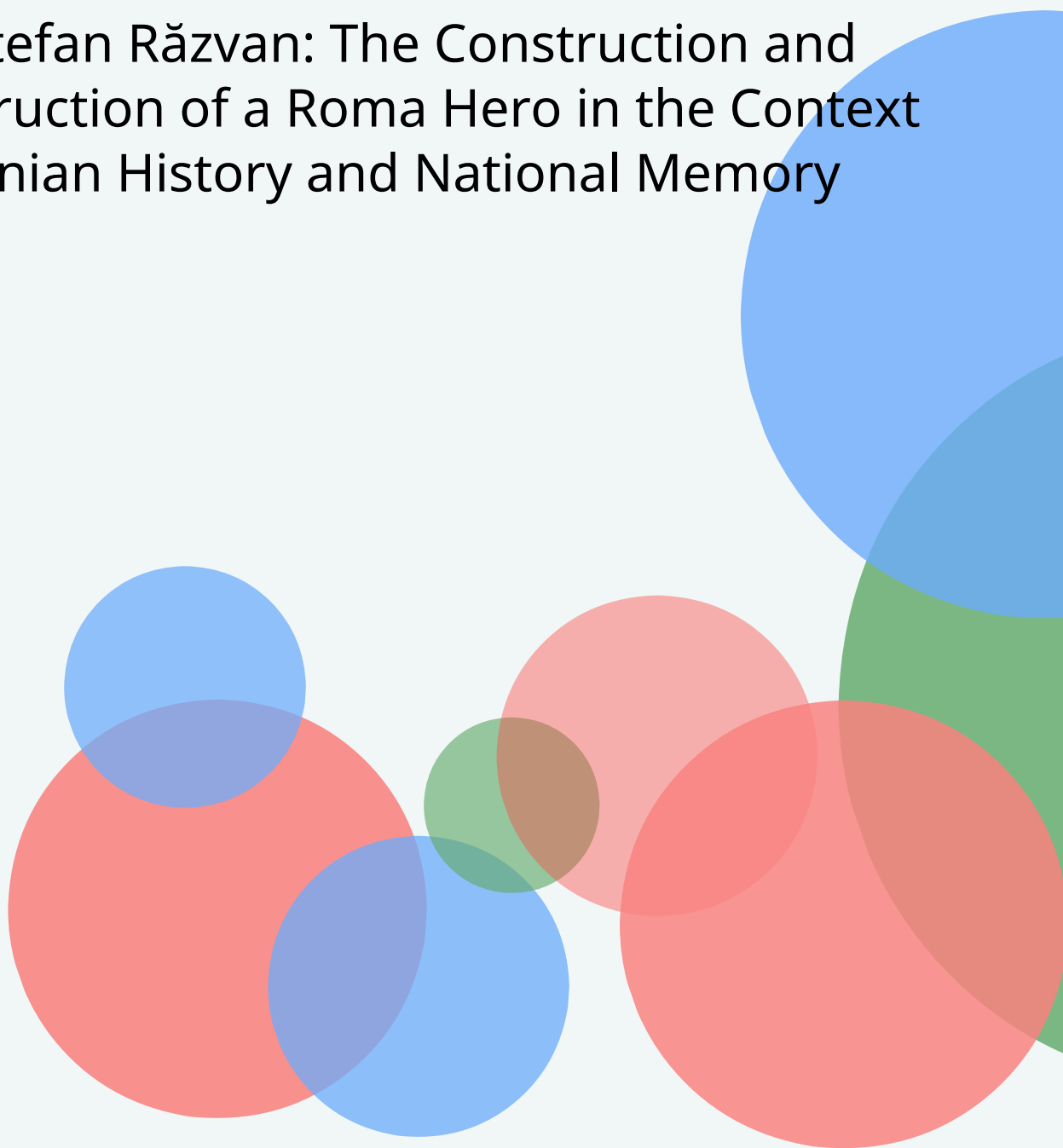

Prince Ștefan Răzvan: The Construction and Deconstruction of a Roma Hero in the Context of Romanian History and National Memory



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2025

European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERiac)

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RECLAIMING OUR PAST, REBUILDING OUR FUTURE:
NEW APPROACHES TO FIGHTING ANTIGYPSYISM

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The JEKHIPE project *Reclaiming our past, rebuilding our future: new approaches to fighting antigypsyism against Roma* is a CERV-funded project aimed at improving the lives of Roma by addressing systemic and institutional antigypsyism, promoting transitional justice, fostering knowledge-building and awareness, and strengthening Roma identity and participation.

It is a follow-up to *CHACHIPEN*, an earlier CERV project, officially titled *Paving the way for a Truth and Reconciliation Process to address antigypsyism in Europe. Remembrance, Recognition, Justice and Trust-Building*. Concluded in 2023, CHACHIPEN introduced an innovative transitional justice-based approach to raising awareness of systemic injustice and ongoing antigypsyism in policymaking, while advocating for a comprehensive truth and reconciliation strategy.

JEKHIPE focuses on multiple levels of policy-making, including research, monitoring, advocacy, networking, alliances building, awareness raising, capacity building, and empowerment. It aims to engage with national and European institutions, academia, politicians, justice mechanisms, state authorities, civil society, and Roma communities themselves to challenge the status quo on approaching Roma issues, particularly antigypsyism, and propose mechanisms for increased accountability by national governments.

