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*Symbolism and Continuity in the Heraldry of  
Medieval Maramureş (XIV-XVI Centuries)*  
-DOCTORAL THESIS SUMMARY-

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## SUMMARY

Key-words: *coat of arms, heraldry, Maramureş, XIVth Century, XVth Century, XVIth Century, heraldic system, heraldic constant, heraldic variable, artificial intelligence*

The doctoral thesis, entitled *Symbolism and continuity in the heraldry of Medieval Maramureş (XIV-XVI centuries)* sets out to research the existence of heraldic insignia in the Maramureş County, starting with the XIV century and up to the XVI century. The paper also tries to address and highlight, if possible, symbolic, social and cultural links and correlations, with heraldic systems of other countries, especially European ones, from the late Middle Ages. To this purport, I have tried to identify the heraldic insignia used in the above-mentioned temporal and geographical limits and to analyse whether symbolic meanings and origins of these insignia can be identified, as well as similar representations from different geographical areas and temporal segments prior to the fourteenth century.

In a well-known paper<sup>1</sup>, written in the field of heraldic research, it was shown that heraldry is a science auxiliary to history that has as its object both the study of the rules of composition of the coats of arms of a state, a city, a family, etc., as well as the history of such insignia. However, the study of heraldry, in my opinion, can offer, especially in the current context, much broader valences. The study of heraldry could help unravel interactions of a social or cultural nature. Through the study of heraldry, genealogical links that could not be proven by other means or research tools, could be envisioned. Also, geographical and chronological correlations, among others, that are not discoverable by more conventional means, could be brought to light. At the same time, the analysis of heraldic symbols could highlight relations with other social systems, religious systems or historical events and could provide information that would complete historical events of which the information is scarce, due to the lack of primary sources.

The reasons for choosing the aforementioned title had a double significance, both of which are of particular importance to me. Firstly, the choice of the theme and field of research has a strong personal meaning, because I owe my initiation into Maramureş heraldry and the first steps in the research of medieval historical phenomenology in this area to the noble lady

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<sup>1</sup> Dan Cernovodeanu, *Ştiinţa şi arta heraldică în România*, Bucureşti, 1977, pag.13

Livia Piso Filipaşcu de Dolha și Petrova, who since I was only in my early twenties, guided me in this regard. For this I am deeply grateful to her and as such, I dedicate my entire doctoral research as well as my doctoral thesis to her memory.

The other dimension of my motivation lies in the scientific curiosity to identify elements of a heraldic nature in the analysed area, to discern their symbolic meaning and to observe whether such symbols existed in the respective geographical space prior to the timeframe of the research scope. Also, the research of primary and secondary sources could allow drawing lines of interdependence with other European heraldic systems. At present, the coats of arms that make the heraldry of medieval Maramureş in a dedicated armorial, like those in Western Europe, which systematically includes and catalogues the coats of arms used by noble families, although there have been several attempts to systematize some coats of arms which can be found researching medieval charters existent in the collection of the Maramureş County Service of the National Archives.

Still, I did not identify a substantial endeavour, eventually supplemented with tools or instruments generated by new technologies, materialized in a database or a armorial, which would also allow more in-depth analyses, in order to analyse the elements of heraldic semiotics, of heraldic communication. This led me to try to establish an initial framework that would serve as a foundation for future research, in an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary manner, with comparative valences.

As pointed out above, there is currently no armorial dedicated to the coats of arms of Maramureş, but even in the absence of an armorial dedicated to the coats of arms of Maramureş, useful research questions can be raised, namely: What is the origin of the charges that make up the coats of arms of the Maramureş nobility? Some of the heraldic insignia that decorate these coats of arms can be found in the great European armorials or in sigillography and vexillology examples, while others can be observed in epigraphic, palaeographic, sculptural sources, etc. Although there are not many known Maramureş coats of arms, the elements that make up the charges of these coats of arms are also found in the existing coats of arms in other geographical regions. For example, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in countries such as England, France or Germany, armorials are known to illustrate hundreds or even thousands of coats of arms, from armorials such as the St. George's Armorial, which contains almost 650 coats of arms or the French Bellenville armorial in which more than 1,700 coats of arms are displayed. As a

result of the doctoral research, I managed to identify 347 coats of arms in the studied area, of which 35 can be placed temporally between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.

