ROMANIAN CULTURAL DOMINANCE IN HABSBURG BUKOVINA

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Abstract:
Arbitrarily incorporated into the Empire, Bukovina was forced to exist in a foreign cultural environment and the people from Bukovina had to fight in order to preserve everything they had acquired and was being systematically damaged at that moment: language, customs, traditions, folklore, laws and common laws. Deliberately mixed up with Germans and Ruthenians – who were given rights the natives did not even dream of enjoying, in order to be more easily integrated – the natives had to bear their identity being erased and thus become „universal citizens of the Empire".

Key words:
Bukovina, Austro-Hungarian Empire, culture, resistance.

Contrary to all the recorded advances and material achievements of this world, only those pertaining to spirituality remain perennial. All others are temporary. They are common things and belong to society; they are, therefore, rules created by the community itself, made according to the cultural level of society at a given moment. It is culture that unites the community and gives its specific identity. When a nation has the misfortune of being isolated from its native territory and language, when it is arbitrarily integrated into another state organization, different to the one it has participated in building, according to some „objective" laws – then that society regresses. This is the case of Upper Moldavia, essentially changed after Bukovina was artificially incorporated into the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Placed into another social background, subjected to different rules from those of its natural evolution, the new artificially mixed society had to fight, first of all, for its social liberties, resorting, obviously, to their traditional and cultural liberties.

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„This is explained by the fact that, against the background of the unfavourable historical conditions of the second half of the nineteenth century, the objectives of the national movement of the Romanian people in Bukovina could not be openly presented in all their complexity, but rather be covertly continued under a cultural disguise so as to avoid attracting the hostility of the imperial authorities. The times imposed solutions of cultural solidarity first, before issuing political answers. But culture always preceded politics, suggesting solutions to it"[40].

The men of culture from Bukovina had to join their efforts in order to regain their own rights, lost once the organization in the new state took effect. As a whole, the society of Bukovina was of a rural type, which preserved its traditions, customs and myths.

„The Romanian language generally meets all the conditions for becoming a cultural language in time, equal to Italian provided skilled people work with it"[41].

Due to the special case of its territory after the incorporation into the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Bukovina cultural phenomenon had particular features in terms of literature, theatre, music, fine arts and media. Through its culture, Bukovina made efforts to attain the aims of its struggle – to detach itself from Galicia and then achieve the union with Romania.

On account of the new rules of property registration, issued by the new rulers, the nobility fled across the border, together with the free peasants, who felt that a good situation under a foreign domination is not to be expected. In this way, another part of the category of cultured and educated people was lost. Those remaining were unaware of what was happening, being used to the fact that a territory is conquered or lost only by struggle. So, the majority of the people were absolutely dumbfounded and confused at that time.

The policy of inveiglement was that of announcing a policy of continuity, reassuring the people that the old laws of the country will never be changed, which made them hope for the better. Obviously, that did not happen. Immediately after the first years of domination, the real intentions

[40] Petru Russşindilar, 1995, *Hurmuzăcheştii în viaţa culturală şi politică a Bucovinei*, Academia Română, Centrul de Istorie şi Civilizaţie Europeană, Editura Glasul Bucovinei: Iaşi, p. 150.

[41] Ion Nistor, 1991, *Istoria Bucovinei*, Ediţie şi studiu bio-bibliografic de Stelian Neagoe, Editura Humanitas: Bucureşti, p. 80.

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of the Austro-Hungarian Empire started to be seen even by the most benighted or blinkered ones. The first protests were those of the nobles, namely of the most enlightened of the few; otherwise,

„…the whole administrative body was imported from the centre. The officials were almost exclusively Germans. The nature of the administration was also German and its purpose was to Germanize"[42].

It would be improper to speak about a class of intellectuals, because the only ones who could read were the priests in the villages. Only the monks in the traditional monasteries and in the clerical hermitages could be included in this category. But they were very few compared to the majority, too isolated to say what they thought, and, not long after the conquest, they themselves were robbed of their territory and thus forced to flee Bukovina and hide in Moldavia.

Bukovina – says Ion Budai–Deleanu:

„*seems to have the fate of seeing itself under the leadership of everybody who is incapable, immoral and selfish in the whole monarchy*",

while the officials, having got rich at the expense of the native population

„had continuously mocked this poor nation, the reason of their temporary happiness, calling them barbarian, half-people etc."[43]

Magistrates, in turn, are described by the author to be

„worthless persons, vagabond good-for-nothings, barbers, journeymen and even lackeys, who were sent to and appointed in Bukovina as leaders, assessors, chancellors"[44].

