The Department of Ethnology and a Half-Century Folklore Archive

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The Department of Ethnology can easily be defined through the activity undertaken by Professor Ion H. Ciubotaru, who came to the "A. Philippide" Institute of Romanian Philology in 1968 with the clear intention to start a systematic investigation of traditional culture from the north-eastern part of Romania. Although he was also involved in writing articles for *The Dictionary of Romanian Literature from its Origins to 1900*, Ciubotaru started documenting and preparing an essential instrument for the scientific research: a questionnaire.

This fieldwork tool was designed to collect representative data from the eight Moldavian counties and to start a folklore archive. The history of such institutions dates back to the ancient times, when Chinese and Babylonians preserved administrative data on various materials.

> The word *archive* itself derives ultimately from the Greek word *archeion* and denoted a building or place occupied by a city's magistracies (*archai*); later it and its plural *archeia* came to apply not only to particular buildings but also to the objects, including documents housed within those buildings (Sickinger 1999: 6). [Cuvântul *arhivă* are ca etimologie cuvântul grecesc *archeion* şi însemna o clădire sau un spaţiu ocupat de magistraţii (*archai*) unui oraş; mai târziu, acest cuvânt şi pluralul lui, *archeia*, a ajuns să se refere nu doar la anumite clădiri, dar şi la obiectele, inclusiv documentele găzduite în acele clădiri]

As for the first folklore archive, it was founded in Finland in 1834 at the University from Helsinki, and *Kalevala* represented the first objective of the field collecting project. In Romania the first two folklore archives were created by George Breazul[1] and Constantin Brăiloiu[2] in 1927 and 1928. Two years later, the Romanian Academy grants the request for a folklore archive and Ion Muşlea becomes its director.

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1 "The Phonograms Archive of The Ministery of Cults and Arts".

2 "The Folklore Archive of the Romanian Composers' Society".

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But Moldova remained uncharted even in 1968, although the Institute of Romanian Philology was founded in 1926 with the declared purpose of studying "all spiritual products of the Romanian people from everywhere, and most of all the language, the moral and material civilization"[3]. The founding document proves a methodological sagacity, since it recommends fieldwork in all Romanian areas, comparisons with other Latin languages and establishing an archive for the collected data.

The year 1970 made this scientific project possible. The Folklore Archive of Moldova and Bucovina was founded in Iaşi by Ion H. Ciubotaru. In order to properly register information, the professor spent two years documenting and wrote a questionnaire of 1175 inquiries. Its nine chapters focus on all traditional aspects of life: superstitions, folk medicine, the rites of passage, holidays and magic beliefs, literary folklore, child lore, traditional clothing, folk architecture and occupations. Simeon Florea Marian's books were part of the bibliographical support for the investigations and they also suggested what exactly should be asked while in villages. Arnold van Gennep's ritual triad structured the gradation of questions. Separation rites were the first to be brought to the informant's mind, then the *limen*, and the talk would naturally end up mentioning ceremonial ways of reintegration to the community.

However, the publication of the questionnaire was not as easy as expected because of the political context. Ion H. Ciubotaru sought help from the great scholar Petru Caraman[4], who was his mentor. After his intervention, the president of the Romanian Academy, Iaşi Subsidiary, Cristofor Simionescu, approved the print[5]. 2000 copies of the questionnaire were mailed to villages and help was asked from priests, teachers and librarians in order to have all the questions answered as accurately as possible. Almost 700 responses came back in the following year, so Ion H. Ciubotaru was able to create a relevant image of the traditional culture from the North-Eastern part of Romania. Direct fieldwork followed in a network of 800 villages, using the same *General Folkloric and Ethnographic Questionnaire* as the main tool of investigation. The Folklore Archive of Moldova and Bucovina gathers now more than 300,000 documents consisting in audio, video and written fieldwork information.

