VLACHICA[1]
Mountaintops Above a Stormy Sea of Contending Empires[2]

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More than forty years ago, during a summer afternoon in Constanţa, Rumania,[3] a story retold by a maternal uncle took my mind by storm. The family gathered for a meal and suddenly my mother's stories, which I had heard throughout my childhood, became real and painful as I listened to my uncle's account of two-hundred-year hardships of the *Armân* family. Something I had refused all this time to accept became undeniable: even though I had chosen my father's tongue and had rejected my mother's because it corrupted my Rumanian speaking, I was part of the Armân humanity.

My reason for stubbornly refusing to talk *Armâneashte* was that, the two languages being somehow close, I made mistakes, mixing Armân and Rumanian words, and my classmates made fun of me, while my teachers corrected me harshly. Another reason for my refusal to speak Armâneashte laid in the xenophobic attitude of the Communist regime, infused into schools, media, and daily life. I was born in the dark years of Rumania, haunted by the Soviet Red Army occupation (1944–1958), the Stalinist propaganda and the rewriting of the national past as well as of literary history. There were years of attempts at "Russification", closed borders, and forced labor camps where the Rumanian elite was slaughtered. Yet, that very evening, the idea to write this novel was born. I asked my mother Hrisula, whose maiden name was Limona, and uncle Hristu Papadumitru, the husband of my mother's eldest sister to write down anything they knew about Armâns.

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[1] Valachia/ Vlachia [vae-***lei***-kija] is the spelling used by Demetrius Cantemir in his *Historia incrementorum atque decrementorum Aulae Othomanicae (History of the Ottoman Empire), Historia Moldo-Vlachica, Vita Constantini Cantemyrii* etc. in Latin as well as in his works in the Rumanian language.

[2] Introduction to a historical novel nearing completion in Romanian translation: *Vlachica. Piscuri de munţi deasupra imperiilor învolburate.*

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[3] I spell the country's name in this way for a reason. A terrible confusion took place after 1989 when the gypsies decided to be called not *gypsies* or *ţigani*/ *tzigani* – their historical/ given names when they arrived in the territory/ Europe during the fourteenth century – but "Roma" or *romani*. For many who don't know history, "Romania" means, mistakenly, "the country of gypsies (Roma)".

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I soon realized that I couldn't write the book I had in mind without seeing the places named in the stories, which were scattered all over the Balkans. Even though I lived in an environment of fear, I asked for a passport. I explained why I needed it; my request was denied. I was told instead to write about the communist reconstruction of the country. It was the year 1975, with the Rumanian culture fully censored, and the country struggling under the communist dictatorship's rule. Years passed. That book remained on the back burner of my mind while I published others; with each new book, my mother reminded me of my promise to write the novel about the Armâns. On her deathbed in July 2001, she reminded me again what my task was and asked me to fulfill it.

The ball started rolling during my professional sabbatical in 2008. From that year on, I spent almost every summer in the Balkans, visiting all important cities on the historical map of Epirus (today southern Albania, northern Greece and Macedonia). I crossed the Dalmatian coast with only my backpack and a camera, from Venice down to Croatia, Montenegro, and Albania, ending in Macedonia and Greece. I spent days, weeks, and months in the Istria peninsula, Ochrid, Bitola (Mănăstiri), Krushevo**,** Skopje, Korce, Gyrokastro / Gjirokastër**,** Voskopoje/ Moscopole, Ioannina, Metsovo /Aminciu, Thessaloniki and Istanbul.

My mother was right. Crossing Slavic language speaking countries (Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro, Macedonia), then Albania and Greece I met people belonging to the ancient, original population and we understood each other speaking my mother Armân with the help of the Rumanian[4]. I could communicate in the ancient language (remembering more under pressure!) with Istrians in Croatia; with Armâns and *Fărşeroţi* (from *Frashër* or *Farşari*), or *Rumëri*, or *Arrmanji* (how they call themselves to separate from *rumuni* living north of the Danube) in today's Albania, Macedonia, and Greece. The word "Vlach" is used mostly in Greece, as well as the pejorative name *Çoban* [**tchio**-ban], which means "shepherd". *Makedon* or "Macedonian" is used in Rumania (this name identifies the territory they came from during a population exchange in the twentieth century). "Vlaşi" (pronounced Vla**sh**i) or *Cincar*/ *Zinzar*/*Tzintzar* was common in former Yugoslavia and still is today in Serbia and in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). Albania's "Vlleh" refers to the Vlach from the south of the Danube. Albanian Muslims nicknamed the Christian Vlachs 'gog'. To define themselves, those from the historic Macedonia and Epirus use both "Armân" and "Makedon-Armân," as this region has been one of the birth areas of the Armân language[5] (today the mother tongue of more than 1.5 million people).

[4] Two Romance languages which are part of the Oriental Romance language family.

