## Linguistics

# THE INDO-EUROPEAN VOICE OF *BARBARIANS*

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**Abstract:** *In our essay we shall focus on the analyses (cum grano salis) of a limited number of words from the introductory pages of the novel Barbarians (such as gorgan, grui, crăpcean, fală, sfadă, etc.). Here, more than elsewhere the author makes use of a good amount of rather strange words (old, regional or folk) in his stylistic attempt to conceive the realm of the Dacians. We shall make an analysis of the etymology of these rather uncommon words as designated in Vinereanu's Etymological Dictionary of Romanian Language (2008) (unlike the traditional Romanian dictionaries, a different vision). From the (probable) linguistic discrepancies and stylistic preferences, findings will be drawn and novelties will be suggested, concerned with Romanian language and culture.*
**Key-words:** Emperor Trajan, etymology, Indo-European origin, King Decebalus, Latin, Laurentiu Liviu Faighel's *Barbarians*, Romanian, Sarmizegetusa Regia, Slavic, Thraco-Dacian substratum.

In 2008 Mihai Vinereanu, PhD published *The Etymological Dictionary of Romanian Language* (936 pages) where he proved, to some extent, the Thraco-Dacian origin of Romanian language. His main methodological approach was to look for possible older Indo-European roots for a significant number of Romanian words, traditionally of Latin, Slavic or other "recent" origin. He made a comparison with many other (old) Indo-European languages and, arguing those words already existed in the specific languages, they might have just as well existed in the Thraco-Dacian substratum of the Romanian language (of which little if anything is known), without necessary having to have "imported" them from Latin, Slavic, etc. From about five thousand words of old or traditional Romanian stock he proved that about



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13% might be of Latin origin, 8% of Slavic origin and at least 58% might represent the Thraco-Dacian essence.

In 2010 Laurentiu Liviu Faighel published a novel called *The Barbarians* (771 pages) in which he depicted the society, culture and civilization of the Dacians at their peak, focusing on the brutal, exhausting and complex military campaigns the Roman Empire fought against the Dacian kingdom from 101 to 106 on the territory of nowadays Romania, with the ultimate conquering of the capital Sarmizegetusa Regia. Though Emperor Trajan and King Decebalus are present in the novel, the protagonist is a simple Dacian soldier, from whose perspective and on whose experience a more genuine image is drawn. Mention should be made that there isn't a black and white antagonism, but an equable picture, with positive and damnatory issues on both sides. All in all, an authentic story of what might have really happened.

1. "In the torridity of the summer's months the Italian millet, the horse thistle and the couch grass were growing over the *hillocks* warped by the intense heat where the herds of half-wild horses were living their lives."[63]

["În vipia lunilor verii, dughia, pălămida și pirul înăbușeau *gorganele* scorojite de arșiță, unde își făceau veacul tabunurile de cai sălbatici;" (Faighel 2013: 8)]

GORGAN = 1. A mound erected over a grave 2. Mound; knoll; hillock.

Persian *Gorkhanah* "funeral monument" (Miklosich 1867: 103)/ *gor-khāna* "a sepulcher, a tomb, a mausoleum; a cavern; an empty room without a window; a cell" (Steingass 1963: 1102) came into Romanian through the Turkish *kurgan* (Șăineanu 1900 II: 191) or through the Russian *kurgan* (Hasdeu 1878 I: 282); cf. ukr., pol., *kurgan*. The Slavic forms are late loanwords into these languages, due to the absence of the metathesis of the liquid consonant.

It is an old IE root which existed in several languages; the Turks took it from the Persians and the Slavs from certain Iranian tribes from the North of the Black See or from other Indo-Europeans. Noteworthy that in Romanian the initial velar stop is voiced, as it is in Persian, followed by *o* as in Persian, whereas the Turkish form is a little bit different. In Romanian, the original meaning of "funeral monument" (if that was the initial meaning in truth) was

[63] All quotations herein were translated from Romanian into English by the author of the article.



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not retained, as the Romanian GORGAN means "a mound, an elevation of land". The Romanian form is likely indigenous and must originate in a common root together with the Persian *Gorkhanah*.