[3] Art. 2. Scopul Institutului este studierea tuturor produselor sufleteşti ale poporului românesc de pretutindeni, în primul rând limba, civilizaţia morală şi cea materială [The scope of the Institute is to study all the spiritual products of the Romanian people from everywhere, mainly the language, the moral and material civilization]. (The National, Iaşi, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University from Iaşi Fund, The Faculty of Letters, dos. 1/1934, f. 46–48).

[4] Petru Caraman was preoccupied by creating a folklore research institution long before he met Ion H. Ciubotaru. In 1945 he was director of the Ethnography and Folklore Section from The Institute of Balkan Research and Studies, while in 1946 a letter conversation with Romulus Vuia indicated the intention to found a scientific club for ethnographic and folkloric studies.

[5] Ion H. Ciubotaru could not sign the questionnaire, and only the courageous initiative of a pressman let this piece of information appear, but only as a footnote on page 8.

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Publications

The data base became the third largest folklore archive from Romania and the process of analyzing information began with a series entitled "The Folklore Archive Notebooks". The volumes were published with great difficulty again, both because of the financial shortcomings and political limitations (for example, Ion H. Ciubotaru's book on funeral rites was not allowed to use the word *death* in the title). Nevertheless, ten books appeared from 1979 to 1990. "They had extremely favourable chronicles" while their rhythmic appearance was the effect of Ciubotaru's assiduity, as his colleague Lucia Cireş recalls (2005: 5).

The researchers involved in creating the Folklore Archive of Moldova and Bucovina were Lucia Berdan, Silvia Ionescu (who married professor Ciubotaru and is now known as such) and Lucia Cireş. The four of them often collected fieldwork data in harsh conditions: heavy equipment often had to be carried through mud and over the hills, accommodation was a hazard, and means of communication were severely limited.

Besides from the founder and the department members, two ethnomusicologists authored one and co-signed several volumes from "The Folklore Archive Notebooks" series: Florin Bucescu and Viorel Bârleanu. Their work made the books unique at that time, since readers had access not only to folk texts and scientific interpretations, but also to musical transcriptions.

The themes investigated throughout the series range from literary genres (disenchantments, ballads, carols, ritual shouts), traditional dancing songs, to ceremonial moments (death as a rite of passage) and ornamentations on weavings. The books received highly positive chronicles from renowned ethnologists: "a remarkable accomplishment of contemporary folkloristics" (Mihai Coman), "a modern and impressive scientific publication" (Ion Cuceu), "a resource of great significance" (Adrian Fochi), that offers specialists "documents of great value interpreted, with rare professionalism" (Nicolae Bot).

The first volume discusses a music phenomenon that allows a melodic line to adapt easily to various species. "The olden song" can be heard in Northern Moldavia as a support melody for lullabies, sad songs (*doina*), funeral lamentations, and even dances. The two ethnomusicologists added 129 phonograms to 292 literary texts and thus created a complete image of the traditional context. Musical scores are included as annexes in other books of the series, too: Silvia Ciubotaru's *Shouts from Moldavia* (1984), Lucia Cireş's *Carols from Moldavia* (1984), Lucia Berdan's *Ballads from Moldavia* (1986), Ion H. Ciubotaru's *The Folklore of Rituals Associated with Family Life in Moldavia (The Great Passage)* (1986) and *The Şomuz River Valley* monography.

Lucia Cireş and Lucia Berdan wrote together a book on *Disenchantments from Moldavia* (1982). The volume "offers a relevant image on the richness and large variety of this folkloric category in the researched area" (Cuceu 1983:

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344–345), and most of all lets the reader enter into a secretive manifestation of traditional knowledge. The disenchantment texts are transmitted orally, usually among family members and the healing skill has to be "stolen" (watched and learned without being taught as a process). Therefore, the anthology discloses well-kept ritual secrets, but not in a random manner, it analyzes them in a scientific context.