[5] Poghirc 1987: 341–348; Poghirc 1989: 131–152; Poghirc 1996: 14–49. Cicerone Poghirc, a well-known scholar of Indo-European languages in the Balkans stated: "If there is an alleged «identification» of the Dacoromanian with the Aromanian, it can only be one of common origin: the Balkan Latin (...) In reality, the Aromanian and the Dacoromanian are far from being identical, since they share only some important structural and material concordances. (Dacă există o pretinsă "identitate" a dacoromânei cu aromâna, ea nu poate fi decât aceea a originii lor: latina balcanică (…). În realitate, între aromână şi dacoromână este departe de a fi vorba de identitate, ci doar de concordanţe structurale şi materiale importante).

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The Germanic and Slavonic invaders started to arrive north and south of the Danube from early third century A.D. The Roman Empire abandoned Dacia's provinces from the North of the Danube in 274–275 AD. The migratory called the original population they met here "Wallah," "Wlach", "Wallachians."

The original population from south of the Danube called itself in its own language Armâni, *Rumëri*, *Rumâri*, derived from *Rōmaíōn/ Romaioi*, which in Greek meant 'citizens of the Roman Empire,' as Greek became later the official language of the Eastern Roman Empire. Prosthetic 'a' (letter added at the beginning of a word) is specific to this population from the Eastern Romance language family, especially in front of 'r' and 'l' consonants. *Rhomaioi* became Armân, Arămân. However, the Armâns from the north of the Pindus keep an old variant, without prosthetic 'a,' – *rumăn*, *rămăn* and, in the Albanian, *rrëmër*. In order to differentiate (for the barbaric ears!) between the "Latin speaking population" north and south of the Danube, the migratory used 'Wlach' for those in the south and 'Wallach' for those in the north.

During my travels, I noticed that many Armâns were afraid to be heard using their language for they could easily be labeled "stupid," "illiterate", "dirty", and could be ridiculed for remaining unchanged. Asking about Istrian Vlaşi in Croatia, I was told they didn't exist – although I found them. The Istrian Vlaşi were afraid to speak to me even when I finally met them. The "Vlach question" is currently one of the hotly debated issues in Croatian's historiography. There is an impressive bibliography of historiographical works on Vlachs, mainly written during the Hapsburg Empire, but the works are largely in Croatian. In Croatia, the Vlachs are considered Serbs. In other words, the original population (Rōmaíōn/ Romaioi, the citizens of the Eastern Roman Empire) of this territory occupied by barbarian Slavic tribes from sixth to eighth centuries A.D. is considered Slavic. Croatian historians today use the word Vlach for the Serb Orthodox subpopulation who moved to Croatian territory at the end of the sixteenth century. They assert that among these "Serbs" there were few, if any, descendants of *real* "Vlachs", whom they consider to be Roman inhabitants migrating to highlands in the early medieval period.

Why are Serbs called Vlachs and vice versa? And why has the original Vlach population from this territory been deleted from the history? History books say: "The Slavs and Croats settled the Balkans in the second half of the sixth century, the Slavs and Mongol people, the Avars, finally began to settle the Pannonian Plain" (Goldstein 2000: 6). The Croatian historians' theory – that peaceful Slavs migrating to this region found a deserted territory – cannot stand. Before the arrival of the migrants, a strong population of citizens had inhabited the Eastern Roman Empire, as proved by ferocious wars against the Slavs recorded in Procopius's *History* books 7 and 8 (Procopius 1914). From Constantinople, the Emperor defended his citizens from the onslaught of Slav and Goth barbarian attackers.

Vlachs are "deleted" from Croatian history today not only for political but also for religious reasons. Wherever they were, the Armâni, Rumâri, Rumëri, the citizens of the Eastern Roman Empire called "Vlachs" by the invaders chose to remain Christian Orthodox, the religion of the Eastern Roman Empire, while the Slav Croats followed the schism of 1054 and became Catholic. It is important to

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remember (Young 1916: 204; Horne 1841: 334) that the historic Macedonia was partly evangelized by Apostle Paul in his first missionary journeys and Christianization in the region took place as an early phenomenon[6]. The "deserted territory" theory of Croatian historians has also been used by Hungarian historians who argued that Transylvania didn't have inhabitants when the Mongols and the Avars arrived – an argument proven totally fabricated by Rumanian historiography and archaeology (Pop 2017)[7].

Today's Albania and Macedonia recognize the Vlaşi's existence. Rumania wants to assimilate the Armân/ Vlach people as Rumanians. Croatia does not recognize them, nor does Montenegro. The Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1333 (1997) of 24 June 1997 acknowledged that today this population faces a serious risk of extinction and recommended that the states where Armân people live support their language, education, religion and the media. Despite that, Greece still refuses to recognize the Armân*/ Aromanian/ Armâneshtsâ* culture as part of its cultural heritage and does nothing to help this ancient community maintain its identity. Strangely enough, politics hasn't changed in the last 250 years. A reader viewing the evidence would be struck by this fact as I was while doing research for this novel.

