state reason has shifted from the Monroe Doctrine (supremacy over the Western Hemisphere and Europeans' non-involvement in American affairs) to the Truman Doctrine ("evil embezzlement" and Soviet non-involvement in free world affairs), the debate over US involvement or non-involvement it is somewhat ridiculous.

Ever since the end of the First World War, in which the United States was involved in the pacification of metropolitan colonies, they have imposed the direction of international relations by building a system whose powers and legitimacy are shaped by the image of the North American republic. In this key interpretation, World War II is only a protection of a status quo created about two decades earlier. Finally, the Cold War and the irreversible collapse of its main rival, the USSR, made the United States hegemonic. Thus, when we talk about the importance or topicality of the topic, it is worth mentioning that it follows this sometimes critical, sometimes laudatory but ubiquitous literature, which includes discussions about the role it assumes, or are determined to do, Americans.

In many ways we can draw historical parallels with the "Pericles century" or the hegemony of Athens for the period after 1991. Simultaneously with the unprecedented technological advance, American influence penetrates almost every aspect of life, becoming not only a political source of power, but a *modus vivendi*, often even mentioning Americanization or McDonaldization. Leaving aside the mundane intrigue, American power is not a historical

accident, but a result of coherent and historically assumed political decisions, in the spirit of a political culture as young as it is sophisticated and advanced.

After about three decades of American hegemony, critics are once again questioning the role of Americans in global affairs. Moreover, "competing" economic, social, political, or cultural powers are presented as alternatives to the United States. The latter, in our opinion, can only replace the US, not remove them at all. The situation allows us the second parallel with history: the terrible 5th century when the western part of the Roman Empire is occupied by Germanic warrior tribes. The incident, mistakenly seen as the end of the "Western Roman Empire" (historical fiction) is all the more dramatic as Rome is invaded. However, its spirit, the consciousness of the Empire and the natural political continuity are not interrupted, facts proven by the very actions of the Germanic conquerors who demand the legitimation of the Roman emperor in Constantinople. We are talking about a permanent shift of the epicenter of the power of the Empire, an otherwise unique structure; where the emperor moves, there is the "capital" and the "empire." The disappearance of the emperor does not mean the end of the empire, but its replacement. So, the emperor can be anyone and the empire can have its center of power anywhere, as long as it goes beyond the caudal forks of legitimacy.

The explanation for which the mentioned historical event resembles the period in which we live is right only if we accept the dialogue with the critics of the American power and with those who see in the withdrawals of American troops from different theaters of war a decrease of their strength.

The study focused on public buildings in major American urban concentrations not only provides a collection of brief explanations of buildings that resemble those of the European neoclassical period but emphasizes the root of political identity and legitimacy of American discourse to the world. The context in which we place the work is that of pioneering: our explanations while evoking a historical concept can be assumed and legitimized, that of Imperium.

The transdisciplinary context in which our work is based has in common the concept of Imperium. Starting from historical data and observations, we cross the frontiers of the history of law, political science, sacred geography, anthropology and, of course, chosen symbolism given by heraldry or vexillology. Our research journey culminates in the architecture of the United States that depicts power, so we review the main currents that have served our study, with some

of the representatives and their works. It was no less interesting for us to meet the field of political theology thanks to which we managed to understand the conversion of the Roman Empire to the medieval European realities, a border often drawn categorically and erroneously in historiography.

The results of our research want to open a line of study of the Medieval Empire and its influence in the New World. The literature has provided us with consistent historical evidence of the symbolic and ideational connections of the medieval European world that seem to be transmitted in this time segment in America.

It is not uncommon to encounter the "empire" as a form of government that, once the "state" has disappeared, obviously disappears first. The reality of the research indicates that the Empire is primarily a form of assumed or legitimized power, that it is related to a person and that his vacation does not imply the disappearance of the Empire. Also, from the research carried out, we know that the Empire can have even two or more centers of power at the same time, without being about another empire and that, consequently, the empire is equivalent to the "first violin" of the culture that assumes it.

The research hypothesis from which we started based the thesis of the work - the patrimonialization of Imperium in American architecture - proves to be a witness of some sensitive historical mutations of the concept through a political culture that is claimed from the translation of empires. Our main objectives go through four research paths, structured in as many chapters.