Silvia Ciubotaru reinvestigated this theme more than two decades later and published full texts of the disenchantments. *The Medical Folklore from Moldavia. Typology and texts corpus* (2005, second edition in 2009) is structured in three sections: a vast study on traditional healing, a typology of diseases as known by villagers and an anthology of disenchantment texts. The introductory study has a diachronic approach both to the traditional healing practice and to the history of medical folklore analyses. Constant comparisons with ancient Roman times and also with Geto-Dacians beliefs are made throughout the investigation. The history of the belief is followed by a history of diseases and epidemics that affected Moldavia and finally by a history of the "medical" practice of healing. Illnesses are quoted both with their old name and with scientific or modern terms.

Another volume from "The Folklore Archive Notebooks" that received a scientific follow-up refers to a theme that held the attention of Ion H. Ciubotaru for about 40 years: funeral rites. Initially defended as a PhD thesis, *The Folklore of Rituals Associated with Family Life in Moldavia (The Great Passage)* contains only a part of the research conducted on the Şomuz River Valley, other sections being published as a monograph (two volumes in 1990, which close the notebooks series). 13 years later, Ion H. Ciubotaru uses again the metaphor of a passage for the title of a book on funeral rites, this time with an explanatory follow-up: *Ethnologic Landmarks of the Funerary Ceremonial in Moldova.* His scientific interest in this rite of passage spanned over three decades and results were consequently important.

Funeral Rites from Moldova in a National Context (2014) categorizes the information collected with the help of the questionnaire, as previous books on rites of passage from Moldova did. Death customs are pursued along 102 questions from this investigation tool. Even though they outnumber the queries on wedding and childbirth rituals, the researcher holding a questionnaire on fieldwork never restrains himself to asking printed questions only. Interviews tend to become semi-directive and it is the subjects who mostly construct the discussion. Supplementary inquiries appear spontaneously and the interviewer discretely helps the subject "give birth" to traditional information.

This method provided the necessary data for typologies that decoded rituals in the subjects' own words. All three rites of passage reveal themselves in a unitary image, although they were researched by three different authors. In these books, each section of a rite and all subsequent convictions are

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presented in their ceremonial context and order, with specific indication of the villages where the information was found. The typology is preceded by a scientific study that decodes ritual meanings and compares Romanian traditional knowledge to universal patterns, while the last part of the book comprises a texts corpus of ritual literature and other artistic work related to the theme.

Both *The Medical Folklore from Moldavia. Typology and texts corpus*, signed by Silvia Ciubotaru, and *Funeral Rites from Moldova in a National Context* authored by the founder of The Folklore Archive of Moldavia and Bucovina, Ion H. Ciubotaru, are part of the large project entitled *Typologies and corpuses of texts*. Another two books were published between these two volumes. *Wedding Customs from Moldova. Typology and Texts Corpus* (2009) improves and enlarges a previous book, who was also defended as a PhD thesis.

Silvia Ciubotaru, its author, subdivides the three ceremonial moments of the wedding (wooing, betrothal and wedding) according to the triple structure of Van Gennep's schema. Each of them consists in three more stages that lead to a gentle shift of the existential context. The purpose is admitted to be vital, as van Gennep considered before:

> each moment of the wedding is followed by strategies to diminish conflicts and rivalry, to balance the temporary instability, and alleviate frustrations (Ciubotaru 2009: 69). [fiecare moment al nunţii este însoţit de strategii de atenuare a disensiunilor şi rivalităţilor, de echilibrare a instabilităţii vremelnice, de alinare a frustrărilor]

Ordering such a heterogeneous ensemble of rites and convictions is not an easy task when it comes to local variations of folk knowledge. The typology used three sections to classify cultural data, and they consisted, unsurprisingly, in preliminal, liminal and postliminal rites. Apart from this structure, the wedding rites are categorized as a second phase, deriving from *Premarital Customs*, which consist in community dances, charms, divinations or the rite of forcing the marriage by using the cult of the hearth (the young lady breaks into the house of a lad and sits on the hearth to impose her will on his mother).