PIE ***kouko-s** "round, bent/arched" (*IEW* 1959: 588) with the epenthesis of the liquid *r*. It is obvious that the Romanian GORGAN has the same origin as the Persian *Gorkhanah* and it may be indeed a loanword from an Iranian language from the North of the Black Sea from the Pre-Roman epoch. Thus it is not a loan from Turkish or Russian. An argument for the idea of an Iranian loan in the case of the Romanian GORGAN may be the fact that the Dacians were preponderantly cremating their deceased and the ashes of the dead was deposited in the tomb along with other objects. The funeral mound may have been used by the Dacians as well in the case of some kings, nobles, heroes or military commanders for the Dacians were the direct descendants of the bearers of the civilization of Kurgans. (Vinereanu 2009: 401)

*Gorgan* is a little used word in Romanian at present. However in the city center of Bucharest there is a church named "Sfântul Ilie-Gorgani". It was erected between 1812 and 1818 on a place where an older church existed, first attested on August, 6th, 1639. The place itself always had the name "the mound of Gorgani". This may be for it is named as any of the tens of artificial mounds erected in the Wallachian plane in the old times. Or it may bear the name of a historical figure from 1630's, Gorgan Spătarul ("the Sword Bearer"). Anyhow, the word was common reference in the old days. Nowadays for the meaning "hillock" the common word is *movilă* which, in traditional Romanian dictionaries, has a Slavonic origin. Nonetheless according to Vinereanu, *movilă* has, in its turn, a Thraco-Illyrian origin (Vinereanu 2009: 550-551). For the meaning "a mound erected over a grave" there is no specific single-word in Romanian at present. Thus one can conclude that Faighel could have used any of the words *gorgan* or *movilă* if he intended the meaning "hillock". For the grave underneath he had to turn to *gorgan*. It is not clear which of the meaning the novelist intended, though "hillock" is more likely. In any case, looking to express an ordinary reality of the Dacian realm, the novelist turned to a rather uncommon Romanian word at present, which is likely to have a Dacian origin.

2. "On a steep *hillock*, lined in the west by thickets of dwindling bloody twigs interweaved with osiers and brambleberries, the Roman camp rose."

["Pe un *grui* pieptiș, mărginit la soare-apune de boscheți de sângeri pirpirii împletiți cu lozii și rugi de mure, se înălța castrul." (Faighel 2013: 6)]



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GRUI = (small) hill, hillock.

Lat. **grunnium* "snout of a pig" (Candrea, Densusianu: 1907-1914; 2006; Scriban 1939/2013; Cioranescu 1958: 3907).

PIE ***guer-**"mountain" (*IEW* 1959: 477); cf. Sanskrit *giri* "mountain", Avestan *gairi* "mountain", Lithuanian *giria* "forest", Latvian *dziria*, Old Church Slavonic *gora* "mountain", Albanian *gur* (pl. *gurë*) "stone". Walde-Pokorny find that the Greek *βορέας* "the north wind" originates from this root (though it may be related rather to the Romanian BURĂ = "drizzle, fog/haze/mist" a Dacian word). Furthermore Walde-Pokorny says that the name of the Hyperboreans is Thracian "those who live beyond the North Wind/mountains, across the mountains". Indeed the Greek named the Thraco-Getae - Hyperboreans, those who lived north of the Haemus Mons (nowadays Balkan Mountains).

GRUI has a Thraco-Dacian origin.

Derivatives: *gruieț* (diminutive), *gruios*. (Vinereanu 2009: 409)

*Grui* is a rather little used word in Romanian at present, though not totally obsolete. For the meaning "hill" the common word is *deal* and for "hillock" there is *colină*. *Deal* is traditionally looked upon as having a Slavonic origin, vehemently declined by Vinereanu, who notices the Semitic similarities and, through the Nostratic Hypothesis, concludes it has a Thraco-Dacian origin. (Vinereanu 2009: 309). *Colină* is a French loanword, though Vinereanu sends us to *colnic*, a word with the same meaning, "hillock", and, of course, not of Slavonic, but of Thraco-Illyrian origin. Nonetheless, the novelist could have used any of the (more or less) synonyms, yet he preferred the (appreciably) more eloquent *grui*. As it is the very third word of the novel, one can easily see the stylistic option. In his attempt to describe the familiar landscape of all Dacian realms, the novelist turned toward a more expressive word, of probable Dacian origin, at the very beginnings.

