



ACADEMIA ROMÂNĂ

SCOSAAR

Anexa nr.6

REZUMATUL TEZEI DE ABILITARE*

TITLUL CIRCULAȚIA CĂRȚII LAICE ÎN ROMÂNIA SECOLULUI AL XIX-LEA. STUDIU ASUPRA MODERNIZĂRII CULTURALE ȘI ECONOMICE

THE CIRCULATION OF THE SECULAR BOOK IN 19TH CENTURY ROMANIA. A STUDY ON CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC MODERNISATION

Domeniul de abilitare: *ISTORIE*

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Abstract

This thesis consists of three chapters: (1) a presentation of the scientific and professional career after obtaining my doctor title in history; (2) research directions and potential publications for the coming years; (3) a representative contribution for my recent work on the history of commercial and non-commercial book circulation in modern Romania, a study on the social and cultural history as well as of the economic modernisation during the 19th Century. The latter part continues my research on the emergence and development of bookstores and publishing houses in the Romanian principalities.

In the first chapter I present in chronological order the three major directions on which my career was built. Since 2006 I have been a researcher at the “Nicolae Iorga” Institute of History of the Romanian Academy. I hold a PhD in history, with a thesis on *Physical Education, Sport and Society in Interwar Romania*, defended on 4 March 2009 at the Faculty of History of the University of Bucharest. My scientific career has been guided by the directions and methods of social history from the very beginning. The first field that aroused my interest was that of the history of Romanian sport, whose past has been generally ignored by professional historians, therefore rich in analyses by specialists in sports science, journalists or enthusiastic researchers, but without specialized training. In my doctoral thesis (*Physical Education, Sport and Society in Interwar Romania*) I started from an analysis of the fundamental concepts – physical education and sport being, in the interwar period, rather antonyms than synonyms. I also studied the remarkable intellectual debates sparked by the explosion of sport as a social phenomenon specific to the world after the Great War, a process only enforced by the great economic crisis of 1929. I was interested in the people who practiced and “consumed” the spectacle offered by the competitions in the stadiums, equally the “athletes” and the “spectators”. The sports geography of interwar Romania was another concern, demonstrating the differences between Bucharest, the rest of the Old Kingdom, the former Habsburg provinces of Transylvania, Banat and Bucovina, and Bessarabia. The uneven development was due to the level of urbanization and industrialization even if the young boyar and bourgeois elites of Bucharest entertained the noble but difficult idea of spreading sports among the masses.

After 1919-1921, the explosion of football made the press gradually integrate sports into the daily pages. I documented the growth from a few scattered news items to specialised pages and publications. Nevertheless, in the absence of complex archives, the press was my main

source of documentation. The process of Roumanisation, of transforming national representation according to ethnic criteria, constituted a separate chapter, difficult to write, but which reflected the close connection between sports and political debates in interwar Romanian society. I was equally concerned with women sports, which were underdeveloped during the period studied.

My research into the history of sports continued, without being my main scientific concern. I thus analysed issues of national representation (Romania-Hungary football matches through the lens of the constantly changing political relations between the two countries) or the first phases of the communist regime (the takeover and partial abandonment of the Soviet sports model in the late 1940s and 1950s).

The second major theme that concerned me was the emergence and evolution of Romanian bookstores and publishing houses in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. My book on *Comerțul cu carte în România: proiect național și proiect economic (a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea – începutul secolului al XX-lea* [Book Trade in Romania: National and Economic Project (Second Half of the 19th Century – Early 20th Century)], Cluj-Napoca, Romanian Academy, Centre for Transylvanian Studies, 2015, was the result of a post-doctoral research with the apparently paradoxical interweaving of doctoral research (the idea that sports distance young people from reading, although illiteracy was a generally recognized social evil at the time). My position as member of the editorial team from the “Nicolae Iorga” Institute, entrusted with the publication of the documentary collection *Călători străini despre țările române în secolul al XIX-lea. Serie nouă* also enabled me to contextualise the positive connotations in the descriptions of bookstores in Bucharest and Iași made by the authors of various travelogues.