The church fared no better. Having such a traitorous leader as the bishop Dosoftei Herăscu, the Metropolitan episcopacy was forced to move from Rădăuţi, where it belonged, to Czernowitz, thus becoming detached from the Church of Iaşi and submitted to the Serb Carlova Church. Herăscu's successor, Daniil Vlahovici, was meant to Slavicize the clergy, in order to divest it of its entire identity.

„The petty politics weakened the foundation of our Orthodox Church, intimidated the weak characters and bent the strongest ones under

[42] Constantin Loghin, 1926, *Istoria literaturii române din Bucovina (1775–1918) (în legătură cu evoluţia culturală şi politică), cu 32 de clişee*, Tipografia Mitropolit Silvestru: Cernăuţi, p. 2.
[43] *Ibidem.*
[44] *Ibidem*.

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the charms of titles and promotions, divided the brothers of the same nation, shattered the strength of our faith in our past, covered our inheritance under the veil of contempt and darkened our confidence in the bright future of our nation"[45].

The education in schools shared the fate of the other social and cultural institutions. The humiliation of children and teachers is evident in the testimony of a contemporary:

„… under such circumstances, within more than a half a century, the Romanian from Bukovina had no possibility of learning in his native language in the public schools in his country; he acquired all culture only in foreign languages, on account of the frequently repeated observation that the Romanian language was a rustic one, unsuited for the teaching of science and education! Thus, it was not surprising that almost all Romanians educated in this way became separated from those without education and felt ashamed to spend time with them and to talk to them in their Romanian language. Many of them hesitated to confess that they were Romanians. In their own families, the German, Polish and even Russian languages were preferred and spoken instead of Romanian"[46].

However, it is difficult to ignore the language of a nation, even in such conditions:

„The Romanian language and culture, excluded from the curriculum of Bukovina public schools, found their place elsewhere, where they were scrupulously cultivated. Following the Moldavian custom, itinerant teachers and monks scoured the villages and gathered together children of noblemen, yeomanry or perhaps wealthier peasants in spacious rooms, introducing them to the mysteries of writing and reading, following some old book, to the holiness of religious books and to the world of figures"[47].

One of the Hurmuzachi brothers speaks on behalf of this society opening towards the national culture about the importance of the national language:

„A nation never rose to a significant cultural level by trying to use a foreign language instead of its native language. [...] *The right to preserve and cultivate one's nationality, which has its corollary in the native*

[45] *Op. cit.*, p. 7.
[46] I. G. Sbiera, *Familia Sbiera*, p. 146.
[47] Constantin Loghin, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

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language, is a holy law of the nature, the triumphant principle of modern civilization"[48].

The same Gh. Hurmuzachi emphatically supported the importance of folk culture:

„Many of these productions of the poetic spirit of the Romanian people can match the literature of the most developed nations"[49].

A significant role in the advancement of Bukovina's culture was played, without doubt, by the new partition of 1775, which helped relatives and old friends to remain close together. Some of them succeeded not only in keeping the national conscience awake, but also in protecting the language against oblivion. Of course, obstacles were everywhere because, soon after annexation, Austria resorted, as a means of precaution, to a separation barrier at the border (called *cordon sanitaire*) – rather a kind of incipient Berlin Wall – meant to separate the Moldavians from their brothers who had fled Bukovina to the other side, to free Moldavia. However, for the main part, the area along the border was uninhabited and hard to guard, being protected by mountains familiar to the locals and unknown to the border guards, which explains why, for years, skilled guides helped all interested persons across the border in both directions.

After the Eterists' revolt, many well-off people from Moldavia took refuge in Bukovina, striking long-lasting friendships there, as it was to happen later with the Moldavian revolutionaries of 1848. The defining role belonged to the courts of the high nobility, which hosted the refugees and preserved the Moldavian documents and books. Churches and monasteries were in themselves true heritage libraries, in which manuscripts and books were part of the monastery or church wealth. But where the Austro – Hungarian Empire failed, the Soviet Empire succeeded in the aftermath of 1944, when it started the systematic destruction of these precious archives of Romanian identity.

Therefore, all the cultural contributions of Bukovina were mainly «underprivileged». We can speak about a scientific literature only in the area concerning the elaboration of the rules of the Romanian language, or the investigation of internal and external sources regarding the origin of the

[48] Gheorghe Hurmuzachi, 1886, în: *Foaia Societăţii pentru Literatura şi Cultura Română în Bucovina*, Anul II, nr. 3/1 March, p. 67-68.
[49] *Foaia Societăţii...* anul I, 1865, p. 86.

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Romanians. The main contribution to the latter is owed to the Hurmuzachi brothers, who discovered in the Viennese archives significant documents attesting the Romanian people's continuity throughout history. Our history would have been infinitely poorer without those documents.