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Motto: "In the rush for arguments, today's pseudo-historians have not shied away from inserting, in materials on the history of minorities, that Stefan-Răzvan's father would have been, no more and no less than a Muslim gypsy [...]" (Grigorescu, 2015, p. 47).



Introduction

This chapter aims to discuss one of the current landmarks in the process of building the social memory of the Roma in the Romanian space. The landmark under discussion is the ruler Ștefan Răzvan, the ruler who sat on the throne of Moldavia between April and August 1595. Even if he had such a short reign, the example of Ștefan-Răzvan is suitable for discussing the relationship between history, popular culture, literature and memory. Ștefan-Răzvan's reign left a strong mark on the Romanian cultural memory through the birth of the first romantic dramatic work in Romanian literature, written by Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu at the end of the nineteenth century. At present, the memory of Ștefan-Răzvan is claimed by the Roma, the ruler being thus introduced into the apparatus of memory production, so necessary for the process of modern identity construction.

In the first part I show the debates in Romanian historiography on the ethnic origin of Ștefan Răzvan, then I highlight why the discussion on his ethnic origin is important in historiography. In the second part, I analyze the figure of Ștefan Răzvan from the perspective of the sociology of literature, and then I comparatively present the figure of the ruler in the Romanian cultural memory and expand his representation in the Roma cultural memory today.

Towards the end of 1851 Vasile Alecsandri, aristocrat, poet and one of the figures of Romanian abolitionism (but in turn owner of Roma slaves), returned from Paris to Iași bringing with him a manuscript by Nicolae Bălcescu on the reign of Ștefan-Răzvan (Camariano, 1940, p. 133); (Zub, 1970, p. 52). When V. Alecsandri arrived in the country, he asked the ruler of Moldavia, Grigore Ghica, for the right to print a magazine "a publication completely foreign to politics and which is meant to include only articles of literature and sciences useful to our homeland" (Camariano, 1940, p. 134). The magazine in question was "România literară". As Cornelia Bodea points out, the first issue of this magazine was to be suppressed "until it was completely born, because of a historical truth. The article at the head of the publication, written by N. Bălcescu under the title of *Răzvan-Vodă*, claimed that this gentleman was of gypsy descent; and the conveniences of that time did not forgive showing a Gypsy on the throne" (Bodea, 1998, p. 18). In a letter to N. Bălcescu, V. Alecsandri wrote to him in April 1852: "One of the resonances for which they closed my gazette was your article *Răzvan Vodă*, which, because it was written by you, was considered by Mr. Știrbey as a pamphlet against him. The gypsy vine of that wretched Lord has reached the ambition of the ruler of Wallachia." (Camariano, 1940, p. 135).

For Mihail Kogălniceanu, the real reason for the suppression of the magazine was the fact that the publication included the word "Romania" in its name, a fact that could not be tolerated by the "foreign diplomats" in Iași. For Nestor Camariano, the real reason for the censorship did not lie in the publication of the article about Ștefan Răzvan, but in the fact that the Russian diplomat in Moldova, the Russian consul, could not accept the publication in Iași of a magazine led by V. Alecsandri, where he collaborated with an outlaw like N.

Bălcescu. Added to this were the political rivalries between Alecsandri and his opponents, "who of course saw in literary Romania only a hotbed of national reawakening". We do not know if Alecsandri was given the possibility by the censorship in 1852, when slavery still existed in Moldavia, to give up mentioning the origin of Ștefan Răzvan in the article or to change the title of the publication. What is certain is that the magazine was suppressed, but a few copies of it managed to be printed and distributed by Alecsandri to his close friends (Camariano, 1940, p.137).

On January 1, 1855, the first official issue of "*România literară*" appeared, Alecsandri this time managing to pass the censorship. The article about Ștefan-Răzvan appeared on the front page, just as it probably appeared in the version suppressed in 1852. What did not appear in the 1855 edition, however, was the reference to the Roma ethnic origin of Ștefan Răzvan.

Who was Ștefan-Răzvan?

This question was also asked by Nicolae Iorga: "As a boyar, Răzvan was a boyar, as a Lord, a Lord, similar as he could to the others. But the question arises: as a Gypsy? Was he a Gypsy? And how did he get out of his "gypsy"?" (Iorga, 1930, p. 157). The answer to this question is linked to the entire historiography built around this historical figure. Ștefan-Răzvan reigned in Moldavia between April and August 1595. The historiography built around this ruler developed around two major coordinates, which could hardly have been hierarchically exposed, if they were not in a dependency: the support given by Ștefan-Răzvan to Michael the Brave in the anti-Ottoman struggle and the ethnic origin of Ștefan Răzvan. Nicolae Bălcescu, perhaps one of the most important figures of the 1848 revolution, is the one who introduces Ștefan Răzvan into the Romanian national history. The moment in which he does it and the way in which Bălcescu understands the mission of history are defining to contextualize Ștefan-Răzvan in the constantly changing narrative thread of national history. The unusual way in which Bălcescu – a historian with a totally different vision from the traditional one that had been written until him, revolutionary – opened the door to Ștefan Răzvan to national history would provoke a fierce battle among Romanian intellectuals, waged in terms of accepting and rejecting the idea that a "gypsy" could have sat on the throne of Moldavia:

"Aga Răzvan was appointed by Sigismund Bathory as ruler in Moldavia under his suzerainty and took the name Ștefan – Voda. This Răzvan was known in Moldavia from a gypsy father and a Moldavian mummy. He had joined the Polish army as a young man and, distinguished by unusual bravery in the war with the Muscalii, he was raised from a simple soldier to the highest ranks of the army by the king of Poland Ștefan Bathori. Later, returning to Moldavia, he entered the service of Aron

Voda, who gave him the rank of aga and sent him, in May 1593, as a messenger to Sigismund Bathori. Then Răzvan received from Aron the command of his Hungarian guard. He drew upon himself the love of these soldiers and succeeded, as we see, with the help of Bathori, in overthrowing his lord and thus ascending in his place to a throne of which he had made himself worthy by his bravery." (Bălcescu, 1887, pp. 98-99).

In 1853, it was published in Iași under the patronage of Prince Grigore Alexandru Ghica, in the Cyrillic alphabet, "The Chronicle of Romanians and Several Nations", signed by Gheorghe Șincai (1754-1816), the historian of the Transylvanian School. Certainly, the gesture of publishing this work in Iași was seen by the political and intellectual elite of the time as one that referred to the ideal of the union of Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania. The resolution with which the Hungarian censorship had qualified the work and its author was "Opus igni, autor patibulo dignus (The work is worthy of fire, and the author of gallows)" (Diaconu, 2021, p. 651). In the year of its publication, the Roma slaves belonging to private individuals had not yet been freed, neither in Moldavia nor in Wallachia.

Gheorghe Șincai recounts the reign of Ștefan Răzvan, about whom he shows, according to some sources, that "they were of gypsy origin". The episode in which Răzvan takes over the throne of Moldavia with the help of Sigismund Bathory is then played. Răzvan had informed Bathory about Aron Vodă who "is not faithful to the Christians, but is inclined towards the Turks", and the armies initially meant to support Aron dethrone him by enthroning Răzvan: "With these armies [...] the infidel Ștefan Reșvan unwittingly surrounded Aron Voda, caught him [...] beat him in the iron and sent him to Transylvania [...] Ștefan Reșvan [...] they have made themselves another lord in his place." Șincai's comment on the history described above is fundamental to understand the position of the historian of the Transylvanian School towards the reign of Ștefan Răzvan: "You, cetitoriul! Here you sit, think and cross how the fast Moldavians, who beat the Poles, the Hungarians, the Tatars and the Turks, could get to that, from now on they have also submitted to the Gypsies? But don't be too surprised, because this was caused by their lack of mutual understanding, after the old lords' vineyard became extinct [...] The gypsy Ștefan X Reșvan gladly became a vassal, or fully subject to Sigismund Batori for the reign of Moldavia, and how could he not make, especially the gypsy, such a thing!" (Șincai, 1886, p. 405). On the one hand, Ștefan-Răzvan is seen as a traitor through his alliance with the prince of Transylvania, which thus threatened the position of Michael the Brave in Wallachia, and on the other hand, his ethnicity was a shame for the Romanians, who had the Roma in slavery. The power relations were overturned and provoked by the reign of Ștefan-Răzvan, called by Șincai "the first of the gypsies", who "reigned over the Romanians only from May to December". In the end, the historian of the Transylvanian School urges those who will know more about Ștefan-Răzvan to read the Vatican Archives (Șincai, 1886, pp. 412-413).

In 1863, a decade after the publication of Gheorghe Șincai's work and the sudden death of N. Bălcescu in 1852, Ion Heliade Rădulescu, who had been a central figure in the 1848 Revolution in Wallachia, along with N. Bălcescu, and the one who would later become the first President of the Romanian Academy, published a work little discussed in Romanian historiography: "The vote, the universal vote". During the Revolution of 1848 I. H. Rădulescu had signed together with N. Bălcescu the "Proclamation of Islaz" which demanded administrative and legislative independence from the Russian protectorate, the separation of powers in the state, the election of a ruler for a period of five years, the abolition of Roma slavery and others. Cristian Preda, referring to the Revolution of 1848, shows that "Our nationalist historiography presents the movement of 1848 as a great success, Because it is one of the moments of the affirmation of the nation. [...] But it is a nation that does not settle in a political form. The revolutionaries are defeated, and their ideas do not become reality." (Preda, 2021, p. 64). Roma slaves who had been freed during the revolution through liberation tickets were forced after its defeat to return to their former masters.

The union of Moldavia with Wallachia, achieved in 1859 under the reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, was the first victory of the Romanian political and intellectual class for the fulfillment of the national ideal of union. In order to achieve this ideal, through its recognition by the Great Powers, a first reform had been implemented: the final abolition of Roma slavery, in December 1855 in Moldavia, and in February 1856 in Wallachia. Moldavia and Wallachia could not be recognized as civilized countries by the West as long as they maintained slavery on their territory. In 1856 the total number of Roma slaves freed in Moldavia and Wallachia from 1831 to 1856 amounted to 250,000 (Achim, 2005, pp. 97-122). After the adoption of this last reform, the two countries could finally orient themselves towards union and independence from the Ottoman Empire, which was the suzerainty of the two countries, and the Tsarist Empire, their protector. In order to organize the elections, the two countries needed the approval of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, through an electoral firman approved by the sultan on January 26, 1857, communicated in a solemn framework in Bucharest and Iasi, the representation of all social categories in the elections was ensured, except for the former "gypsy slaves" (Dumitrescu, 2012, p. 334).