Unlike other old populations of Europe, these "ancients" didn't vanish. History books in the Middle Ages still recorded segments of their former vast extent under the names of Moravian Vlachs, Vlachs of the Istria peninsula, of north of the Danube and the Carpathians, and of the Balkans, while historians called some of them by the ancient name of *Daci* (pronounced almost like "Dutch") even in the fifteenth century[8].

The **Valahs** north of the Danube and in the Carpathians built three kingdoms during the eighth to fourteenth centuries – Valahia, Moldavia, and Transylvania – reunited later in a single state, the Kingdom of Rumania.

The **Vlachs** south of the Danube, and farther south-west in Dalmatia, and north-west of the Danube in Moravia preferred a different kind of life. By hiding on mountaintops, they lasted almost unchanged until today, surviving in parallel with empires and nation-states. They avoided harsh wars and domination and preserved their customs, ancient language, and ways of life intact. At the end of the nineteenth century, but mainly after the First World War, they were gradually forced out of hiding and into recorded history through peace treaties and the work of European

[6] *The New Testament*, "First Epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians" and "The Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians". Paul's first visit in Macedonia is dated around 50 A.D. when he reached Kavala, and Thessaloniki, the capital of ancient Macedonia. The *Letters of Paul to the Thessalonians* were written in Corinth, Greece, and addressed to the Christian community he founded in Macedonia.

[7] See chapter "Transilvania între 900 şi 1300" (Transylvania between 900 and 1300) and the commentary about the deserted land issue asserted by Hungarian historians: "how to interpret the *terra deserta* or *terra vacua et inhabitata* terms from papal and royal documents – *"cum se pot interpreta termenii* de „terra deserta" sau „terra vacua et inhabitata" din unele documente papale şi regale…" The goal of Hungarian irredentism associated with Hungarian revisionism is to restore the pre-World War I borders of the Kingdom of Hungary. They call the Carpathian region of Romania as the 'Hungarian Basin' or the 'Settlement of Magyars' (my translation MR).

[8] Chalcocondylas 1843: 499–510.

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linguists. The Vlachs or Armâns from the Balkans became vocal in our time because they realized their world – their culture and language – is on the brink of extinction.

Strangely, they cannot be found on today's map of Europe. When asked about them, professors of international law confess that they have never heard of them. Who are they? How could these Armân people best be described or defined? It is said that history has symbolic and profane meanings and manifests in cyclical patterns.

Once upon a time such a manifestation of *cyclical symbolic events* – known as the grand Hyperborean migration – took place from the north of Europe to the south of Pelasgian Greece. Mythologists regarded this movement as a descent from the "polar" Hyperborean state of primordial non-distinction to the mundane manifestations of this cycle, a descent from the archetypal realm into mere earthly history. One of the intermediary stages of this movement that took place from the north of the Carpathians, Danube, Dniester, and the Black Sea to the north of Greece and the Adriatic Sea was made by a race known in history as Dacians, or Getae[9] (Herodotus 1890: paragraphs 93, 94, 95) or Thracians[10] (Plato 1871). Authors of antiquity, including Strabo[11], Apollonius of Rhodes[12], and Pliny (Plinius 1634: 12, i) considered them a Hyperborean race. In the transition from the Hyperborean space to earthly geography, the primordial place (with its topography and spiritual centers) was projected into a secondary analogous one, a space with profound meanings of a sacred and symbolic reality (Densusianu 1913).

This compact mass of population lived from the Adriatic Sea to the Black Sea, from the Haemus Mountains (today called the Balkan Mountains) to beyond the northern Transylvanian Carpathians, in Pannonia[13], in Moravia, in southern Poland,

[9] Herodotus 1890. Herodotus called them Getae and Thracians and wrote about their God, Zalmoxis (also spelled Zamolxis), and his relationship with Pythagoras.

[10] Plato 1871: *Charmides, or Temperance*. Persons of the dialogue: Socrates, who is the narrator; Charmides; Chaerephon; Critias. Scene: The Palaestra of Taureas, which is near the Porch of the King Archon. "Such, Charmides, I said, is the nature of the charm, which I learned when serving with the army from one of the physicians of the Thracian king Zamolxis, who are said to be so skillful that they can even give immortality. This Thracian told me that in these notions of theirs, which I was just now mentioning, the Greek physicians are quite right as far as they go; but Zamolxis, he added, our king, who is also a God, says further, 'that as you ought not to attempt to cure the eyes without the head, or the head without the body, so neither ought you to attempt to cure the body without the soul; and this,' he said, 'is the reason why the cure of many diseases is unknown to the physicians of Hellas, because they are ignorant of the whole, which ought to be studied also; for the part can never be well unless the whole is well'. For all good and evil, whether in the body or in human nature, originates, as he declared, in the soul, and overflows from thence, as if from the head into the eyes. And therefore, if the head and body are to be well, you must begin by curing the soul…"