In the first part, we demonstrate the course of the concept of Imperium from its crystallization in Rome to the Middle Ages, with emphasis on the way in which the discourse of power was instrumented in the legislative process. Clarification of the semantics of the term Imperium, its origin and heritage, the source of imperial power, as well as the twinning with clerical power and conversion to Christianity were the main issues discussed.

In the first chapter, Imperium, we analyzed the semantic basin of the empire, the origin of the term, the characteristics of the notion, the legal complex, the source of power and the relations between Oikoumene and Imperium, respectively Sacerdotium and Imperium.

It is structured in three subchapters: Lex de imperio - the semantic basin of the empire; the origin of the term empire, the characteristics of the notion, the legal complex and inheritance, The source of imperial power: Oikoumenē versus Imperium - the heritage of concepts of

legitimizing power in early medieval and Sacerdotium et Imperium - conceptualizing the relationship between clerical and political power Christian religion; the emergence of political theology in the Christian public space.

The second chapter, The Emperor, is dedicated to interpreting the importance of the emperor in the medieval symbolic economy and how the imperial person, through function and role, becomes a bearer of autocratic and even theocratic symbols. It refers to the person of the emperor, the depositary of the Empire, thanks to Pronia: we follow the play of symbols and the often-questionable balance between autocracy and theocracy, which emperors, depending on their personality and the vicissitudes of history, tried to keep.

It is also structured in three subchapters, comprehensive near the research of the emperor's universe: "God's mask" or "God's will" - the foray into the desirable profile of the person receiving imperium, the divine deputy, administrator and theocrator, Symbol and symbols - the imperial ceremony, the sum of the symbols represented by the emperor, the universe of the monarch, Autocracy, and theocracy - from the overlapping of concepts to their antithesis.

Empires, the third chapter, sums up vast sub-themes in which the solutions of public law, imperial models, the succession of empires, the legitimacy of power and the transfer of power are analyzed. The Empires chapter aims at a history of the Medieval Empire during the Medieval Age and the beginning of the Modern Age in which issues of canon law and political theology are often confronted with historical events or the processes they triggered. The discussion includes imperial models, the sacred geography of the Church, the legacy of Justinian, but also topics such as Donatio Constantini or Zweikaiserproblem. In the end, neither the Greco-Latin controversy nor the imperial ideologies of the dawn of European modernity were set aside.

From the organizational point of view, it includes 13 subchapters, organized chronologically and thematically: Imperial models and power generating factors - empire succession, inheritance legitimacy and power transfer, Imperial nucleus and nuclei - the constitutional matrix of an empire and the imperial power infrastructure algorithm, Medieval Empire - symbolic geography and geopolitics of power, Evolution of the concepts of "imperium" and "ecclesia" in the context of restructuring the administrative fabric of the Roman Empire in the West, Public law solutions of territorial organization and their relations with the center of legitimacy of political authority religious (V-VIII centuries), Justinian's Empire and legal patronage of the political and administrative structures of Oikoumene, Provincial differentiations

of the relationship between local power and imperial power in the V-VIII centuries, the Donation of Constantine and the creation of imperial ecclesiologies through *Zweikaiserproblem*, the Carolingian Empire between political aspiration and ecclesiological conception. The Ottonian Empire between political-territorial aspirations and ecclesiological conception, the Greco-Latin Controversy on the Empire in the XII-XIII Centuries, the Phagocytosis of the Constantinopolitan Empire in the Christian Republic, and the Revival of the Empire in Constantinople.

The second part of the paper focuses on the translation of empires in the New World and how, in the newly founded American republic, the Founding Fathers sought to encapsulate historical symbolism in architectural monuments and in the anthropization of the landscape. Named the *Metamorphoses of Imperialism in the New World*, the chapter is dedicated to the ideological issues of empire in the New World, *translatio imperii* by architectural imitation of Rome, architectural styles, and the line to bring the US closer to Rome, and the modulations of the empire at the turn of the XXI century.