In 1863 Al. I. Cuza, the earthly ruler elected by census vote in the two countries, had been on the throne of Moldavia and Wallachia for four years, but the idea of bringing a foreign prince, who would ensure political stability in the two principalities, was nevertheless on the table of political debates, which represented a failure of the two countries not to be ruled by a Romanian ruler. I. H. Rădulescu was one of those who opposed the bringing of a foreign prince to the throne. In his attempt to expose to the public the risks of bringing a foreign gentleman, he appeals to the figure of "Stephan the Gypsy". Questioning the issue of granting universal law, he argues that the masses, referring in particular to the clacași, among whom the freed Roma now belonged, must be

politically educated. After explaining the essential problems regarding the "risks" brought by the vote of the blind, the incompetent or the mad that could lead to the vote of the potter for the soldier, or of the soldier for the clergy, of the clergy for the merchants, or of the townspeople for the villagers or vice versa, and who could thus decide in science and arts, and including in politics, it "would not be called a vote – but *a antivote*" (Rădulescu, 1863, pp. 10-11).

The first of a short but concise series of questions that Rădulescu asks his readers is "– Do you want a foreign prince or not?". Then he leaves aside the didactic style and "runs to the common sense of the Romanian in general, to his caustic anecdotes or histories" to make the problem under discussion better understood. After appealing to some popular anecdotes, he moves on to "another circumstance, which is entirely related to the dominance of the *Historia Patriei*". The circumstance presented presents Michael the Brave in the battles with the Turks. Heliade Rădulescu shows that Michael the Brave had the promise of Aron Voda of Moldavia and Bathory of Transylvania to come to his aid with armies, but because of Bathory's desire to rule over Moldavia and Wallachia, he dethroned Aron in order to weaken the balance of forces, Michael the Brave now having to worship Bathory under the Turkish threat. In terms of the use of terms, I. H. Rădulescu's work stands out as part of Romanian nationalism in the mid-nineteenth century. He shows that through "mobs led by wage demagogues", encouraged by Bathory's army, Aron was deposed:

"The demagogues were liberals according to their words, and proposed to the mobs to elect a gentleman from the most abject classes, under his word to put the nation [the nation] on the throne, and not families.

– You know what? they had told them; let us choose a Gypsy as Prince: for if the Gypsy rises so high, where will the Romanian not go higher? The mobs were surprised in their beliefs, and by a parodied vote called universal they proclaimed a Gypsy of the Lord." (Rădulescu, 1863, pp. 17-18).

Who were the "liberal demagogues" of whom I. H. Rădulescu speaks, giving an example from the end of the sixteenth century? Mihai Chiper shows that an uncomfortable thesis for the conservatives was that the measures of the Provisional Government during the Revolution of 1848 had divided Wallachia into two classes: *boyars* – reluctant to change, and *liberals* – "sons of peasants, fighters and martyrs of the great modern political demands." Regarding the legacies left by the Revolution of 1848, it was now crucial to determine who *the liberals were*. A speech by P. P. Carp in 1897 in the Senate clarifies the place of the lower strata in the revolution: "I believe that all these things were done not by the oppressed classes against the oppressors, but by those social strata who, after a long slavery, also demand the place in the sunlight, but they were made by one generation against another generation, they were made by sons against their parents!" At the end of

the nineteenth century, there was a fear of conservatives that the history of the 1848 Revolution would be falsified by assuming the merits and instrumentalizing them in the struggle for political power by PNL representatives. The fundamental idea was that the Revolution of 1848 had not been carried out by the masses, but by the sons of the boyars themselves: "sons against their parents", many of whom had been educated in the university centers of Berlin, Paris or London (Chiper, 2015, pp. 179-180).

The history built around Ștefan-Răzvan would not only condemn the ruler, as a traitor or usurper, but also the Romanian boyars who supported him, the "liberal demagogues", who also had a contribution to his ascension to the throne. They are sometimes referred to in historical works written before the Great Union of 1918 as "deputies of Ștefan Răzvan" who "subscribed [...] a very humiliating act for the ruler of Romania [Michael the Brave] making Sigismund formally sovereign over the principality" (Laurian, 1909, p. 165). Terms such as "demagogues", "deputies" are new, in the Middle Ages there was indeed a council made up of boyars who had a certain role in the election and support of the lord. By appointing the boyars who would have subscribed to the enthronement of Ștefan-Răzvan with these terms, an arc over time is created in which the nineteenth-century political class is responsible for not repeating history.