In addition to the aspects highlighted above, other additional research questions can be considered: Did the heraldry existing in Medieval Maramureş develop independently and separately from the heraldry of the neighbouring regions or even from the general medieval heraldry systems? Is the heraldry existing in medieval Maramureş the result of a symbiosis between local elements and those imported because of an eventual heraldic acculturation or heraldic mimicry? One of the most serious impediments in obtaining a satisfactory answer is the heterogeneity of language and heraldic vocabulary, and in the absence of a unitary language and vocabulary, comparative research has a limited scientific value. Currently, except for the descriptions in the Siebmacher's Armoria, in which the coats of arms of Maramureş are described, as well as in some of the charters containing coats of arms that I have studied, located in the archives, I have not identified other documents or works containing scriptural descriptions of these coats of arms.

Once reasonable answers to the above-mentioned questions have been identified, in the continuation of the research activity, it could be useful to formulate additional research questions, namely: What could be the symbolic meaning of the Maramureş heraldic elements that have not been borrowed from other heraldic systems? Could it be possible to establish elements of continuity between older heraldic or non-heraldic representations and the medieval heraldic elements of Maramureş that are not the result of an informational import? As a result of the doctoral research, two more questions could be formulated, namely: What could be the tangible results of the distinct identification of the elements of the medieval heraldry of Maramureş? Is the Maramureş heraldic system a system that developed separately or in relation to social, cultural, geographical criteria, etc., respectively is it a component of the great European heraldic system and an integrated element of the European heraldic culture? To be able to answer such questions, I think it is useful to resort to the tools of general systems theory. Even if the Maramureş heraldry did not benefit from its own armorial, I believe that this aspect does not interfere with its systemic character. From this perspective, any system could be envisioned as having input values and output values, constants, variables, conditionings, entropy, tendency towards equilibrium, etc. The identification of the primary elements of the Maramureş heraldry could allow us to find documentary, social, genealogical, sigillography, vexillology relationships with other heraldic systems that influenced or were influenced by the Maramureş heraldic system.

Regarding the content of the paper, it is structured in five chapters, to which five appendixes are added, which contain some attempts to highlight the innovative component of the paper.

Chapter 1, entitled *Temporal, geographical and conceptual limits. Heraldic, technical and legal limitations* aim to establish, as far as possible, the temporal, geographical and conceptual limits for doctoral research, on the one hand, and on the other hand, to highlight the limits and limitations of research. Firstly, the limits of the research are defined by the research objective and were proposed and established, in relation to spatial, temporal, conceptual and bibliographic parameters. Secondly, the limitations were represented by unforeseen restrictions, generated by some difficulties that arose during the research activity, having the nature of restrictions, in the sense shown in the Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language. Among the limitations I encountered were limitations generated by some difficulties in terminological and conceptual transposition of the heraldic lexicon in the studied period, limitations related to the use of images and texts using digital tools, including artificial intelligence algorithms, in which sense I showed how I tried and mostly succeeded in overcoming these limitations. The technical limitations were briefly described, as they were partially overcome, with some logistical sacrifices. In the future, further steps will be taken to remove such shortcomings caused by these limitations. At the same time, other limitations were highlighted, as well as the way in which they were dealt with, to the extent possible.

Chapter 2, entitled *Considerations regarding coats of arms of Maramureş in XIV-XVI centuries, from the perspective of heraldry*, tackles to possibility to analyse the representation of the Maramureş coats of arms that were identified, in the doctoral research from the perspective of heraldic science. In this regard, I analysed the heraldic escutcheon, the heraldic tinctures and metals, the exterior elements of the escutcheon, namely the helmet, the crown, the crest, the mantling, also known as the lambrequins and other heraldic elements, as well as other aspects considered relevant in relation to the coats of arms identified and described in the work.