[11] Strabo 1903. Vol. 1: The Alps, 309; Getae and Daci, 467; Strabo 1917: Vol 3, Book VII, chapter 3: Zalmoxe, Pythagora; Byrebistas / Burebista

[12] Apollonius 1912: Book II

[13] Paterculus 1924: II, 110 The Pannonians, considered Illyrian (by the Romans), were part of Burebista's empire. They spoke the same language as Burebista's administration, perhaps with slight dialectal differences. "Now all the Pannonians possessed not only a knowledge of Roman discipline but also of the Roman tongue, many also had some measure of literary culture, and the exercise of the intellect was not uncommon among them".

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from the Rhine, and to the Dniester in the east[14]. Invasions from the Far East divided this population into big branches: the Dacians, north of the Danube, who created *Dacia Traiana* after the Roman occupation; the Vlachs or Armâns[15] south of the Danube; the Vlachs of the Istrian peninsula (Xenopol 1891: 278) etc.

The further migrations and invasions that started in the first millennium B.C. and ended in the eighth century A.D. (the Ottoman conquest and domination from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century was in many aspects a barbarian invasion) didn't wipe out the "ancients". They continued to live in the mountains and densely forested territories. The conquerors – today's Bulgarians, Croats, Macedonians, Serbs – had little connection with them; they had never been assimilated by the "ancients," nor did they assimilate them. The descendants of the old race clans who live in today's mountains of Epirus, northern Greece, Macedonia, Croatia, Dalmatia, Serbia, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, and Rumania are the original population of this vast territory – the original people of Europe. During history's harsh invasions they retreated even higher into the mountains.

The Armân, Istriot, Meglenit, and Daco-Rumanian languages have roots in a Proto-Indo-European language, sister to the Italic, Celtic, and the Illyrian. The relationship of the Aromanian/ Armân and Daco-Rumanian with the Italic is sister to sister, not mother to children[16].

Linguistic and historical works published in recent years suggest that the Roman occupation of Dacia (106–275 A.D.) and of the territory between the Adriatic and the Black Sea emphasized a common Proto-Indo-European[17] heritage and did not impose a process of Latinization. In other words, the Latinization process in Dacia and the territories between the Adriatic and the Black Seas, which had a common Proto-Indo-European heritage, was not enforced by the Romans. Rome conquered and ruled Greeks for centuries, yet Greeks did not become Latin and Latins didn't become Greeks. What happened in the vast territory inhabited by those I name "the ancients" could be described through another example: the Romanization of the Gauls (Celts) in Gallia, explained today by the closeness of the Celtic and Italic languages. Why were the Romans so successful in spreading their

[14] Giurescu 1946: 20 "Buerebista, who lived in the first century B.C., united all the Getae tribes. His dominion stretched in the west to Bohemia and on the east up to the Balkan Mountains and further east up to the Bug. After his death the empire split into five parts". "To the north of the Danube was a huge forest. Teleorman, a region of southern Romania, means *crazy forest* in the Cumana language, the name of the Dâmboviţa River comes from *hill* in Slavic, and *codrul Vlăsiei* means the Vlăsia/Vlach forest". More about Dacians, Getae, Thracians, Illyrians, p. 39–50 (my translation MR).

[15] Weigand 1895. Weigand translated *Armânii* with the German word „*Aromunen*". If he would have translated "Aromânii" the German word would be „Arumänen"; "Român" in German is „Rumänen.

[16] According to this theory, the members of the Oriental/East-European Romance language family are: *Armâna / Aromunen/ Macedo-Armâna* (in the south of Balkans), *Meglena* (in Gevgelia territory at the Greece border with FYROM Macedonia), the *Istriot language* (Istria Peninsula and Croatia) and *Rumanien* (the historic variant of the Dacorumanian from the historic Dacia). Its counterpart is the Occidental Romance language family in Western Europe with languages such as Italian, Spanish, French, Portuguese etc.

[17] The Proto-Indo-European (PIE) language is the reconstructed common ancestor of the Indo-European languages, the root language from which they evolved.

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culture and language across the Gaul? The Italo-Celtic is a generally accepted pre-stage of the Celtic and Italic languages, a common language from which both derived. Wouldn't be possible to accept, according to this model, an Italo-Oriental Romance language family pre-stage of the Dacian, Armân, Istrian, Meglen and Italic? Historians and linguists (Mallory 2006; Bomhard 1996; Campbell 2008; Hamp 1990) stress that overpopulation, climate change, and a shortage of resources forced groups of people living somewhere north of the Black and Caspian Seas to move around 4000 B.C. Successive migrations to the West brought new people to Europe; others went south to Anatolia; another group went east to Iran and India. One compact group was that of the ancestors of Italic-Celtic-Illyrian, another one of the Tocharian and Anatolian people, while yet another group split into Germanic-Balto-Slavs and Indo-Iranian-Greek-Armenians.

