

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

the variety and diversity of the thematic approach, apparently try to thoroughly examine the complex history of the two reigns. Professor Radu Ștefan Vergatti, a versed, or I should better say a highly versed expert in the Romanian Middle Ages and not only, with real and appreciated analytical extensions in modern and contemporary periods as well, winner of several prizes and awards in the country and abroad, author of several works concerning the reigns of the two rulers, managed to assemble, in a diachronic, intelligible and unitary form, the results of the research undertaken by 13 famous historians, thus making up a substantial volume which might be considered a real monograph of the two voivodes to whom it pays homage. In our opinion, the themes approached in this fine book, many of them being the outcome of laborious doctorate papers and assiduous research work, most of them new or less used even in ex professo literature, undoubtedly turn the volume into a landmark book for all those who wish to explore the middle and the end of XVIIth century as well as the first two septennial periods of the next century in the Romanian history.

In his studies, the coordinator tackles problems which had not been given a historiographical solution before. He succeeds in offering sensible answers, in keeping with his scientific fame, namely: starting from an appropriate critical analysis of the existing documents and papers, he fairly intelligibly rebuilds the image of the ties of kinship between the two princes, both of them of Basarab descent; likewise, with the competence of genuine jurists, the two coordinators, Radu Ștefan Vergatti and Cristina Narcisa Vergatti analyze and throw into relief the importance of the first penal code in the Romanian society, elaborated during Matei Basarab's reign, with the assistance of the metropolitan bishop Ștefan, a code named "The improvement of the law" whose overwhelming importance for the Romanian juridical practice is given, among many others, by its long applicability in the Romanian judicial system, lasting – in the author's opinion – at least till the Organic Regulations; furthermore Radu Ștefan Vergatti dissects Matei Basarab's relations with Eastern Europe, both with the political representatives of Poland, Ukraine and with the ecclesiastical representatives in the area, whom – by means of all kind of help – he tried to use in various missions, managing to create an authentic system of relations with the states of Eastern Europe; and, last but not least, the beginnings of the Princely Academy in Bucharest are examined, the way in which it was formed, the author having his own point of view, different from that of many exegetes of this subject, concerning the year of establishing this first Romanian educational institution.

Another historian – who through his studies has made his conspicuous mark on his historiography of the XVIIth century and the first two septennial periods of the XVIIIth century – is Dinică Ciobotea who, alone or in cooperation with others, is the signatory of six studies containing questions which are essential to knowing the reigns of the two rulers, namely: Matei Basarab's links with the boyars from Mehedinți, his relation with Craiova town, his action of rebuilding the Saint Demetrius church of Craiova, the way the landed properties of Horezu monastery appeared, as well as interesting suppositions concerning the policy of genuine cultural mécénat undertaken by this voivode reigning south of the Carpathians.

Extremely interesting studies carried out by well-known historians are attractive for the readers owing to the problems they approach: in this book they display an authentic archeology of the founding act performed by Matei Basarab in Oltenia, they produce a synthesizing and intelligible analysis of the history of the Câmpulung Muscel monastic complex, they scrutinize Constantin Brâncoveanu's policy of supporting the town south of the Carpathians, they examine Matei Basarab's relations with the Romanian gentry, especially his relationship with the high dignitary Udriște Năsturel and, last but not least, they present the way in which the two rulers managed to support the printing activity of their time.

As a last conclusion, the analysis of this book undoubtedly enables us to hold that, through the complex and various problems analyzed, this work represents an indispensable landmark for all those interested in the history of the XVIIth century and the first half of the XVIIIth century.

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