Ion H. Rădulescu instrumentalizes Ștefan Răzvan as a symbol of the political and national failure of bringing a foreign prince to the throne of the Romanian Principalities: "In the same way, the Baron of Șolcan was nicknamed no more and no less than *Stephan*, but Stephen remained, not the greatest, but Stephen the Gypsy – contemporary Transylvanian chroniclers call him Răzvan, Still a bit gypsy." (Rădulescu, 1863, p. 19). The fact that Prince Ștefan Răzvan "had taken the name of 'Stephen' as his royal name" was a problem for the Romanian intellectuals of the nineteenth century. The name "Stephen" made a direct connection between the occupant of the throne and Stephen the Great (1457-1504), the most important figure in the history of Moldavia, suggesting a Romanian royal legitimation and descent in the person of Răzvan. Over time, not only Răzvan "had also taken the name of "Stephen", but also other rulers who followed Stephen the Great, without necessarily having a blood connection with him. Their boldness, however, has never been so criticized at the historiographical level, as in the case of Răzvan. The contemporary Transylvanian chronicler to whom I. H. Rădulescu refers is none other than Gheorghe Șincai, the historian of the Transylvanian School.

The one who was to become the first president of the Romanian Academy and after whose name the most important amphitheater of this institution is named, "Ion Heliade Rădulescu", unravels in the person of Ștefan Răzvan the origins of an ancient Romanian proverb: "The Gypsy when he became emperor, before his father 'spread it'"¹ (Rădulescu, 1863, p. 20). An allusion to the fact that first those who elected Răzvan as ruler were judged and executed. In order to further strengthen Ștefan-Răzvan's image as a

¹ Am ales să redau aici forma scrisului așa cum apare ea în original, fără să o adaptez așa cum am făcut în citatele folosite mai sus din lucrarea *Votul și revotul popular*, publicată de H. Rădulescu în 1863.

non-Romanian, I. H. Rădulescu continues with other anecdotes. A Hungarian would have gone to Ștefan Răzvan and would have asked him what it was: "Dihania wanting to pass the Romanian, he answered: - I am Romanian. "But, Your Majesty's father?" that one asked him again. - Still a Gypsy... replied, the poor Baraon his mouth speaking in advance. (Rădulescu, 1863, p. 20). The mocking wording "Baraon" is based on the word "pharaoh", based on the false idea in European culture that the Roma come from Egypt. The consonant "f" from "pharaoh" is replaced by "b", the newly formed word, "baraon", contains the word "baro" from the Romani language, which means "great" and at the same time the idea of "pharaoh as emperor". Through such a linguistic process, Heliade Rădulescu, recognized as the one who stylized the Romanian language, invents a dehumanizing and deeply offensive word, which is equivalent to the "Gypsy Emperor".

A proof that Heliade-Rădulescu was a good connoisseur of the history of the Roma is a letter of his from 1855 to Gr. Grădișteanu in which he wrote to him regarding the antiquity of the Romanian people, on whom the suspicion was that they were a people of ancient Greeks or Greeks (as a result of the reigns and cultural influence of the Phanariots), old Latins, Italians or old French: "The Romanians were right when they said to the ancient Greek Gypsies ; for truly the Indians are older than all the ancients. If there are the ancient Greek Gypsies, the Romanians are somewhat newer than them, but still older than those who spoke the language of Demosthenes" (Heliade-Rădulescu, 1891, p. 173). The idea of the antiquity of a people is associated in the nineteenth century with the idea of nobility, of the vine. The discussion about the place of the Romanian people at the table of the Latin peoples was an important one, this meant the recognition of the Romanians among the civilized peoples of Europe. The recognition of the fact that the Roma would have had an older origin than the Romanians, through the Indian heritage, was on the one hand a historical finding, but at the same time their name as "ancient Greeks", in the light of the cultural influence, especially the linguistic influence exerted by the Greeks on the Roma, highlights the superiority of the Romanians in relation to the two peoples. In the same letter of December 1855 he informed Grădișteanu that he had "castrated himself from his political career" in order to reassure those who would have suspected him of "the ambition of the Gypsy harm" (Heliade-Rădulescu, 1891, p. 446). We don't know exactly what the statement refers to, but most likely it is a comparison of the Romanian political class with the "Gypsies" or even Heliade-Rădulescu would have followed their harm at some point!

The anecdotes continue with the well-known Romanian folk character "Păcală" who sees the "andoi voevod" defecating (to emphasize Răzvan's Roma origin he uses the preposition "ando" from the Romani language, its equivalent *in* Romanian). Păcala wishes him: "Eat him healthy, Your Majesty!" Feeling offended, Ștefan Răzvan orders the murder of Păcală and other "hundreds and thousands" considered his accomplices. In Romanian culture, Păcală represents the figure of the one who fools himself, naïve, credulous, but who usually comes out of the tangled situations in which he enters. From the multitude of

stories that exist in Romanian culture with this character, I have not heard, until the example of Heliade Rădulescu, that Păcală was ever killed or died in any of the stories. The fact that Ștefan-Răzvan kills Păcală, a national symbol, and "hundreds and thousands of others expresses the idea that Răzvan would have killed the Romanian nation itself. Finally, the Moldavians revolt and hang Răzvan "ridding the world of him after a three-month chaos "produced by a universal vote". On the way to the gallows, Ștefan Răzvan, seeking to give pardons and "miles", because as long as he had been a lord he had been greedy, that is, "both a gypsy and a gypsy", shouts to the people that he "owes" a thousand lei "to the Metropolitan for anointing me..." and that he forgives them... It is thus shown that Răzvan would have given the Metropolitan of Moldavia a bribe to be anointed with myrrh by him, as a symbol of God's approval of his reign. In fact, Ștefan-Razvan uses in the documents of the princely chancellery signed by him the formula "I Ștefan voevod, by the mercy of God, ruler of the land of Moldavia" (Roller, et al., 1950, p. 124). Heliade Rădulescu then concludes with the fate of Păcală and Răzvan to be killed because of the "universal vote" (Rădulescu, 1863, p. 20). Răzvan is thus constructed as a symbol of the Romanians to abdicate the right of national sovereignty and autonomy. His killing is a restoration of the pre-existing order. The appeal to comparisons with and about "gypsies" was a discursive form meant to ensure the success of the orator or writer. The "Gypsy" was the common point where different opinions could finally reach a consensus.