Nevertheless, only wedding customs reflect the three ceremonial sequences of separation, limen and incorporation. 46 monographic articles present clearly the unfolding of the ritual scenario, offering explanations in the informants' words, with accurate geographic evidence. As a general rule for all typologies, information is backed up with abbreviations of the villages where data was found and they can be looked up at the end of the book on a list of all the investigated rural settlements.

In 2012, Adina Hulubaş, one of the two young researchers from the Department of Ethnology, published *Childbirth Customs from Moldova. Typology and Texts Corpus* which received the "Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu" Award from The Romanian Academy. The fieldwork that provided ethno-

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graphic information for this rite of passage was conducted between 1969 and 2011 by numerous researchers, including the author. The main investigation tool was the section for childbirth customs from *The General Folkloric and Ethnographic Questionnaire* containing 87 inquiries on the matter. Hence, the book is similar with the previous one that analyzed wedding customs, as a result of the method used to obtain cultural data and also of the tripartite structure of the typology.

The classification of rites starts with the preliminal phase, where the author includes actions that magically assure fertility, conceiving, and pregnancy. The dominant intention is to protect the woman and her unborn child of misfortunate effects and to ease pain when labour starts. A large body of field evidence hence arguments Van Gennep's opinion[6] on this existential passage (2004: 41).

Another award from The Romanian Academy was given to Ion H. Ciubotaru for the trilogy entitled *The Catholics from Moldavia. The Universe of folk culture* (1998–2005). Drawn from The Folklore Archive[7], this impressive work had an important impact on the international academia also and it received *Premio Internazionale di Studi Demoetnoantropologici „Giuseppe Pitrè – Salvatore S. Marino" from Palermo.* The three volumes of the book clearly demonstrate the Romanian ethnicity of the Catholics referred to as *Csángós* and provide important missing links of nowadays rituals. For example, the custom of setting up a funeral as a wedding if the deceased is an unmarried young, is completed by the practice of placing green leaves huts on their graves, still active in Catholic villages. Conservative groups manage to preserve rituals and meanings for a longer time and Ion H. Ciubotaru made the best of this scientific opportunity.

The most recent book based of the data gathered in the Folklore Archive of Moldavia and Bucovina belongs to Silvia Ciubotaru. *The Agrarian Customs from Moldavia in Relation to the National Context* was published in 2017 and it represents a much awaited synthesis on the theme. Until now, the north-eastern side of Romania was almost uncharted on the virtual map of agrarian practices. Not only does Ciubotaru succeed in proving the long and active tradition in Moldavia, but also she creates innovative links between different segments of traditional culture related to vegetational rites. She connects literary ritual texts that are sung at Christmas and New Year's Eve with magic gestures, arguing that agriculture changed the fate of mankind on many levels: the human activities gained stability, time starts to be perceived as a cycle and mythology acquires complexity as a result of the belief in eternal regeneration.

[6] Hulubaş and Ioana Repciuc edited a collective book in 2016 with the declared purpose of investigating Van Gennep's schema in contemporary society and scientific fields. A study from the volume presents The Folklore Archive from Moldova from this perspective.

[7] As professor Ciubotaru confesses in an interview (Antonescu 2000:2).

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The congruence of all books from *The Typologies and Corpuses of Texts* project is maintained once more: an introductory study prepares the reader in a captivating manner for the complex meanings of traditional rituals and beliefs, a typology of agrarian customs follows, and then an anthology of folk texts. As imposed by scientific demands, the book also provides an extensive bibliography, abbreviations keys and several indexes.

The Petru Caraman Legacy

Ion H. Ciubotaru met his mentor Petru Caraman in the autumn of 1962 and they built a powerful relationship that lasted for 18 years, until the passing of the scholar.