We can speak about a literature in Romanian only in relation to the writings coming from the Romanian writers in Moldavia, Transylvania and Walachia, mostly published at the same time with the publications before the Revolution of 1848. But the role of Aron Pumnul and I.G. Sbiera in the realms of philology and history or of Simion Florea-Marian in that of folklore cannot be disregarded. Starting with the first popular calendars, the importance of folklore, of practical learning and later of the dictionaries and grammar books compensated for the lack of literary productions, satisfying the taste of the population and their level of acceptance.

The fruitful cooperation between Moldavia and Transylvania had begun before the revolution of 1848. The future exchange of ideas and literary works would mark a qualitative step forward in literature, which progressed from religious to moralizing and didactic forms, while the alphabet evolved by undergoing a so-called «simplification», represented by the sole fact that «*half of the letters were Latin*»[50]. But the factor that led to the development of the quality of the culture in Bukovina was the persecution of the tyrannical regimes of the Moldavian rulers, who were supported by the Russian consuls. Under these circumstances, the difficulties of some people were mitigated by the hospitality of others. The relationships between the families of landowners that had been separated since 1775 were rekindled. The friendships started to work again because the rich young people who went to study in Paris returned to Czernowitz, where the enlightening ideas they imparted were welcomed as benefiting the public good. The hospitality of the Hurmuzachi family at Cernauca, Dulceşti or Czernowitz, where they owned properties, has remained proverbial over time. Generously hosted, the ideas of the Revolution and of the Union were born there. The leading politicians and the most creative people took refuge there, drawing up their political programs or writing their creations, as in the case of Mihail Kogălniceanu, Vasile Alecsandri, Dimitrie Ralet, Anastasie Panu, the prince Gr. Cantacuzino, Alecu Russo,

[50] *Ibidem*, p. 34.

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Al. Ioan Cuza, the Goleşti brothers, Gheorghe Bariţ and Aron Pumnul. An effervescent atmosphere of creativity joined the Romanians in the two divided countries. All these led to one of the most fruitful cultural cooperation and to common political programs. From this point of view, the Hurmuzachi family was right to consider that „*at the base of cultural policy we must place the schooling policy, which, in its turn, has to have a national character*"[51].

Understanding that the moment was auspicious for issuing a propaganda publication, the Hurmuzachi family set up the „*Bukovina*" newspaper, subtitled the „*Romanian Gazette for Politics, Religion and Literature*", and intended to be the mirror of Romanian intellectual life. Iraclie Porumbescu, the father of the composer Ciprian Porumbescu, started his activity there with patriotic poems and fables. „*Some of them contain significant moments from Bukovina's past*"[52]. Alecsandri published much of his work there. Andrei Mureşanu, Dimitrie Bolintineanu, Eliade Rădulescu, Grigore Alexanderescu also contributed to it by their writing, so the newspaper set a special direction for the literary movement in Bukovina and Romanian literature in general.

A coherent program was established for publications such as „*The Paper of the Society for Romanian Literature and Culture in Bukovina*" and „*Dacia literară*" of Iaşi:

„*First of all, our paper will deal with national literature in its various branches, contributing through original and special works to its enrichment*"[53].

Alecsandri himself honestly noted in 1866:

„*Here* [at Czernowitz n.n] *my theatre plays produce a great effect; everyone sing the songs of «Florin and Florica» and especially the poem that I addressed to Bukovina and which is printed in the «Society» has become the national poem here, despite the Germans*"[54].

Negruzzi, Alecu Russo, Miron Pompiliu, Dimitrie Petrino also published there. The paper's rich harvest of literature consisted of works „*published as circulated among the people, without being affected by the*

[51] Petru Russşindilar, *op. cit.*, p. 166.
[52] Ion Nistor, *op. cit.*, p. 169.
[53] Constantin Loghin, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
[54] Ion Nistor, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

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rage of rectifying, as was the trend of that time"[55]. Its merit is that the authors were united by the same cause of furthering the Romanian spirit.

Things worked in the other direction as well. Later on, writers from Bukovina published their works in „*Convorbiri Literare*" of Moldavia, furthering the collaboration between the Romanians in the two regions of the same country. It is worth noting that the teacher Aron Pumnul, coming from Transylvania, assisted young people from Bukovina with their applications for the high schools in Transylvania. That was the case of Vasile Bumbac, Ioan Buliga and Vasile Burlă.