Another comic advice that I. H. Rădulescu gives in his brochure is the following: some "Păcali" from the system, with their hearts full of bad faith, ask Romanians the day before the ad-hoc couch "What do you want?". Păcală's son, before the people answered, quickly printed thousands and thousands of pamphlets on which he wrote: "We want a foreign prince". Another Romanian, who was abroad, also voted, showing a desire that fooled both those in the system and the people, as well as all the foreign princes "who had set their eyes on our countries": "Lord, God, prolong the desire imposed on the Romanians until the monarchical or royal Europe rots, so that principles like the stars fall, so that I can give the Romanians some foreign prince to eat it roasted" (Rădulescu, 1863, pp. 12-13).

If we were to follow the chronological thread of the events described, we could see the following: in 1852 the first issue of "Literary Romania" was suppressed, in which Nicolae Bălcescu explicitly mentioned Răzvan's ethnic origin, in 1853 the complete edition of "The Chronicle of Romanians and Other Nations" appeared, also in Iași, in which the idea of collective guilt that must be assumed by the Romanians in order to be allowed on the throne of Moldavia "a gypsy" is present. Two years later, in 1855, the first censored issue of "România literară" appears, in which there is no reference to the ethnic origin of Ștefan Răzvan. Eight years later, 1863, during Cuza's reign, the image of Ștefan Răzvan is taken up by I. H. Rădulescu in constructing his arguments against bringing a foreign prince to the throne of Moldavia and Wallachia.

After the Revolution of 1848, I. H. Rădulescu's conservative views in relation to the progressive intellectuals of the time became tense because of his different position towards the European powers in relation to the latter. In a letter of his to Caesar Bolliac, a former member of the Commission for the Liberation of Slaves, perhaps the most vocal Pașoptista regarding the abolition of Roma slavery, he tells him: "A Romanian also heard that it is not human for someone to have slaves or Gypsies, and he started one day and beat his mother, beating her on the stairs, judging her that why should she have slaves" (Heliade-Rădulescu, 1891, p. 105-106). Rădulescu thus conveys the idea that revolutionary ideas, those of equality and emancipation of society, had to be adapted to the local context but always placing slaves and masters in a relationship with the homeland, the nation, whose sons were the masters, and the slaves were not. The image of the Roma, or especially that of Ștefan-Răzvan as a representative of all Roma, was often instrumentalized in the power relations between Romanian intellectuals.

In 1866, three years after the publication of Heliade-Rădulescu's work, Moldavia and Wallachia were already under the reign of the foreign prince of the Hohenzollern dynasty, Carol I, whose full name was Karl Eitel Friedrich Zephyrinus Ludwig von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen. It is no coincidence that the first romantic dramatic work in Romanian literature, "Răzvan Vodă", was published and staged, ten months after the proclamation of Carol I as ruler of Romania, February 10, 1867. The premiere took place at the National Theater in Iași. The chronicle of P. P. Carp, a close friend of the new king, published in November 1867 in "Convorbiri literare", comes to protest against a mystification which, "through the complicity of the public", had become a sad experience: "to find writers who, driven by a fatal illness, give life and light to lucubrations such as Răzvan Vodă, this has often been seen, to find themselves an audience that gives them an incomprehensible approval, this is rarer and more serious" (Carp, 1867, p. 245). Probably it was not Hașdeu who referred to P. P. Carp as a writer pushed by a fatal illness to give life and light to Ștefan Răzvan, but Nicolae Bălcescu – the one who, just before dying in exile crushed by a cruel illness, wanted his article on Ștefan Răzvan to be published. Hașdeu's genius and subtlety had been understood by P. P. Carp. What P. P. Carp foresaw was the passage to immortality, to the hero, which Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu offered to Ștefan Răzvan through a literary work that brought a double criticism to society: on the one hand, he criticized society for its old habits, of which racism towards the Roma was the strongest, and on the other hand, he slapped the political class for its inability to have been unable to choose a Romanian ruler on the throne of the two principalities.

Carp considers Hașdeu's work fatal "for the country's literary momentum". Even if Hașdeu builds Răzvan on the premises of what would later be defined much more clearly by Nae Ionescu as the "good Romanian", Carp takes care to highlight Răzvan's "gypsy" heritage from his father who had transmitted to him "that naïve and unconquered appetite for the good of Trăinu, which today is still a distinctive sign of the Gypsy people and before which the psychologist stops as if before an unresolved problem" (Carp, 1867,

p. 245). Carp does not take into account the fact that in fact the Romanians had had for five centuries that "unconquered appetite for the good of the living" by enslaving and exploiting the Roma.