My theory is that the Proto-Italic-Celtic-Illyrian group contained another grouping very close to these future branches, yet already on its own, living independently of other groups. I presume that the language of this "in-between" (an Italo-Oriental Romance language family) group was closer to the Proto-Celtic, the Proto-Italic, and the Proto-Illyrian. Some consider that the oral transmission of knowledge made this in-between group closer to Proto-Celts, while others prefer the Proto-Italic. The in-between group moved around 4000 B.C., together with Celts and Italic tribes, to the north of Europe, where they inhabited different regions. The flooding that took place in northern Europe in the second millennium B.C. pushed all these groups back to southern, southwestern, central, and eastern Europe.

The population "in between" settled in the Carpathian basin and, north of it, in the lands of the Oder and on the Vistula and Dniester plains, that is, everywhere between the Baltic Sea and the Carpathian Mountains, and further south of the Danube (or Istros) all the way down to the Adriatic Sea and its Dalmatian coast. The ones without a "name" called their territory north of the Danube *Dacia* and themselves *Daci*, which in their language seemed to mean *country* and *countrymen*[18]. It is considered that around the beginning of the first millennium B.C. a new migration of tribes from the Far East pushed hard westward those that had gone east around 4000 B.C. Within this wave of migration, archaeologists and

[18] Lozovan 1968: 209 "Following W. Tomaschek and N. Iorga, I was, until recently, inclined to interpret Dacus solely as «inhabitant of the -daua», which led me to classify the term in the historical category of the opposites «town-countryside». Mircea Eliade has set the research on a new trail. The author starts from a gloss by Hesychius, which he compares to an account by Strabo, and believes that he can interpret Dacian = wolf as a «mutilated relic» of a Mdnnerbund ritual. This allows him to place the problem in a Dumezilian perspective and to present us with a gently varied tableau of lycanthropy among the Indo-European peoples. […]. Now, the etymologies. J. Pokorny distinguishes two roots: (1) *dhau- «wiirgen, drucken, pressen», which he refers to the gloss by Hesychius, proposing «davon der Volksname Aaot, Dd-ci»; (2) *dhe- «setzen, stelle, legen», which takes us back to the Thracian -daua «Siedlung». V. Georgiev adopts the etymology of Aai(K)OL <, Indo-European *dhawo-s («wolf»). Finally, following J. Pokorny, I. I. Russu separates the two roots; however, while he keeps daos («wolf»), he links, as does W. Tomaschek, the with *dhe- and therefore with -daua. […] It may be that in Dacus are included both daos and -daua and that the confusion may have taken place in ancient times. It is also possible that the Greeks were unable to differentiate between the two meanings of daos. This mixed explanation may have the advantage of reconciling Eliade's «initiatory» point of view and the «urbanistic» one in which I placed myself".

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historians have identified the Getae, the Thracians, the Scythians, the Sarmatians, and many others.

According to Bomhard, the Proto-Indo-Europeans reached the Balkans about 6,000 B.C. A Neolithic population had spread into the Balkans, and further migrations to the west and east took place around 5500 BC. This is consistent with the theory of the Nostratic[19] (Wilford 1987) origin of the Proto-Indo-European language PIE (Bomhard 2015: 279; 283)[20]. The Nostratic theory is supported by the archaeological findings of Colin Renfrew (Renfrew 1994; 2000; 2012) according to which the Neolithic type of farming was prevalent in Europe due to the migration of a Neolithic population into the Balkans during this period. In a recent book, David Reich confirms that today's Europeans DNA contain genetic legacies from the ancestral group of European hunters, over whom the migration of agricultural practitioners from the Middle East had happened almost 9,000 years ago, which is in line with the theory issued by archaeologist Colin Renfrew 30 years ago. Also, his analyses of human DNA confirm that the second migration that took place over 5000 years ago came from the eastern steppes of pastoralists who spoke an Indo-European language. This second wave of populations came from a region that stretched between the northern Black Sea and the Caspian Sea and belonged to the Yamna culture[21].The Indo-Europeans were widespread from the Balkan to the Danube-Carpathian-Pontic region, where they created the Cucuteni culture (from approximately 5500 B.C. to 2750 B.C., the Cucuteni-Trypillian culture extended from the Carpathian Mountains to the Dnieper and Dniester regions), as well as other cultures in the region. The Cucutenians and others who had created those cultures were called the Proto-Illyrian-Thracian-Dacian or perhaps more precisely Proto-Celtic-Illyrian-Thracian-Dacian. The Italics were included, but not as a separate

[19] Nostratic: languages issuing from a common language spoken about 15,000 years ago and giving rise to the languages in families like Indo-European. "…a remote ancestral language that modern man has never heard or seen. They call it Nostratic, from the Latin noster, for «our». Nostratic was spoken in the Middle East sometime between 20,000 and 12,000 years ago, the researchers say, and from it evolved all the European languages as well as many African and Asian ones" (http://www.nytimes.com/1987/11/24/science/linguists-dig-deeper-into-origins-of-language.html?pagewanted=all).

