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Faculty of European Studies**

**The Genesis of the Romanian People Reflected in
the History Textbooks of the 20th Century.
Constituents, Stereotypes and „Public Use” of the
Ancestors**

Summary

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Content

I. Introduction, argumentation and methodology.....	1
Historical considerations and problems	1
Concepts	8
Methodology and the research design	21
II. The historical debate over the genesis of the neo-latin people	23
Thematization.....	23
A. Celts and Gauls as forerunner of Europe. History and historiography.....	27
A 1. Celts and categories of celticism	32
A2. The change of paradigm	33
A 3. The Celts – archaeological culture and ethnicity.....	37
A 4. Celts and regional identities. The spanish case	39
A 5. Preliminary conclusions.....	42
B. The romanization issue	44
B.1. State and Roman civilization. Cultural highlights of a paradigm	45
B. 2. The change of paradigm	49
B.3. How can one define romanization?	50
B. 4. The critics of romanization.....	56
B. 5. Preliminary conclusions:	60
Excursus: Romans and Barbarians in the classic historiography	62
The Conceptualization of barbarity. Herodot and his followers	62
„Barbarians” in Roman historiography	67
„Barbarians” and „chosen peoples”. The Jewish-Christian Late Antiquity historiography	70
Conclusions	78
C. Barbarian populations and their role in shaping European nations	78
C 1. The emergence of Germans in the European historiography.....	81
C 2. The Franks – the two versions of a common history.....	84
C 3. The Slavic history and the „sovietization” of ethnogenesis	86
D.The genesis of the Romanian people. Paradigm and historiography concepts	90
Conclusions	113

III. The education legislation during the 20th century. Politics and education system 106

Periodization of the education laws 1896 – 1989	119
A. Period 1896 – 1924	120
The legislation of education (1896 – 1924)	126
B. Period 1924 – 1939	143
The legislation of education (1924 – 1938)	147
C. Period 1939 – 1948	161
The legislation of education (1939 – 1948)	164
D. Period 1948 – 1968	172
The legislation of education (1948 – 1968)	175
E. Period 1968 – 1989	179
The legislation of education (1968 – 1978)	180
Conclusions	194

IV. The genesis of Romanian people reflected in the history textbooks. Constituents and stereotypes..... 197

A. Textbooks status between didactics and propaganda	198
B. Stereotype and prejudgement. Formation mechanism and implications	205
C. Stereotypes and historiographic clichés reflected in textbooks	215
Textbooks A.D. Xenopol (1878-1907)	216
Textbooks Grigore G. Tocilescu (1889-1907)	225
„The Textbooks Scandal”: the conflict between Gr. Tocilescu – I. Bogdan, N. Iorga, Th. Avramescu-Aguletti	238
Textbooks Theodor Avramescu-Aguletti (1902 – 1936)	245
Textbooks Th. Aguletti - M. Petrescu (1921-1935)	259
Textbooks N. Iorga (1908-1929)	266
Textbooks Orest Tafrali (1921-1935)	274
Textbooks D.D. Patraşcanu (1914 – 1935)	286
Textbooks N.A. Constantinescu (1915-1938)	299
Textbooks Emil Diaconescu (1929 – 1946.)	307
Textbooks Ion S. Floru (1923-1935)	314
Textbooks Ioan I. Lupaş (1921 – 1944)	319
Textbooks Ion. D. Arginteanu (1926 – 1929?)	331
Textbooks Andrei Oşetea (1936-1940)	334

Textbooks Grig. Mich. Cotlaru (1935-)	340
Textbooks Nicolae Ioan (1935-)	344
Textbooks Gh. C. Teodorescu (1936-)	348
Textbooks Enache N. Popov(-Barariu) (1937-)	353
Textbooks Traian Ciufu (1937)	356
Textbooks Scarlat Lambrino, Virgil Arbore (1935-1940)	363
Textbooks P. P. Panaitescu (1927-1943); (reeditare 1991-1996)	371
Textbooks C. C. Giurescu (1939-1943)	385
Forerunner comunist textbooks (1945-1946)	405
Unique edition textbooks Iordănescu, Arbore, Lazăr (1945)	405
Romanian History textbooks during 1947 – 1989	421
Textbooks Roller (1947-1956/1960)	422
Textbooks D. Almaş, Gh. Georgescu-Buzău, Aron Petric (1958-1970)	449
Education changes during the 7th and 9th decades of the 20th century and its impact over the teaching history	462
Textbooks Dragne, Ionescu, Iordănescu (1970-1980)	464
Textbooks C-tin Daicoviciu, M. Constantinescu, (Şt. Pascu) (1970-1989)	474
Textbooks H. Daicoviciu, P. Teodor, I. Cîmpeanu (1980-1989)	485
Conclusions.....	501
V. Final considerations	508
Bibliography.....	523

Appendix:

Appendix I. The list of education portofolio holders of the Romanian governments between 1862-2010	575
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Key-words: identity, stereotype, History textbooks, ethno-genesis, Celts, Latinity, Germans, Slavs, barbarians, assumed ancestors, in-group, out-group, „public use”, prejudgement, education policy, ideology, continuities.