Mircea Eliade dedicates a series of notes to the relations between B. P. Hașdeu and King Carol I. He shows that Hașdeu's articles in the newspaper "Traian" created the image of an "antidynastic". Hașdeu devoted an extensive debate to the dynastic problem in the journalism of the time. His position, however, could not compete with the idea of the Union and its maintenance, as he himself stated on April 6, 1866: "I was against the principle of the foreign Lord of *non-Latin race*. That is why I subscribed to the plebiscite in the register against the election of Prince Carol I. Today, however, [...], as one that I have been and will always be for the Union, I hasten to withdraw my vote, declaring that, *in the interest of saving the Union*, I am in favor of the election of Carol I" (Petriceicu-Hașdeu, 1937, pp. 324, 325). Eliade does not make the direct connection between the image of Ștefan Răzvan and that of Carol I, nor could he have done so considering the political context in which he publishes the critical edition of Hașdeu's work: the monarchy of Carol II, grandson of the first foreign prince, Carol I. For Eliade, Hașdeu is the one who replaced Răzvan: "the "man of value", "predestined", destined to do great deeds and who is left in the dark by the "country" (Eliade în Petriceicu-Hașdeu, 1937, p. 331). He shows that what contributed to Hașdeu's hostility towards the ruler was not only the "German and Ovrei danger" and "cosmopolitanism", but also the reduced honor he enjoyed at the Palace in the first years of Carol I's reign.

Perhaps, for the betterment of King Carol I, Hașdeu chose in 1869 to publish his work, "Răzvan Vodă", under a new title compared to the initial one: "Răzvan și Vidra"! "Răzvan" seems to be Carol I now, and "Vidra" – Romania. The change of the title of the song would forever change the way it would be understood and received by the public.

The "Gypsy Emperor" as a National Trauma (1595 - 1863)

The first poetic expression generated by the occupation of the throne of Moldavia by Ștefan Răzvan is a "Song of Lament on the Land of the Wallachians" by an Armenian chronicler, a priest established for a period in Iași, Hagop from Tokat born in 1573. The poem presents the political and social life of Moldavia between 1593-1595, to which Hagop of Tokat was an eyewitness. The theme is the takeover of the throne of Moldavia by Ștefan-Răzvan from Aron Vodă, then from Răzvan by Ieremia Movilă. About Răzvan it is shown:

"The evil voivode [Aron Voda] had an adviser,
his name was Rasvan;
he was loved by all;
was the head of the horsemen.
Commanded by the horsemen,

who have caught the voivode;
They put iron on his hands and feet,
they took him to the Hungarians
Răzvan, malice itself,
sat down on the princely throne,
and reigned over the land
on April 24.
From Easter to St. Mary's Day
he was the lord of the Wallachian nation;
has done much evil to the country,
As it has never been and will never be again
The whole country was frightened
of the terror of the pagan Tatar,
Like a ship in the sea
that sways on the waves."
(Siruni, 1939, pp. 305-306)

Răzvan is called a "pagan Tatar", why? Is this just a figure of speech or is there a direct reference to Răzvan's non-Romanianness and implicitly, by "pagan", to the fact that he was not Orthodox? We will see the significance of this observation along the way. I. H. Rădulescu referred in his work on universal suffrage to an ancient Romanian proverb, associating it directly with the image of Ștefan Răzvan: "The Gypsy when he became emperor, he 'scattered his father'" (Rădulescu, 1863, p. 20). The first part, "the gypsy when he became emperor" expresses the idea of becoming, through the verb "to arrive". Becoming involves, in addition to obtaining the dreamed status, also a transformation of the individual. Once he becomes emperor, the first target of the "gypsy" is his father, by killing his father he kills his past, his origins. Thus, everything turns against him. Those who are ashamed of their parents, especially by committing patricide, are detested and rejected by society. But what would have happened if the "gypsy" had chosen, motivated by love for his parent, to keep him alive? This would have been a proof of his origin, and society would have rejected him, would not have recognized his legitimacy. In other words, any of the choices is to the detriment of the "gypsy": if he chooses to keep him alive he will be mocked by the courtiers, if he chooses to kill him he will also be mocked. The conclusion would be that he should not approach the throne.

The joining of the words "gypsy" and "emperor" is antagonistic, in the language of the time "gypsy" was still synonymous with the word "slave" or "slave". The accession to the throne of a person from the "most abject classes", to use the expression of I. H. Rădulescu, was a shame for the entire political class and for the entire people, tacitly assumed as a collective fault of the entire Romanian people, but turned to the "gypsy" in the form of his self-destruction under the triumphant gaze of the Romanian. To be "king" implied a direct

appointment to reign, an anointing with myrrh from God. The "Gypsy" does not get this appointment, he gets to the throne through betrayal, through trickery, and then everything turns against him. Here the proverb also implies a questioning on the part of the Romanian of God on the idea of "how was it possible, how did you allow it"? Divine justice does its job in that Răzvan dies under his desire to be ruler of Moldavia.

