

In the same time a synthesis and a working instrument, the work *The evolution of the political institutions of the Romanian state from 1859 until nowadays*, is the result of many researches and investigated details, the intention of the authors being that to comprise as much information as possible, and to present them to the reader, both from the historical, and also expositive and interpretative perspective.

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Loredana-Maria Ilin-Grozoiu, *Concepts, Beliefs and Traditions Regarding the Immortality of the Soul and the Cult of Deads*, Craiova, Universitaria Publishing; București, Pro Universitaria Publishing, 2014, 240 p.

The importance of the chosen theme is doubled by its major signification, not only related to the historiographic significance, but in a much broader meaning too, for the actuality of the subject nowadays, the history of religion still constituting a concerning field.

From the very beginning of the work, the author draws the attention on the fact that the people from all over the world, did not share the same belief and, rather randomly, the ideas, the religious beliefs and the funerary practices were different. Yet, we have to remember the presence of a religious attitude that confirms the belief in a divinity, or many divinities, and the belief in immortality. It is probable that these beliefs influenced, to a certain extent, the behaviour of a person inside a community as well.

The work contains a *Foreword*, three chapters *Conclusions* and a *Selective bibliography*. The investigation is opened through the chapter called *The immortality of the soul: myth or reality?*, in which there are brought forward archeological and historical data, along with the cultural anthropology ones. The author mentions that, through the performing of the funerary practices, the man, regardless the time of living, pursued, on one side, the total separation of the two worlds, and on the other side, the maintaining of a permanent collaboration between them. A special attention is paid to the belief of the Geto-Dacians in soul immortality, with the mention that, a part of the Geto-Dacian funerary customs have been kept in the Romanian folklore, although modified in time, through the local popular creativity.

As the author herself noted, a variety of opinions and beliefs related to the faith of the human after death, imposed by the desire to bring closer the two worlds, have been developed in time, transforming themselves into a complex cult of the forefathers and great-forefathers. The modifications appeared in the collective mentality, contributed to the perception of the death phenomenon as “a passing” into another world, populated by the passed away, and not a rupture in the individual’s destiny.

Moreover, in this chapter too, the author brings to our attention the beliefs and the contemporary religious ideas that refer to the eschatological problems and the cult of the dead. From all the beliefs contained by this system, the author mentions: the Hinduism, the Buddhism, the Islamism, the Judaism and the Christianity.

In the second chapter, *A history of the Romanian Christian beliefs and traditions on the immortality of the soul and the cult of the dead*, the author presents an exquisitely realised transition for the stages of the discussed problems, because, for the Romanian space, it should be remarked the almost unchanged preservation of the funerary practices, from the ancient times and until nowadays. This is due to the fact that there is vividly present the belief that any digression from the norms, will

generate the loss of the efficient “passing”. From this perspective, the inclusion in the same analytical segment of the Christian beginnings and the Christian ritual practices, along with the perpetuation of beliefs and traditions according to which the soul survives the death of the body, can be considered inspired. For this respect, the belief into a post-mortem existence, is exemplified by the author through: the funerary wake masks, the ritual breaking of a pot and the funerary feast, the custom, archeologically attested, of closing up the orifices of the skull with clay, the rite of the soul window.

Once created the cultural background, the author led the analysis in the ethnographic space from Oltenia, where she noticed that the funerary ceremony has been preserved until today, in meaningful traditional forms, expressed by the variety of ritual and magical acts and practices, encompassing ancient elements. Consequently, in the second chapter, *The intersecting of the popular tradition with the religious tradition in the practising of the funerary ritual from Oltenia*, through examples and observations, she managed to identify the elements specific for the spirituality from Oltenia, along with roots that grow from the centenary history of this historical province. They motivated her to consider the funerary offerings and the ritual substitute of the dead (the candle, the funerary water, the round-shaped bread, the alms, the fir-tree, the cross) and the funerary rites (the wake, the censuring, the repast).

The conclusions and *The selective bibliography* make this work complete, a work that synthesises a history of the mentalities, a reflection on the ideas, behaviours and the Christian imaginary, on the way in which the actual structures and beliefs have evolved.

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Radu Ștefan Vergatti, Cristina Narcisa Vergatti, *The Uncle and the Nephew: Matei Basarab and Constantin Basarab*, Baia Mare, Science Press Publishing House, 2014, 429 p.

In 2014, 300 years had past since the appalling death of Constantin Brâncoveanu of his four sons, preceded by the death of Lord Steward Ianache Văcărescu, on which occasion the influential institutions of our country: the Government of Romania, The Romanian Orthodox Patriarchate, the Romanian Academy, the universities, libraries, institutes of research and associations of research organized symposiums, conferences, te-deum religious, ceremonies and many other kinds of events. All these were meant not only to enhance the cognitive dowry related to Constantin Brâncoveanu’s life and reign, but also to commemorate and pay homage to one of the few princes and voivodes of our nation who fully correspond with the suggestive characterization defining the legendary heroes of peoples, that of being “one of those rulers who preferred dying upright rather than living on their knees”. Among the works which remarkably appeared in the wake of all the events related to Constantin Brâncoveanu tricentenary, there is a paper which occasioned a fine editorial event that took place in the year of the tricentenary, at Râmnicu Vâlcea, within Antim Ivireanu Library. Published in Baia Mare, under the coordination of Professor Radu Ștefa Vergatti Phd and of his distinguished wife Cristina Narcisa Vergatti, with the considerable assistance of an authentic representative of the ecclesiastical rank, the Right Reverend Daniel Gligorie, the work was simply but suggestively given a name suitably chosen by the coordinators, that is “The uncle and the nephew: Matei Basarab and Constantin Basarab Brâncoveanu”. The title of the book, as well as a pictures on the cover, suggest the idea of continuity, especially cultural continuity, less analyzed by the historians and more highlighted by literary historians, while the book, right from viewing the contents, enables us to define it as a genuine miscellany, with carefully assembled studies and articles which, through