The present doctoral thesis entitled “The Genesis of the Romanian People Reflected in the History Textbooks. Constituents, Stereotypes and “Public Use” of the Ancestors” aims to answer the following question: “What is the dynamic of the change of perceptions concerning our ancestors as reflected in the history textbooks during the 20th century”? The thesis is not trying “to solve” the Romanian ethno-genesis by any means, nor the formation of the Romanian language, but how these phenomena are presented in textbooks. Solving these controversies will not solve the Romanian identity issues.

Searching and identifying, and then adopting certain ancestors - as illustrious as possible - was one of the most legitimate projects for the national elites during modern Europe. Thus, our ancestors couldn't remain “innocent”. The main objective of this thesis is to identify the most frequent stereotypes from the history textbooks/manuals concerning our ancestors during the late 19th century and throughout the 20th century. The topic of the research is related to identity issues at European level, which still represent a powerful stake. Likewise, in Romania this topic represents a very sensitive issue that can cause disputes, mobilize energies and easily antagonize not only historians but also large parts from the general public.

The conceptualization of the ethno-genesis phenomenon is a consequence of the modern political society concepts. Although the intentions of the scientists were honest, the political context, the patriotism, the selective scientific information as well as others cultural and other social variables contributed to setting up the main clichés about the ancestors. Nowadays, the scientific community can recognize a biased conceptualization, as well as an “ideological” scientific discourse.

What is similar for the most ancestors analyzed in this paper (Celts, Romans, Germans and Slavs) is the commonly claimed membership to the Indo-European family, conceptualized in linguistic terms. The scientific interpretation models of the cultural phenomena that certified a correspondence between ethnicity and linguistics distorted the realities and the results turned into national policies. Moreover, by using archaeology the focus in modern research activities was

the quest for “the space of origins” using and also the linguistic and cultural area of spread for the ancestors, enabled by “national” philology and anthropology.

A common assumption about these categories of ancestors was a homogenous conduct and unity in action. Therefore, one can observe a perfect similarity between nation states and the cultural projection on the ancestors’ behaviour. This is the case with “the Celtic social structure”, or “the Geto - Dacian society”. Likewise, for a very long time, the impression of the Roman state was that of a sole actor, that set the expansion, the colonization and the Romanization policies from a unique High Command Centre, by implementing them in a unilateral and irreversible manner. Here are some clichés: all Germans, warriors by excellence, are culturally inferior to the Celts; Slavs, always victims of the German population were a large and peaceful people, “democratically” organized. The constant repetition of these stereotypes and clichés among scholars, teachers, pupils, tabloids, or in the media has given birth to persistent beliefs among the masses. One of the major consequences was the supposed inequality among “the races” and then among the ethnic groups that lead to tragic outcomes.

The “obsession” of the origins and the issue of genesis remain alive during the 20th century. Until the ’70s one can notice the preservation of the patterns regarding the stereotypes among scholars. Since then, overwhelming detailed information as well as new frame and data analysis tools have reshaped what we know about the ancestors. Therefore, we are compelled to modify the scientific explanation patterns and to communicate the results more adequately in order to be easily understood by the general public. For this reason, it is necessary to correct or to reject many of the scientific stereotypes which are still operating. Another challenge is to find new ways in order to cover the need for knowledge of the public that is not in touch with the academic environment. The paper turns to account the history textbooks in Romania, during the 20th century, focusing especially on the theoretical schools, secondary level (gymnasium and high school level). The approach completes several works from the Romanian historiography, but it is extending the chronological limits of the analysis from 1893 to 1989, so it is most likely the first of its kind to cover the entire 20th century.