3. "They were no longer being harmed by the warriors of king Decebalus when they were to farm their fields, to breed animals, to slake lime, to make wine or to fish small *carps* and crucian with the fish spear from the river's ponds."

["Nu mai sufereau nicio sminteală din partea oştenilor regelui Dekebalos când era să-şi cultive ogoarele, să crească vite, să ardă var, să facă vin ori să prindă *crăpceni* şi caracude cu ostia din bălţile fluviului." (Faighel 2013: 11)]



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CRAP (Aromanian/Macedo-Romanian/Vlach, Megleno-Romanian *crap*) = carp, a freshwater fish (*Cyprinus carpio*).

Bulgarian, Serbo-Croatian "crap" (Miklosich 1862: 16; Cihac 1870 xii: 62); cf. Greek *Κυπρινος* "carp", Albanian *Krap*, Russian *krop*, Old High German *karpo*, Middle High German *karpfe*, Lithuanian *karpa*, Latvian *karpe*, *karpa*, Swedish *karp*, Estonian *karp*. Vasmer (1953-1958 II: 334-5) believes that the Germanic forms emerge from the Thracian etymon *Καπριοι* "Carpi" and "Carpathians", respectively. Nevertheless he alleges that the Slavic languages took the form from the Germanic languages.

Mention should be made that the name actually exists in most of the IE languages from Europe. Thus the Latin form *carpa* is confirmed at Cassiodorus, an author from the 6th century AD, who specifies it as a fish that grows in the Danube. Some authors find that the Latin *carpa* is a loanword from Gothic (cf. Walde 1965 I: 171). The fact is that one does not have to turn to loanwords because *carpa* exists in many of the IE languages from Europe. Necessarily it must have existed in the Getae-Dacian language as well, since this fish was breeding in the Danube. Ernout-Meillet relate it as well to the name of the Carpi, a hypothesis that is assumed by Vasmer, too. Barnhart (1988: 146) thinks that Latin took it from Germanics which, in their turn, borrowed from an unknown pre-Germanic source. It is known that prior to the arrival of the Germanic peoples from the Scandinavian Peninsula, until V-IV centuries BC Central Europe was inhabited by the Celts as far as the Rhine, neighboring the Dacians to the East.

> "when the bold Massiliote Pytheas undertook his voyage of discovery in the North Sea in B.C. 325, he found that on the Rhine the nation of the Celts gradually changed into another, for which he uses the indefinite term of Scyths" (Schrader 1890: 428).

It is a well-known fact that the Greeks used the generic term of Scythian when they referred to Dacians as well (cf. Vinereanu 2003: 47-48).

Hence CARP is an old IE term obviously used by the peoples where the carp bred. Thraco-Dacian origin. (Vinereanu 2009: 276)

1050 km of the length of the Danube river shores and 30% of its basin (including the delta) are on the territory of nowadays Romania and these figures were even larger for Dacia (a time when Danube River was looked upon as sacred). There are 133 species of fish (still) populating its waters, including impressive species such as great sturgeon. And yet, the novelist chose the carp. This may be for the carp is one of the several wide-spread species. Or for it may relate to the name of the Dacian tribe "Carpi" and even more, to the stronghold of the Dacian people, the Carpathian mountain range.



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Though the statement is a bit far-fetched, it is too much of a coincidence not to consider (at least) the second argument.

4. "Nevertheless, Caesar Domitianus boasted of as a Dacicus and celebrated his triumph in great haughtiness; and few had knowledge that much of the wealth he put on airs he had snatched by sword from the Dacians actually reddened the chests of the treasury."