Traditionally, Romanian researcher paid less attention to the actual evolution and developments of the book trade. Economic and financial aspects were rather overshadowed by the dominance of the circulation of ideas. The history of the separation of bookstores from the grocery trade and then the appearance of publishing houses was a new scientific discovery for me, on the basis of which I began to build research on the history of historical concepts. Such was the bourgeoisie, still insufficiently studied. Booksellers-publishers, as they were called at the time, were a bourgeois professional category of capitalist entrepreneurs, but aware of the dual, economic and national role of their activity. Booksellers-publishers depended as much on political decisions, such as press and censorship legislation, on domestic or national economic fluctuations and crises, as on the inspiration of the authors with whom they worked. The publishing contracts I discovered and put into circulation demonstrate both this dual role

and the differences in relationship with authors between the booksellers-publishers themselves.

The presence of booksellers-publishers in the ownership of paper factories built in Romania from the end of the 19th Century also confirms their role as capitalist entrepreneurs with a well-defined cultural role. Eliminating dependence on paper imports was both a political project common to the liberal and conservative parties, as well as an argument made in favour of the development of national culture.

Equally, I was interested in other aspects of the book trade, such as the impact of the war on Romanian fiction and the role of booksellers-publishers in the formation of a dedicated market segment. In understanding the social trauma of the First World War, Romanian literature played a special role, through the novel, a literary genre that gained particular momentum in the interwar period.

The second chapter of my thesis announces the related scientific projects of the following years: deepening the study of the history of book circulation, the history of concepts, editions of documents, a political biography of Barbu Dimitrie Știrbey.

Chapter III, *Transnational and national mechanisms of the circulation of the secular book in the 19th Century*, represents an original work, describing the dominant direction for my future research activity. I started from the analysis of Western research in the field, from the theories of Robert Darnton, on the one hand, Thomas R. Adams and Nicolas Barker, on the other, because the connection of the boyars from Moldova and Wallachia to the Western “communication circuits” was decisive both for the “penetration of modernizing ideas”, and especially for the emergence and local development of the bookshop and publishing trade. I thus studied the boyar family libraries, trying to shed light on the connections between them, the generational evolutions and, above all, the presence of readers, thus contradicting the idea of closed libraries to any kind of external reader.

For booksellers in the Romanian countries, the modernisation and increase in the quantity and quality of original writings and translations grew in parallel with the establishment of important relationships with foreign book markets, especially with those in Leipzig, Brussels and Paris. Not all booksellers felt they needed to look for these links, a sign of targeting a certain type of audience. The case of the bookstore of Friedrich Wallbaum and J. Weise, later bought by C.A. Rosetti and Enric Winterhalder is representative. Although they stubbornly sought to maintain links with the German Book Trade Exchange in Leipzig, Wallbaum and Weise had difficulties due to censorship in Bucharest, prices and the length of communication routes, despite the fact that they printed publications and brokered purchases for the Wallachian government. A solution of the booksellers-publishers was the reading cabinet, which, for a fee,

played the role of public libraries. Reading cabinets continued to exist until the end of the 19th Century. So did the (personal) subscription, one of the forms of publishing much studied by Romanian historians. Towards the end of the 19th Century, Romanian readers could bypass local intermediaries and order books directly from booksellers-publishers abroad, a sign of the modernization brought by the railways.

An important aspect for the study of book circulation as a sign of cultural and economic modernisation is the identification of a critical number of biographies of booksellers-publishers. Seen together, such cases allow for a collective biography of a bourgeois professional category; separately, each indicates its own path, a way of social ascent and, sometimes, adaptation to the market specifics of a locality or region. Equally important is the non-commercial circulation of the book: publishing patronage, loans, gifts, reading recommendations allow a better understanding of the mental, individual and collective universes. The circulation of ideas can thus be investigated in depth. Specific to cities, bookstores were places of sociability for intellectuals of the era, while the village world remained far from away from this kind of trade.

The commercial and non-commercial circulation of the book in Romania in the 19th Century is, therefore, a sign of the general transformations that we conventionally call the modernisation process.