> Reciprocity seems to be the law that governed their providentially common path. On one hand, the disciple managed to fully assimilate the gifts he had been given by such a generous master who was sharing his genial super-abundance; on the other hand, it is in this relationship that the scholar found his hope in a posterity brighter than the decay of the hostile present. He was pleased by Ciubotaru's brilliant mind and of his peerless devotion (Repciuc 2010: 111) [Reciprocitatea pare să fie legea care a stat la baza providenţialului parcurs împreună. Dacă discipolul a reuşit să asimileze pe deplin darurile oferite, cu atâta generozitate, de maestru, dintr-un preaplin al profesorului genial, învăţatul şi-a găsit în acesta speranţa unei posterităţi mai luminoase decât marasmul contemporaneităţii adverse; a fost mulţumit de mintea sa strălucită şi de inegalabilul devotament pe care i l-a arătat.]

Unfortunately, the scholar's tremendous work could not be published on time, because the Second World War and the communist government thwarted all possibilities of normality for the Romanian academia (see Caraman 2016). It was his disciple's fate to redeem the scientific loss.

The Folklore Archive of Moldavia and Bucovina was established, as mentioned above, thanks to his efforts. He thoroughly analyzed the 1175 questions written by Ion H. Ciubotaru for the questionnaire and concluded that it was a highly rigorous instrument for fieldwork investigations. Once the archive started to gather, a special collection was added, consisting in Petru Caraman's fieldwork documents from 1916 to 1938. Eleven notebooks have been registered in the archive, containing 920 pages of different sizes and 649 literary texts, apart from a significant amount of ethnographic information. Another section amasses 12,000 pages consisting in answers the scholar received from collaborators and also folk literature. Petru Carman used several questionnaires on caroling, un-caroling, the funerals for unmarried young, old beliefs, the meanings of the word *conac*, etc. Each topic is filed separately to allow a quick and effective identification of the theme under interest.

However, numerous books were left in manuscripts. The first volume edited by Ion H. Ciubotaru was part of "The Folklore Archive Notebooks". In 1982, the disciple published "The Petru Caraman Collection" and entitled the

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book *Folk literature*. Six years later, Silvia Ciubotaru edited Petru Caraman's PhD thesis that was defended at Jagiellonian University from Krakow in 1928: *Caroling at the Romanians, Slavs and other peoples*. The scholar had a roaring success in the international academia, he was offered a career as a college professor in Poland, but he chose to return in Romania and bring his contribution both to the field of ethnology and of Slavic studies.

The cultural phenomenon of caroling is much more complex that we usually acknowledge. Petru Caraman discovered a reverse effect of the custom that consists in going from door to door and casting good luck formulas on the residents. Peasants call it *descolindat* (uncaroling) and it is a reaction of anger caused by the refusal to let the carolers sing at the door. Magic spells and violent gestures were intended to leave the house vulnerable to evil forces, disease and poverty. The book that analyzes this traditional rite in a large scientific context was published in 1997 and had professor Ciubotaru as its editor. In the same year a collection of Caraman's studies appeared after a collaboration between the disciple and Ovidiu Bârlea.

Two books were published again, in 2005, and made a part of Slavistics related studies available for the public, thanks to the same editor: *Kochanowski – Dosoftei. The Psalter in lyrics. The influence of Kochanowski on Dosoftei's work*, and *The old Ukrainian folk song about Stephen the Great and the corresponding linguistic and ethnographic problems*. This year an impressive book of Slav studies was edited by Livia Cotorcea under the print of "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University Press.

The volume entitled *The Concept of Human Beauty as Reflected by the Anthroponymy of Romanians and of the South-Eastern Europe. Prolegomena to the Study of Personal Name* was edited by Silvia Ciubotaru. The book appeared in 2011, under the same publishing house, since Petru Caraman had a deep affective connection with the university from Iaşi. It was the twelfth and last of the manuscripts Petru Caraman entrusted to Ion H. Ciubotaru in 1980. Yet, this book manages to be a different approach even for such a various academic work. As a result of his constant preoccupation with the magic dimension of folk life, Petru Caraman enters the domain of Onomastics to prove that names had an augural purpose initially, the same as gestures and practices of the childbirth rites did. Parents chose names for their meanings in order to mould the future life of the newly born. Ion H. Ciubotaru has carried a long and difficult activity of sorting, categorizing and transcribing tens of thousands of hand written pages that also contained words in various Slav languages, Greek, Latin and several modern languages.