A special role in Bukovina's cultural development is attributable to the setting up of the National Library. On June 1851, at the initiative of a Committee including Doxachi Hurmuzachi, together with Carol Miculi, Alexandru Costin and others, was launched a „*Call of gifts for the Library of Bukovina country*". Their undertaking was supported by their personal financial efforts, since otherwise all applications for setting up such institutions and corporations were refused under various reasons. The Empire cut from the root any initiative that was likely to awaken the consciousness of the nation. Thus, starting with 1850, the great owner Mihai Zotta gave 1.000 florins for setting up the library. In the same spirit of brotherhood, the Romanians living outside Bukovina made their contribution, and we refer to Nicolae Cantacuzino Paşcanu, the prince Mihai Sturdza, Constantin and Scarlat Vârnav. But „*Eudoxiu Hurmuzachi, the son, filled the shelves of the new library with books acquired by him from the publishers of Vienna*"[56]. Catalogues containing all the volumes in the Romanian language were exchanged between this new library and the Central Library in Iaşi. In 1861 the library was taken into the care of the Executive Committee of the Diet, and, starting with 1870, Ioan G. Sbiera, Eminescu's teacher, was appointed director of the library. Unfortunately, the initiative of the monks at Putna or Dragomirna to restart the printing activity was rejected by the Austrian authorities, who knew that Romanian nationalism would surely have acquired an even greater magnitude.

The Celebrations at Putna in 1871, occasioned by the anniversary of four hundred years since the church had been consecrated undoubtedly had

[55] Constantin Loghin, *op. cit.*, p. 88.
[56] Ion Nistor, 1991, *Istoria Bucovinei*, Ediţie şi studiu bio–bibliografic de Stelian Neagoe, Editura Humanitas: Bucureşti, p. 150.

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particular importance for the cultural history of the Romanians, but also struck a blow at the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Governor of Bukovina *„permitted a religious and not a national characteristic of the celebration"*[57]. Yet, this celebration succeeded in reviving the national consciousness of the masses and in awakening the national spirit, against the will of the rulers: both the Austrian and local authorities in Czernowitz. Despite all these, the Congress of All Romanian Students was organized at Eminescu's insistence. Ciprian Porumbescu's performance of his composition named *„Hora detrunchiaţilor"* to the *„whole Dacia"* remained emblematic.

Thus, the music, performed in the same ardent patriotic spirit, further inflamed the Romanian spirit in Austrian Bukovina. Until its occupation by the Austrians, in the Upper Country of Moldavia the tradition of religious choirs was natural; being closely linked to ecclesiastical practice, the choral movement *„was indissolubly linked to the beginnings of Christianity and to the new churches that were built"*[58], very numerous in that part of the country. An important step in the development of religious choral music was made by the Musical School in Putna. The monks of Putna church used to copy musical manuscripts and also composed music. That school *„had become, in only two decades of existence, one of the most important centres of culture in Moldavia and even in Southern-Eastern Europe, with wide resonance in the Southern Balkans and as far as Moscow"*[59].

At the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th, Austrian Bukovina relinquished that tradition for a while, advancing instead in cultivating classical music, introduced by the aristocratic families in imitation of the fashion in Vienna. However, the local fiddlers' music developed in parallel, being performed not only at popular events such as communal merry-making and dances, but also in the great aristocratic houses. It so happened that in 1847 the Romanian fiddler Nicolae Picu, who performed in the house of the Hurmuzachi family, was appreciated by the composer Franz Liszt, who was so enthusiastic about his true talent that he

[57] *Ibidem*, p. 206.
[58] Alis Niculică, 2009, *Din istoria vieţii culturale a Bucovinei: Teatrul şi Muzica (1775–1940)*. Casa editorială „Floare Albastră": Bucureşti, p. 142.
[59] *Ibidem*, p. 143.

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put down some of his popular songs, songs that were later to be adapted in the compositions of the great artist.

Grigore Vindereu, welcomed with great enthusiasm by the Romanians gathered at Putna in August 1871, was Picu's disciple. He perfected the interpretative art of his master, enjoying the unanimous appreciation of the peasants and the great landowners. At the beginning of the 19th, following the model of Frederic Chopin, looking for inspiration in popular creations and reworking them in classical music were becoming a fashion. His student, Carol Miculi, was the first musician from Bukovina who was significantly inspired by Romanian folkloric music, shown by his composing a collection entitled „*Quarante-huit airs nationaux roumaines*", collection that contains adapted shepherds' folk songs.

„Many of the songs collected by Miculi are to be found today in Romanian folklore and some of the dances are still preserved by tradition only in Bukovina"[60].