„Cu toate acestea, Caesar Domitianus se împăunase cu titlul de Dacicus şi-şi serbase cu mare *pohfală* triumful; şi puţini ştiau că multa avuţie cu care se grozăvise că ar fi smuls-o cu sabia de la daci însângerase sipetele visteriei." (Faighel 2013: 11)

FALĂ (Megleno-Romanian *falbă*) = 1. haughtiness, pride. 2. glory, reputation/fame.

Old Church Slavonic *chvala* "praise, eulogy" < Old Church Slavonic *chvaliti* "to praise" (Miklosich 1862: 51; Cihac 1870 xii II: 107; Cioranescu 1958: 3250); cf. Bulgarian *fal(b)a*, Serbo-Croatian *fala*, Russian *chvala* "praise, eulogy". Vasmer (1986-1987 IV: 228) finds the Slav forms having an uncertain origin, yet he relates them to the Old Icelandic *skvala* "to call, to shout/yell", *skvali* "noisy/loud", New High German *swellan* "to swell/inflate", English *swell*.

In any case, Old Church Slavonic *chvala* provides no explanation for the Megleno-Romanian *falbă*, which is an older form than the Daco-Romanian *fală*. Thus one has to find another etymology for the Romanian *fală*. In this case the Germanic forms should be accounted for. Barnhart (1988: 1101) relates the English *swell* to the Gothic *uf-swalleins* "pride, vanity/conceit". The root exists in several Germanic languages. It is not too clear the relation with Old Church Slavonic *chvala*, though it seems to be a cognate with the forms in the Romanian language.

Lehmann (1986: U13) states that the Gothic form does not have an established etymology and that this root is only present in the Germanic languages. One has to keep in mind that the meaning of the Romanian *fală* is identical with that in Gothic. Considering the Germanic forms and the one in the Romanian language it can be reconstructed a PIE ***(s)ŭelb** "pride, vanity/conceit". The Romanian *fală* originates in this root through a Thraco-Dacian **valba*, **falba*> Old Romanian **falbă* (cf. Megleno-Romanian *falbă*) > Romanian *fală*. The presence of *b* explains the absence of rhotacism of the intervocalic *l*. From the Pre-Latin stock.

Derivatives: *a se făli* "to swagger", *fălos* "haughty", *falnic* "glorious". (Vinereanu 2009: 346)



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There is a wide range of currently in fashion synonyms in Romanian for (the slightly obsolete) *fală*. For some of these Vinereanu expressed, of course, his option for other etymons: *trufie* (not Latin, but Pre-Romanic), *îngâmfare* (not Latin, but Thraco-Dacian), *faimă* (not Latin, but pre-Romanic), *măreție* (not Latin, but Thraco-Dacian). In some other cases, Vinereanu did not dwell upon different etymons, such as: *fudulie* (Turkish), *pompă* (Latin, French), *orgoliu* (Italian), *glorie* (Latin, Italian). Somewhere in between is *strălucire*, which may be from the unattested Latin **lucire*, or may be related to the Hittite *lak* "to light"… In any case, the novelist preferred the antiquated *fală*, most likely for stylistic effect. Coincidence or not, it is, according to Vinereanu, not Old Church Slavonic, but of old pre-Latin *origin*.

5. "Unlike the *ill-tempered* woodsmen, the lowlanders – comati, as they called themselves – had an amicable temper and were fond of feasts."

„Spre deosebire de *sfadnicii* codreni, câmpenii – comaţi, cum îşi ziceau ei înşişi – erau soţioşi din fire şi iubitori de petrecere;" (Faighel 2013: 8)

SFADĂ = 1. Quarrel / dispute / feud. 2. Conflict / strife, disagreement / dissension / friction.

Old Church Slavonic *svada* "conflict, slander" (Miklosich 1862: 47; Cioranescu 1958: 7720). The Old Church Slavonic form *svada* is not attested, instead there is a similar form, Old Church Slavonic *svar* "quarrel/dispute" (cf. Blagova 1994: 593) which cannot be the etymon of the Romanian **sfadă**, though the two forms are obviously cognates; cf. Russian svára "quarrel, enmity" from the Proto-Slavic *svar, Bulgarian *svara* "reproof/reprehension". The Slavic forms are related to the Latin sermo, -nis "dispute, conversation", Oscan *sverrunei* "the one who is speaking", Gothic *swaran* "swear/vow", Old Icelandic *svara* "to answer", Old Saxon *andsvara* "to answer", English *answer*, English *swear* (cf. Vasmer 1986-1987 II: 585). There is also the form *sfară* "strife/quarrel" (archaic) in Romanian.