Once more, the words of Mircea Eliade prove to be true. He was writing about Mihai Eminescu in 1935 and started his article with the following words that can easily refer to Caraman's destiny:

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> The genius always takes revenge. Sooner or later, any great personality starts to be understood and cherished properly (1987: 6) [Geniul se răzbună întotdeauna. Mai devreme sau mai târziu, orice mare personalitate începe să fie înţeleasă şi preţuită cum merită].

On going projects

The research team was enlarged more than three decades after The Folklore Archive of Moldavia and Bucovina was founded. Adina Hulubaş and Ioana Repciuc are fully aware on its significance and continue the scientific process on two levels. Firstly, more typologies are being written in order to create clear and efficient instruments for the study of traditional culture. Ioana Repciuc is categorizing Moldavian winter customs while analyzing this cultural phenomenon in an international context. The book will be published in 2020. Adina Hulubaş is close to finishing a typology of peasant architecture that will be completed by a large corpus of photographic documents and a study centered on active foundation rites from Moldavia. Both of the young researchers continue to record cultural data during fieldwork in Moldavian villages.

Secondly, the two started a promotion strategy for the archive, in an effort to help modern inhabitants of Moldavia understand where customs come from and what their meaning is[8].

The workshop entitled *How and why we can teach folklore* is organized yearly by the Department of Ethnology. This project was envisioned as a method to transmit knowledge further to the youngest generation, by training their teachers. The results were made public and two administrative requests were sent to the Romanian Ministry of Education with the purpose to start a national process of improving teaching methods.

The Folklore Archive of Moldavia and Bucovina can be considered a cultural cornucopia, since its vast range of information allows the present and future researchers to use documents in order to contrast and compare with present customs and cultural demeanour. Various fields can be approached through interdisciplinary methods, starting from registered data of the archive: social and cultural history, the study of secular religiosity, the sociology of religions, intangible cultural heritage documentation and safeguarding plans, craftsmanship analysis for strategies, migration studies, educational curricula for traditional culture and many more. Several areas are already familiar to Ioana Repciuc and Adina Hulubaş, as publications and projects undertaken

[8] In 2015 Astrid Cambose became a member of the Department of Ethnology. She is currently involved in editing a volume containing the answers received by B.P. Hasdeu to the *Linguistic Questionnary Dotaţiunea Carol I (Programa pentru adunarea datelor privitoare la limba română*, mss. BAR 3418–3436). It makes available to the public the answers received by B.P. Hasdeu to his *Linguistic Questionnary* dated 1884 that can be found at the Library of the Romanian Academy in an archive containing 19 large manuscripts, with about 8500 handwritten pages (*editorial note*).

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prove. While hoping to welcome new colleagues soon, they are grateful for the large horizon cast by the impressive work of Ion H. Ciubotaru and his colleagues.

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Abstract

The Folklore Archive of Moldavia and Bucovina was founded in 1970 by professor Ion H. Ciubotaru and one can easily say that it defines the entire scientific activity carried within the Department of Ethnology from "A. Philippide" Institute of Romanian Philology in Iaşi. The article presents the history of the team of researchers on two levels: the academic achievements (published work) and their socio-cultural efforts such as writing and printing the 1175 inquiries questionnaire, the harsh conditions of fieldwork and the financial limitations of the projects. But nothing from this strain can be guessed if we look at the impressive number of books the four published. On the contrary, each of them was well received and became a landmark for the scientific field, since they are based on consistent data recorded from more than 10,000 subjects. Currently, the two young researchers carrying on the gathering of cultural data and the analysis of the documents are grateful for the heritage they received from the founder. In addition, they strive to promote the importance of cultural identity in our modern times.

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