Great composers from Bukovina followed Miculi's example: Ciprian Porumbescu, Tudor Flondor, Alexandru Voievidca. „*Crai nou*" was the first Romanian composition of this kind. „*If there is any composer I have studied and I'm continuing to study with great care*" – says Ciprian Porumbescu – *„than I dare say this composer is our people itself"*[61].

The representative of „popular" themes in the fine arts was, undoubtedly, the painter Epaminonda Bucevschi. Like other artists of his time, he explored relevant and enlivening popular themes from the present and the historical past, illustrating, for example, the anthem *Deşteaptă-te române,* and the well-known folk ballad *Dochia*. Through his work, *„Epaminonda Bucevschi raised artistic Bukovina to the rank of a «Venice» where art and culture were born and matured, and famous patronages watched for their honour and cause"*[62].

In this way, the painter and his contemporary painting shared the common creative attitude of the others, inspired by social life in its entire, natural reality, in representing the prevalent patriotic theme of that time. In fact, the painter was the continuator of the religious painting tradition started at Putna long before.

[60] Alis Niculică, *op. cit.*, p. 154.
[61] Ilie Luceac, *op. cit.*, p. 94.
[62] Ilie Luceac, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

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The cultural societies from Bukovina had become, in turn, true effective barriers against foreignism, claiming to receive answers in the Romanian language for the petitions officially submitted. The members of those societies were elected from all Romanian provinces and the honorary members of the „*Society for Romanian culture and literature in Bukovina*" were elected from Romania. Guided by the principle that „culture is life itself", the intuition of the leaders was auspicious, because they knew how to fuel political events which did not often have a favourable result, to cherish culture and, through it, Romanian national unity. „*We believe* – writes Gh. Hurmuzachi in the *Paper of Society* –, *that not the sterile political battles, not the fierce fighting of the parties,* [...] *but* [...] *only culture will save us*"[63]. The Department of National History, ardently promoted by the Hurmuzachi brothers and by society at large, was one of the greatest achievements.

„Being a way of protest and resistance against the Austrian policy, the organization of societies was at the same time a good school, where generations of Romanian intellectuals were formed, thus playing an important role for the national and cultural unity of Romanians, culminating with the moment of the Great Union of 1918"[64].

The theatre, in its turn, was a strong source of Romanian spirituality. It was an educational forum available to all, especially as the plays were mostly chosen from the Romanian repertoire and were performed in the Romanian language, fact that aroused an unexpected enthusiasm. Performed in the native language, the plays had a great role in discouraging other theatres (German, Polish, Hebrew, etc), simply because the representations were qualitatively superior to them. Due to the acting companies of Ștefania Tardini, Vlădicescu, Mihai Pascaly and then to the representations of Matei Millo, *„the Moldavian artists were the first messengers of Romanian culture who came to recapture what the Romanian people had lost*"[65]. After such a theatrical show, even a German newspaper had to appreciate the

[63] *Foaia Societăţii pentru Literatura şi Cultura Română în Bucovina,* An III, nr. 7 şi 8/1867, p. 179.
[64] Ilie Luceac, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
[65] Alexandru Hurmuzachi, 1865, *Teatrul naţional*, în: *Foaia Societăţii...*, nr. 1, 1 March, p. 68.

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outstanding art of the performance: „*We owe both art and ourselves to bring our homage to this brilliant artist*"[66].

With regard to all these actions, which paved the way for the union of Romanians from everywhere, Eminescu himself concluded:

„*If* [...] *«Lepturariul» exaggerated in eulogizing some people no longer living nowadays, at least many of them were the persevering pioneers of the nationality and of the Romanian spirit – pawns, gregarious soldiers, whose big hearts were maybe worth more than their minds, it is true! – who, if they were no geniuses, were at least people possessed of a vast erudition*"[67].

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[66] *Bukowina*, 13 May 1864.

[67] Mihai Eminescu, 1980, *Opere IX. Publicistică,* Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România: Bucureşti, p. 82.

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Rezumat:

Dominarea culturii româneşti în Bucovina habsburgică

Încorporată arbitrar în imperiul habsburgic, Bucovina a fost silită să fiinţeze într-un mediu cultural străin, iar locuitorii ei s-au văzut nevoiţi să lupte pentru a-şi păstra valorile care acum erau distruse sistematic: limba, obiceiurile, tradiţiile, folclorul, legile. În mod deliberat amestecaţi cu germanii şi rutenii – care se bucurau de drepturi la care localnicii nici nu puteau visa, pentru a fi mai uşor integraţi – oamenii locului au suferit să vadă cum identitatea lor era ştearsă cu scopul de a face din ei „cetăţeni universali ai Imperiului".

Cuvinte cheie:

Bucovina, Imperiul austro-ungar, cultură, rezistenţă.

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