[20] "The Nostratic language had its beginning in or near the Fertile Crescent just south of the Caucasus, with a slightly later northern extension into Southern Russia in intimate association with woods and fresh water in lakes and rivers. From these positions, it had ready access to the lower Danube and the Balkans (Indo-European), to the Caucasus (Kartvelian), south of the Caucasus into Mesopotamia, Palestine, Egypt, and the rest of North Africa (Sumerian and Afroasiatic), eastward into Central Siberia (Elamo-Dravidian), and northward and thence eastward along the Circumpolar fringe (Uralic-Yukaghir, Altaic, Chukchi-Kamchatkan, Gilyak, and Eskimo-Aleut). "I further suggest that it was the migration of these ancient non-Nostratic-speaking agriculturalists into the Balkans that gave rise to the civilization of «Old Europe» (on Old Europe, see Paliga 1989; Gimbutas 1994). Thus, we can plot two distinct migrations into Europe: the earliest, which crossed from Anatolia into the Balkans and then spread northward into Europe, began about 10,000 years ago. I am proposing that this migration was by non-Nostratic-speaking agriculturalists. The second, which came from the Russian steppes and spread westward into Europe, began about 6,000 years ago. This migration was by Indo-European-speaking horsemen. Because of this migration, Indo-European languages gradually replaced all of the earlier languages of Europe except for Basque".

[21] Reich 2018.

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group. According to this theory, other Indo-European groups (the Indo-Aryan, the Tocharian, the Proto-Slavic, and the Proto-Germanic) had migrated from this region at different historical periods, generally eastward or northward, while the Celts migrated westward from this region after the collapse of the Cucuteni culture (Renfrew 1994; 2000; 2012).

During this historic period, i.e., the first millennium B.C., the Illyrians inhabited the region of the former Yugoslavia; the Thracians lived in the Balkans (Bulgaria today, more or less), and the Dacians and the Getae lived north of the Danube, from Pannonia up to the Urals, called Dacians in the west and Getae in the east. The Pannonians were considered Illyrians (by the Romans) and they were part of Burebista's empire. They all spoke the same language, perhaps with slight dialectal differences[22]. The Italics migrated from different areas inhabited by Thracians, Illyrians or Celts (Vinereanu 2008).

The "ancients" living in this vast place were praised by historians of antiquity for their wisdom and courage under many names such as Dacians, Getae, Sarmatians, Arimaspi, Rami, Scythians, Thracians. They were well-known healers and musicians. Orpheus and his lyre came from this people. Herodotus (Herodotus 1945) calling them "Getae" regarded them as "the noblest as well as the most just of all the Thracian tribes". Dacia, the kingdom of King Burebista (82–44 B.C.),[23] extended from the Carpathian Mountains and the Black Sea to the Adriatic and from the Balkan Mountains to Bohemia[24]. Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa (who made a survey of the Roman Empire in the first century B.C., in Augustus's time), as well as cartographers such as Claudius Ptolemy during Emperor Marcus Aurelius's time (the second century A.D.), drew Dacia's borders toward the Sarmatian steppe, the Vistula River, Bohemia, the Baltic Sea, the Alps, the Adriatic on the Dalmatian coast, the Aegean Sea, and *Pontus Euxinus* (the Black Sea). Jordanes, writing about Goths, wrongly attributed to them many events that belonged to the Dacians. However, Jordanes wrote about two Dacias, one in the Alps and another one in the Carpathian Mountains[25].

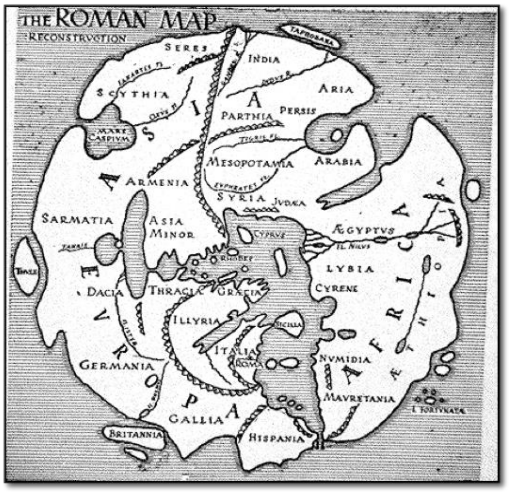
[22] Paterculus 1924: 279 (paragraph 110) "Now all the Pannonians possessed not only a knowledge of Roman discipline but also of the Roman tongue, many also had some measure of literary culture, and the exercise of the intellect was not uncommon among them".