Chapter 3, entitled *Heraldic identification and description of the coats of arms found in Maramureş and Ugocea, Ung and Bereg Counties din Maramureş, taking into consideration the social and political framework*, tries to analyse from a heraldic perspective, in a social and political context, the coats of arms identified in the temporal and geographical limits mentioned in the first chapter. Also, visual and linguistic details are presented regarding some medieval charters illustrating coat of arms, which I found and studied in different archives, both with

direct relevance to the studied topic and with indirect meanings for the researched scientific issue. Finally, some aspects regarding the interaction of the heraldic system and the social structure in the researched areas are described.

Chapter 4, entitled *Analysis of the heraldic charges identified in Maramureş (XIV-XVI centuries), from the perspective of their continuity and symbolism (including mentions and specifications about heraldic charges both prior and subsequent to the researched timeline)*, analyses from a historical and symbolic point of view, the heraldic insignia relating the charges that I have identified in the doctoral research, these being classified in natural figures, figures relating to the human body, figures inspired by the animal kingdom, figures inspired by the bird kingdom or other animals capable of flight, chimerical figures, figures inspired by the world of plants and artificial figures.

Chapter 5, entitled *Proposals for valorisation of the coats of arms of medieval Maramureş*, includes proposals for configuring a conceptual and reference framework for the analysis of the heraldic system, based on systemic approaches, as well as hypotheses regarding the way of reflecting the heraldic system from the perspectives stated above. Thus, the conceptualization of the set of heraldic phenomena and symbols as a system, seen from the perspective of the general theory of systems, could allow in the future for a more efficient analysis of the entire complex of heraldic signs and symbols, as well as the correlations between them and other social, cultural, economic systems. Such a conceptual architecture would allow a broader framework of analysis, in which notions such as heraldic constants, whether relative or absolute, as well as heraldic variables can contribute to a novel interpretation of heraldic phenomena.

Also, in the same chapter I tried to present, as an application of the proposed conceptual framework, the utility of developing a database on the coats of arms in the analysed heraldic system (the database is presented in Appendix I of the work), as well as possible uses of artificial intelligence algorithms. Regarding these algorithms, I think some explanations are useful. The special effervescence generated by the concept of artificial intelligence generated in recent years requires some clarifications and mentions, which I hope to be able to provide, in relation to the fact that I have been using artificial intelligence algorithms in my research activity for over 5 years. Firstly, the name artificial intelligence (AI – Artificial Intelligence) does not actually reflect an artificial intelligence system that has reached the autopoiesis stage, but rather is currently the expression of a group of large generative language models (LLMs) and other

generative models, used in different spheres of professional activity and scientific research, without thereby constituting entities with artificial intelligence itself. Thus, the road to entities with artificial intelligence is still at the beginning and there are not even certainties that such a goal could be achieved. Some researchers have questioned the future emergence of the concept of AGI (Artificial General Intelligence), which would represent a step closer to building autonomous entities equipped with effective artificial intelligence, although such a step may never materialize.

At the end of the paper, after the conclusions, five appendixes are included, namely: the above-mentioned database, which contains references on the identified coats of arms, an experiment on conversational artificial intelligence algorithms and an experiment on image-generating artificial intelligence algorithms, as well as some information regarding other medieval documents that I consulted (diplomas, armorials, etc.), regarding heraldic insignia relevant to doctoral research.

In concluding this summary, I can only express my hope that, beyond the errors inherent in such a scientific approach, as well as some omissions of the research, the aspects highlighted in the doctoral work will be able to be used in other subsequent researchers. In any case, I consider it necessary to emphasize that the steps started within the doctoral research will be further developed, to the extent of my own possibilities.

Claudiu Ramon D. BUTCULESCU

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