The paper is divided in four chapters and the final considerations. The first chapter is entitled “Introduction, Arguments and Methodology” and it focuses on the research design. The second chapter, “The Contemporary Debate on the Genesis of Neo-Latin People” selectively approaches

the debate over some populations identified as ancestors at a European level. The selection of the constituent was made according to the “traditional” conceptualization scheme of Neo-Latin genesis: natives, Romans and the Germanic/Slavic layer. In this part, I use the term “public use” of the ancestors, after the expression of Gonzalo Ruiz-Zapatero, who refers to the instrumentation case of the Celts in Spain. The motivation for this approach resides in the ascertainment that there are enough elements to certify this phenomenon not only in the rest of Europe, but also in Romania. Another topic is the effect of the new paradigm over the human sciences applied for ethno-genesis theories. In order to define the complex elements, it was necessary to include an excursus, “Romans and Barbarians in Ancient Historiography”. In this part, there are showed the main characteristics of the “barbarian” image as reflected in the ancient sources from the perspective of the “chosen people”, the Romans, as *in-group*. The excursus emphasizes the main stereotypes of the barbarian populations – Germans and Slavs. There are presented in the form of a case study the two interpretations about the history of the Franks shown as forerunner of the French and German people. Another case study within the excursus presents the issues of the early Slavic history and also the “Soviet science” approach on these populations. The Franks and the Slavs’ cases can be regarded as models that are used in order to identify the stereotypes in the Romanian textbooks, which are analyzed in the fourth chapter. The fourth subtheme, “D. The Genesis of the Romanian People. Paradigm and Historiographical Concepts” is an approach meant to identify the schemes of transmission of the Romanian ethno-genesis and the main representation of ancestors themes as identified in the Romanian historical debates.

The third chapter entitled “The legislation of education during the 20th century. Politics and policies of education” is focused on the relation between politics and education, and reviews the legislation between 1893 and 1989. In this part, the emphasis put on the stake for the legislator, and the elements that open the political intervention in the practice of education. Furthermore, the impact of the political projects was stressed, as well as that of the ideology over the education system and on the society. The chapter suggests a new chronology, which divides the 20th century in 5 stages, taking into consideration the legislation of education. This chapter connects the historical elements of political practice from the “central” point of view, with official documents as textbooks, which are to be tackled in the following chapter.

Finally, the fourth chapter is named “The genesis of the Romanian people reflected in history textbooks of the 20th century. Constituents and stereotypes” and it’s the largest and most complex of all. This chapter is composed of another four themes that are analyzing the same number of connected issues. The major objective of this part is to set up a catalog of stereotypes identified in the history textbooks; this can be a very useful tool for the future research in this domain. The first subtheme, named “A. Status of History Textbooks” – between Didactics and Propaganda”, resumed the discussion over the multiple roles of the textbooks, with special considerations for history textbooks. Here not only the didactic requirements are presented, but also the discussions about their role in manipulation and propaganda. The second subtheme, “B. Stereotype and prejudice. Formation Mechanism and Implications” summarizes the main discussions about the concepts of „stereotype” and „prejudice”. This discussion was necessary in order to relate the Excursus from the second chapter, which presents stereotypes reflected in ancient historiography over the barbarian out-group, with the social mechanism and the effects of stereotypes. The socio-psychological approach is a very important instrument in order to provide new interpretations to certain historical issues identified during research. Here, I motivated and explained the use of the concept „conformism paradigmatic securizant”, (securing paradigmatic conformity), that produces negative effects over the group dynamics and produces scientific stereotypes. These scientific stereotypes, as proved, distort the reality that pretends to be analyzed. The final subchapter, „C. Stereotypes and Historiographical Clichés Reflected in Textbooks” collects the identified cliches in the history textbooks from the main authors of the 20th century. In order to identify relevant stereotypes connected with the ethno-genesis issues as well as the portrait of the assumed ancestors and of the barbarians, I have made a selection of 10 relevant items for our analysis, as follows:

- 1) Preface, foreword, introduction, motivation;
- 2) Periodization / chronology;
- 3) Nominalization/identification of assumed ancestors. The constituents of ethno-genesis;
- 4) Native image: Thracians, Getae, Dacians; the portrait of the leaders: Burebista, Decebal, etc;
- 5) Trajan’s portrait; the Romanization process;
- 6) The genesis of the Romanian people;
- 7) The Romanian glotogenesis;
- 8) The contribution of Christianity;
- 9) The German barbarians’ image;

10) The Slavic image and their contribution.

The last chapter, “Final Considerations” assumes the conclusions of the paper. In this part the outcomes are underlined as derived from the conceptual framework in relation with different issues and topics relevant for the thesis. The multiple interactions between scientific disciplines, ideology, politics, legislation, cultural identity, reference group, and history textbooks are comprised in a set of persistent stereotypes. The conclusions are presented taking into consideration the historical stages, the different constituents and related issues of the ethno-genesis process. The last part is focused on presenting the specific set of images and stereotypes corresponding to different ethnic populations analyzed: the natives, the Romans, the Germans and the Slavs. Moreover, the conclusions are trying to point out the identified structural problems both from the ancient cultural patrimony, and from the education area. There are also provided suggestions for possible corrections and future actions not only concerning the history textbooks, but also their side effects, compared to the European values.