So the Slavic forms have the liquid consonant *r* in word-final as the other IE languages (Latin included). N. Densușianu (1986: 1105) relates it to the Greek σφεδανός "violent, vehement", but also to the Medieval Latin *faida* "enmity". Romanian language has both forms, with *d* and with *r*. The forms with *r* are spread in several groups of IE languages. They both originate in a common root. On the other hand, forms in dental (consonant) exist in Romanian and in Germanic languages. cf. Old High German *fehida* "wrangle, enmity", Old English *fahd* "idem", Middle English *fede* idem", English *feud* "idem", English *foe* "enemy". The Medieval Latin *faida*, specified by Densușianu, must originate in Old High German *fehida*, with



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the elision of *h*, a sound that had disappeared in Late Latin. From the pre-Latin fond. Derivatives: *a (se) sfădi* "to quarrel"*, sfădire* "reprimand". (Vinereanu 2009: 756)

There are plenty synonyms in Romanian used nowadays for the obsolete *sfadă*. For a few of these Vinereanu expressed his option for other etymons: *gâlceavă* (not Old Slavonic or Bulgarian, but Thraco-Dacian), *zâzanie* (not Medieval Greek, but uncertain). For most of the others, not: *ceartă* (Latin), *conflict* (Latin, French), *neînțelegere* (Latin), *divergență* (French, Latin). Disputes, conflicts, or dissensions were some of the landmark features of the Dacians, something that was noticed as early as Herodotus in his *Histories* (440 BC):

> "The Thracian people are, following that of the Indiana, the most numerous in the world. If they had a single leader or if the Thracians could get along with one another they would be unconquerable and in my opinion stronger by far than any other peoples. But this is impossible and shall never be achieved. Therefore are they so weak. The Thracians have several names, according to the region inhabit, but their customs and habits are quite the same for all of them" (Herodotus 1949: 19).

The novelist preferred the antiquated *fală*, and not any of the many synonyms of Latin origin. Coincidence or not, this is, according to Vinereanu, not Old Church Slavonic, but old pre-Latin stock. The novelist used an old pre-Latin word to designate a defining feature of the Dacians. It is, once again, something more than a mere stylistic effect.

There is a large number of other words the author made use of in the seven introductory pages of the novel for an obvious stylistic effect, trying to depict the ancient world of the Dacians by means of early speech. Much of these are to be found in Vinereanu's *Dictionary* as having a probable Thraco-Dacian origin (and not Slavonic or Latin as the traditional etymology asserts). Plenty describe the Dacian landscape: *bahnă* "marsh", *arin* "alder tree", *pir* "couch grass, twitch", *cer* "cerris", *gârniță* "the Hungarian or Italian oak", *rogoz* "sedge", *sânger* "bloody twig", *bortelit* "holey, hollowed out", some referring to animals: *boncălui* "to bell (about stags)", *ciutac* "short horned ox", *groștei* "piglet, young pig", some to domestic life: *bulgur* "grinded wheat", *ostie* "fish spear', *gireadă* "stack, rick"; some to habits: *lotru* "robber"*, dobândă* "loot, spoils", *smintealĕ* "loss, damage, harm, trouble", and some to spiritual life: *știmă* "daemon, spectre, spirit", *bală* "monster, dragon, wild beast", etc.



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One cannot know whether the novelist Laurențiu Liviu Faighel was aware of the existence of Vinereanu's *Dictionary* when writing the introductory pages of the novel. The two years interval between the publication of the two tomes leave room for ambiguity / any option. However, it is most likely that the author did not examine the scientific work when writing the novel. He was probably simply making use of less known words with an appealing sonority. If so, we have a foretaste of involuntary adequateness. In his endeavor for authenticity when resurrecting the world of the Dacians, the writer may have actually voiced the barbarians.

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