[23] Pârvan 1937: 157. "After the conquest of Pannonia, of Taurisk lands and of the Scordisci and Triballi, in a few days Burebista's riders could reach not only the Illyrians on the Adriatic or the Aegean Macedo-Greek, but the very land of Italy" (my translation MR).

[24] Parvan 1926: 462. "This explains why Dacia remains throughout the second iron age a country linked to the life of Central Europe, being Western-oriented, and the triumphant Hellenism which changes the whole East and South stops helplessly at the Danube, leaving at the discretion of Celtism the enormous region of the Middle Danube, Elbe Upper and Lower Danube, centered in the mountainous Transylvanian Plateau" (my translation MR).

[25] Jordanes 1915: 51

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Reconstruction of the Orbis Terrarum by Erwin Raisz (Encyclopedia Americana: 1954)

To recapitulate: conquering the Dacian kingdom in 106 A.D., the Romans did not impose a language, they refined it. Later on, the migrants coming from the Far East between the second and eighth centuries A.D. called those speaking the "ancient" language Wallachians, from *Walah*, *Walh*. This name has the same origin as Wales, *Walcheren*, *Valonia*, *Welsh*, *Walsch*, *Walchen*, meaning talking a language similar or close to Latin. *Wallah* took different forms such as *vlach*, *vlahos*, *vlas*, *voloh*, *wloh*, *olah*, *valacchi*, *velaci*, *valaques*, *valacos*. The ancient Germans used to call the neighboring Celtic peoples by the name of *Walha*[26].

Over their long existence, the native population of this vast territory – with their wild and free nature, refusing to be ruled by or to obey others – developed strategies to preserve freedom. One of them was escaping from time. They knew how to get out of time, as a philosopher put it[27]. Some of them had "retreated from time" for one thousand years north of the Danube, while those south of the Danube, hiding high in the mountains, had continuously waited for dangers to go away. The

[26] Another explanation of the origin of the Vlach name is that *Volcae* was the first Celtic tribe with which the Germans came into contact upon their descent from Scandinavia, after which they called Volcae all Celts, but also the Italics. It is well known that in the times of Burebista and afterwards, the Geto-Dacians were bordered to the west by the Germans, who stemmed from the Scandinavian peninsula, settling east of the Rhine. See Vinereanu 2008, "Argument" p. 16 and the entry for **valah**, p. 878 (my translation MR).

[27] Blaga 1969: 119. "Germanic, Huns, Slavic, Bulgarian, Avars, Pechenegs, Cumans, Hungarian tribes all came, stayed, left, or remained. Many of those who stayed were absorbed by the anonymous sponge of a native population who would not in any way allow itself to be dragged into 'history'. This was the most striking feature of the native population: indeed, for almost a thousand years, proto-Rumanians and Rumanians manifested a kind of instinctive self-defense attitude that can be called a boycott of history". ("Semnţii germanice, hunice, slave, bulgare, avare, pecenege, cumane, ungare, toate au venit, au stat, s-au dus sau au rămas. Mulţi dintre cei rămaşi s-a întâmplat să fie absorbiţi de buretele anonim al unei populaţii autohtone, care nu voia în nici un fel să se lase târâtă în 'istorie'. Aceasta era trăsătura cea mai izbitoare a populaţiei autohtone, în adevăr timp de o mie de ani aproape, *pre-românii şi românii manifestă un fel de atitudine instinctivă de autoapărare care se poate numi boicot al istoriei*") (my translation MR).

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Romans' withdrawal from the path of the barbarians in 270 A.D. had been a huge blow for the Wallachians from north and the Vlachs from south of the Danube. Facing wave after wave of migrants, they realized they could not stop the flood of invasions. In order to survive, some of them established the strong nucleus of a state, while others retreated up into the mountains, hoping that the barbarians would one day leave the region. They moved to the heights of the Pindus, the Haemus Mountains and the Dinaric Alps, where they built their unreachable world. Following their retreat, the migrants took over the plains south of the Danube, while north of the Danube strong pre-state formations opposed migrant settlement.

The communication between these groups was probably uninterrupted for some time through the cycles of transhumance, the phenomena of moving the livestock to seasonal pastures. In the South of the Danube, the "ancients," waiting for the danger to go away, witnessed wave upon wave of settlers taking over the plains and even founding states[28]. As time passed by, the Valahs from the North of the Danube, the Vlachs from the Pindus, the Vlasi from the Dinaric, those from the Moravian Mountains, and those in the Dalmatian range lost touch with one another. The refugees on secure heights had chosen to remain unchanged, but their languages developed differently. The Armân language, the Istrian Vlach and so on became romance languages in their own right, sisters of the Rumanian language, and not dialects of the Daco-Rumanian language or the *Common Rumanian* as written in Rumanian linguistic books.