Starting from the metamorphoses of the Empire in America, first through the Iberian attempts, then through those of the new maritime-Atlantic powers and continuing with the reflection of the imperial ideology in the American philosophical thinking. After debating the emanations of imperial power in American political culture, we sought to show how this influence is reflected in the public patrimony of the United States and how the Cold War appears as a mirror of a new *Zweikaiserproblem* even through imperial signs and symbols since Harry Truman's time.

It is the case study of the paper and the theoretical basis based on sources from which the narration of the images in the appendix starts. Structurally, it is organized in 10 subchapters, organized as follows: The ideological problem of the empire at the beginning of European political modernity. Remodeling international law in the vision of Hugo Grotius, Attempts at global organization and imperial ideology as a trigger for the two world conflagrations, Reflection of imperial ideology in American political, philosophical and historical thinking, Empire of symbols, *Translatio imperii* in the New World: imitation of Rome, Definition styles in general, Washington District Building in the District of Columbia as a Rome of the New World, Buildings, American landmarks, the Cold War as a reflection of a new *Zweikaiserproblem*: Imperial signs and symbols in the United States, 21st century and changes in the concept of "Empire" Between positive aspirations and negative consequences - the post-

modern functionality of the empire. The subchapter The definition of styles in the general theme includes the definition, description, and history of the main architectural styles that the Americans took over, adapted and "Americanized" in the concert of the New World empire. Following the names of the styles that serve the object under study, they are: Old Style - Georgian architecture, "American Dream" style - Federal, President-architect style: "Jeffersonian", Revitalization of the "Greek" style - appeal to the Hellenistic crucible, "Italian" style, The "Renaissance" style (of the Renaissance) in the USA, Beaux-Artes in the USA, and the American "Neoclassicism".

In the appendices, we have provided a vast collection of images whose organization tends to become a narrative in images of the Empire, from the "birth certificate," Lex de Imperio Vespasiani, to the days when the last words of this study were added.

The United States today stores the most pertinent experiences of democratic governance in human history. To govern is the verb that closes in itself the hard core in which the struggle for power and domination of the human race develops. In general, political scientists and other toilers in the field of social sciences have applied an infinitely multiplied resumption of the Aristotelian phrase that man is a political zoon, but have eluded, either out of ignorance or ideological ferocity, to specify where the word comes from. government and the words "prime minister" and "minister". The verb "to govern" comes from the ancient Greek *Kybernân* and means to lead the ship whose etymology is *Kybe* = head and designates the one who leads the ship from the highest place of the ship's deck. The words prime minister, minister come from the Latin *ministerium* = servant, servant, whose radical is *osco minstreis* genitive corresponding to the Latin *minoris* opposite to *magis* / *magister*.

The terms come from the language of the medieval Church and refer to the acts of government of the earth in its desire to attain the divine. The church imagines itself as the *navicella Petri* (Peter's ship), and the Aramaic "*Kefa*" with which Peter was called by Jesus Christ was transliterated into Greek *Κηφας* and then into Latin in *Cephas* with the meaning of head, ruler. On the branch of the Roman Church came to us the word minister with the meaning of servant, the most significant being the oxymoronic bishop of Rome himself = *servus servorum Dei* (the servant of God's servants).

From the perspective of the evolution of medieval institutions, the centuries of the Middle Ages are some in which the institutional and doctrinal sovereignty of the Roman Church and its

permanent tendencies to subordinate the temporal, first of all its maximum political incarnation - the Empire, Sacrum Imperium are manifest since the end of the century. the 5th. In the field of political studies in Western Europe and the USA, the invocation of the letter given by Pope Gelasius to Emperor Anastasius of Constantinople, entitled "*Famuli pietate vestrae*", brings to the fore the cardinal principles of the legal functioning of the Roman world before Christianity and which must work. henceforth in a Christian key: "*There are two august foundations on which this world rests: the sacred authority (auctoritas) of the pontiffs and the royal power (potestas). Between the two is much more difficult the task of the priests, as they will have to answer, at the Last Judgment, for the lay leaders of the people. You know all too well, too understanding son of ours, that although you have authority over all men, you bow your head piously before those who deal with divine matters, and from them you expect Your salvation. And that to receive the heavenly mysteries and to share them is the duty of the priests, and you must not forget that you must obey the discipline of religion and not sit in its head; and that in these sacred matters you must depend on the judgment of the priests and not subject the priests to your will.*"