Where did the names *rumân/armân/rumëri* come from? To resume and conclude: coming down in history, the ancients had called themselves *rumâni* to the north of the Danube, *armâni* and *rumëri* to the south. Strangely enough, in the fifteenth century a Greek historian Laonikos Chalcocondylae Atheniensis (1430–1470), invariably talked about *Dacians* – not about Valahs, Vlahs, Rumuni/Rumâni – in his ten-volume history of the collapse of the Byzantine Empire and the newly established Ottoman Empire (work translated into Latin as *Decem Libri Historiarum*). He called Vlad Drăculea (Ţepes), known as Vlad the Impaler, the Prince of Wallachia (1431–1476/77), the "King of the Dacians"[29].

Legends, still current in Rumanian folklore (Lovinescu 1996: 39) mention a mysterious Ler-Emperor, the greatest emperor in the world: only God was above him. He lived on the top of a great mountain. Connected to him lived a mysterious population called *Rohmanii*, *Rucmanii*, *Rahmanii* – saints of a sort, living at the end of the earth, close to Heaven, in a land where the sun never sets. Sometimes *Rohmanii* lived underground and their King was Ler-Emperor. (*Le'r* means "ours" in Gaelic; *Ler Doamne* means "our King" in Rumanian). Were *Rohmans* for real*?*

[28] Despite this, the Vlachs from south of the Danube were mentioned in history. See Comnena 1928 and Tudela 1907.

[29] Chalcocondylas 1843: 500 "Accedens B(V)ladus, Draculis filius, principatum Daciae ocraptfit" …"V(B)lad, the son of Dracula, took over the kingdom of Dacia…"; Chalcocondylas 1847: 337 "B(V)ladus Daciae princeps nunc moraretur". "V(B)lad, the Prince of Dacia now staying…" …"hosto Dracule Dacorum principe". Dracula, the exiled prince of Dacians (https://archive.org/stream/corpusscriptoru08unkngoog/corpusscriptoru08unkngoog_djvu.txt).

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Did Rohmans truly existed? Homer[30] talked about a population north of the Danube called Arim(o)i. Dionysios Periegetes called them Oresmoi (people living in the mountains), and claimed they were related to the Titan race[31].

Diocletian called *Romania* all territories under the Roman rule inhabited by Gets and Thracians. Vlach clans from the Balkans called themselves *armâni.* The Turks called them not only *walachar/ ualahar* (from *walach*), but also *români.* The Meglen population (in northern Greece and southern Macedonia) nowadays call themselves *vlaşi* (pronounced "vlashi") but also *Rămâni.* The Istrians (Croatia, Istria in the Dalmatian peninsula) call themselves *Vlaşi*, *Rumâni*, and *Rumâri.* A reference to the name *Romanian* had been seen in the *Nibelungenlied* (originating in the fifth through ninth centuries), where a Duke Ramunc/Ramung of Wallachia appears[32]. It is argued (Diaconovich1904: vol.3, p. 400) that *Ramung* could represent a symbolic figure bearing the name of the ancient population.

As I said at the beginning of these pages, in the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire territories, people called themselves and were called *Romaioi*, which in Greek means Romans. Greeks were themselves *Rōmaíōn/ Romaioi* as citizens of the Eastern Roman Empire. Those ancient or native populations living in the Byzantine Empire also kept the term Vlach to preserve their identity as distinct from the migrant populations from outside the empire. They were *Vlachs* for speaking a language close to the Latin for the barbarian ears, and also *Romaioi*, citizens of the Eastern Roman Empire. Could it be that when fleeing to the north of the Danube, outside the Eastern Roman Empire, to escape the barbarians' atrocities, they were called "those coming from the Eastern Roman Empire", *Romaioi/Romaïkís*, in time becoming *romuni/rumun/rumân*?

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[30] Homer 1898: 780 "So marched they [the Achaeans] then as though all the land were swept with fire; and the earth groaned beneath them, as beneath Zeus that hurls the thunderbolt in his wrath, when he scourges the land about Typhoeus in the country of the Arimi (Arimoi), where men say is the couch of Typhoeus".

[31] Periegetes 1828: lines 130–35; 300–5, Latin (https://archive.org/details/dionysiusperiege00dion).

[32] Nibelungenlied 1934: 102 "Duke Ramung of Wallachia spurred up to her with seven hundred men. They sped like birds on the wing" (http://www.yorku.ca/inpar/nibelung_armour.pdf).

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Abstract

The article – a preamble to a historical novel written in English – explains to the English-speaking audiences the history of the Armân population from the south of the Danube, called Vlach, and its relationship with the Valah population from the north of the Danube. It is as well discussed the origin of the Armân language and of other languages from the Oriental Romance Language family. In today's world, when the original population of the Balkans, from the south of the Danube, Dalmatia, Macedonia (FYROM), etc. called Vlach does not exist on any geographical maps of Europe, this conversation is a necessary restitution act.

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