When we refer to the institutional reality known as the "Empire" we mean the absolutist tendencies of medieval doctrines of inspiration, either ecclesiastical or secular, at a time when they are beginning to compete with the emergence of medieval nations and the empowerment of national monarchies. The empire, in its comprehension, formally closed the relatively contoured borders of the Roman Church, a self-defined "synthesis" of the Universal Church, although opinions from Western imperial theorists, in the desire to justify the universality of the Empire (seen by them as the only Empire) they claimed that "*summa potestas nullis circumclusa limitibus*". Some emperors (Carolingian, Ottonian) managed to coordinate and even subordinate to the proto-realist to the temporal-spiritual interests some of the attributions of the Holy See - through imperial acts (*Privilegium Othonis*). But since the middle of the eleventh century, with the coming into open conflict of the two universalisms in true realistic form - the imperial and the papal - as well as the territorial expansion of Europe, there have been differences in vision and attitude. The Church to the storm and to the new communities that made their presence felt at the borders of the European political world (political world theoretically superimposed over the extension of the Roman Church).

If for the Empire important was only the pragmatic-realistic effort for the domination of the territories and communities that had their habitat there, as much as the military support and feudal-strategic interests allowed, for the Church, at least at the center in full reform process, it was already a problem with spiritual meanings, related to his earthly mission and the divine message of which he considered himself and which he had to spread and defend.

There are two ideal horizons that each of the subjects of our research nurtures. They have a common origin but have different declensions. The common origin is Rome and its political and legal edifice created in more than a millennium of history. Because in Western culture Rome is the epitome of any territorial domination that sublimates the world.

That is why there is, before any realistic theory, a symbolic competition between Moscow and Washington for the temporal decline of Rome in one way or another. Moscow has a temporal and conceptual primacy (Russian power since the sixteenth century defines itself as *moskovskoe carstvo* / the Muscovite Empire) through the voice of the abbot Philofei: "*our tsar. Two Rome has fallen, but the third resists and will not be the fourth.*"

Few theorists of realism have understood the profound significance that Russia attaches to this prophecy. Even if it is not often said, but it is always underlying, Russia can only bear with great effort the fact that the USA aspires to the legal and ideal place of the fourth Rome. We also had some perplexities about the idea that the USA is the fourth Rome. Analyzing Washington well, as urbanism, as symbolic topography, I discovered that imperial Rome - the original and authentic one, is replicated in the public buildings of the American administration, and the president of the USA, when exercising his executive authority, does it symbolically from the Oval Office. It is decorated with imperial fascias - the quintessential sign of Roman power.

For reasons related to the hypothesis, our work ends at the investigation of this episode, because with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the great rival of the United States, we believe that a new chapter of the study of the American "empire" opens, which would be the subject of another paper or a second part of what we have tried to demonstrate in the lines below.

Our work is imagined as a vademecum for American imperial discourse. From an academic point of view, the effort made with our subject aims at inserting a line of research in the field of political studies on American political culture. Often imagined as a result of the Enlightenment and secret societies, the American republic is overlooked by the founding and cultural imprint of the Founding Fathers, and the meeting of recent currents such as "ethno-

nationalism" and neo-Protestant Christianity with the intellectual expression of " conservatives" generate disharmony. Bringing our modest clarifications in the field of historical-political studies, we do not want to generate changes in the already established approaches, but to nuance the interpretations using the historical argument.

The present research was an exercise of collecting historical data, organizing information according to the appeal of working hypotheses and keeping the format in the rigors required by such an approach. The bibliography used was in Romanian, English, French, and for Italian and Spanish we used translation and adaptation tools. Regarding Latin or Greek sources, we used parallel translations, preferring those in English or Italian for more accuracy. The primary sources used us to penetrate the mentality of the times and to understand the way in which the political discourse is constituted at that level. We sought a critical approach to these sources, wanting to put the documents in context. The abundant secondary sources, general or specialized studies put us in front of a real challenge: being a subject that we discovered as we went through the literature, we had to select from those sources that we considered more relevant and appropriate to our academic approach.