Who is the "father"? There are two courts here. The first, to which I referred above, would refer to the biological parent. The "father" is represented by the ruler Aron, whom Răzvan betrayed, but also by the retinue of boyars who are said to have killed Răzvan immediately after ascending the throne. The "father" is at the same time an individual character and a collective one, in any case a mirror of Răzvan's gypsy under any instance the father could be looked at: biological or adoptive – Aron Vodă and the retinue of boyars who would have trusted Ștefan Răzvan. The anecdote presented by I. H. Rădulescu in which a Hungarian would have gone to Ștefan Răzvan and asked him *what it was*, and "Dihania wanting to pass the Romanian, answered: - I am Romanian. "But, Your Majesty's father?" that one asked him again. - Still a gypsy... replied, poor Baron," it makes even more sense now. It is not the question of taking the throne that is important, but the origin of the person who took it.

The problem of lineage on the throne of Moldavia was not only a concern of classical historiography, but also of the present one. Cristian Antim Bobicescu, in his article on the origin of Ieremia Movilă, the one who succeeded Ștefan Răzvan to the throne – and the one who also assassinated him – shows that "If Ieremia belonged to the dynasty unlike Răzvan who was of low birth, and unwanted by the Moldavians, supporting the former, Poland appeared in the eyes of the Pope as the defender of "legality" (Bobicescu, p. 36). The author, a specialist in Moldovan-Polish relations in the medieval period, further points out that "We seem to be facing a polemic. For the dominant opinion existing in Poland was that in Moldavia there is no nobility, but everyone is equal to each other, and that there "everyone is just beginning to graze the sheep and already wants to become a great pan and become a voivode". This is Ossoliński's opinion in 1553, but two decades later Paprocki's epigones write the same thing (that the Moldavians accept gentlemen of low birth) and the opinion is maintained until about 1620 when a participant in Żółkiewski's campaign in Țuțora writes that "the Moldavians have the habit of submitting to the one who rules the capital", a fact that implies in the conception of our Pole a significant lack of dynastic feeling in Moldavia". (Bobicescu, p. 46).

In this context, we better understand the challenges to which Nicolae Bălcescu had set himself to respond through his chapter on Ștefan Răzvan. Bălcescu uses Ștefan Răzvan as a symbol against slavery. All the ideals of the Revolution of 1848 – which implied a radical transformation of social and power structures, through the loss of the privileges held by a certain class – could not be realized without the abolition of slavery. Bălcescu focuses on the image of Ștefan Răzvan the equality between classes, which meant not only considering *the gypsies* as the *equals of the Romanians*, but also the loss of the privileges of

the boyars in relation to *the peasants*: "Born a gypsy from a nation condemned for centuries to slavery, he was yet another strong proof that in the eyes of providence there are no chosen peoples and condemned peoples, that it equally pours out its mercies upon all men without distinction of nation, but placing on the forehead of each one the seal of the Godhead, and declaring him with equal rights as all mankind, to liberty, to equality, to virtue, and to truth." (Bălcescu, 1887, p. 236).

These words were directed against the rulers of Moldavia and Wallachia. Dan Berindei shows that Bălcescu had taken part in the 1848 Revolution in France. In February 1848, together with the Parisians, he tore a piece of velvet from the throne of King Louis-Philippe and sent it to Vasile Alecsandri as a sign of the "victory of the 'wonderful Revolution'". Back in the country, he demanded the publication as soon as possible of the measures regarding the liberation of Roma slaves (Berindei, 1969, p. 21; 24). Bălcescu, like the rest of the abolitionists, was aware that the freedom of Romanians was locked in the slavery of the Roma. In order to emancipate themselves, to be received and treated respectfully within the great European family, where they felt more attached to the Latin side, especially the French as it was otherwise and natural, the Romanians needed to wrest their freedom from the hands of the Roma. The centuries of slavery in which Romanians had learned to regard the Roma as "the most abject class of society" had left deep traces in Moldavian and Wallachian societies. The first reference to the reign of Ștefan Răzvan comes from the *Letopisețul Țara Moldovei*, written by Miron Costin, without making any mention of its origin. On the other hand, other historical sources from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, outside the Romanian space, make numerous references to his ethnic origin. Bălcescu thus had to change an opinion that had become grounded in historiography.

Perhaps one of the reasons why Ștefan Răzvan would mark the national consciousness so deeply was not only that his legitimacy was imputed, but also his too close proximity to Western values, in this case the fear of the Moldavians and the Wallachians of having introduced Catholicism in the two countries as a result of Ștefan Răzvan's closeness to a Transylvanian prince close to the Pope. Melchisedec Ștefanescu, a titular member of the Romanian Academy, pointed out that: "Batori, [...], sent with Răzvan and one Catholic Bishop of his own, to lead the papism of Moldavia for the benefit of Hungary" (Ștefănescu, 1883, p. 256). From another of his articles we find an essential piece of information regarding the erasure of the memory of the Roma ruler: "Răzvan, who have become an undue ruler (which for this reason is not even shown in the catalogue of those who reigned)" (Ștefănescu, 1883, p. 276).

In a collection of Romanian folk songs from 1869 there was a ballad about a Moldavian ruler named Ciubăr (the name is obviously chosen with significance, referring to pastorality as a defining element of Romanian folk culture, "ciubăr" being a wooden vessel used in the preparation of cheese). In the ballad, his name alternates with that of Bogdan. We find out that at the marriage of his son, "So the gallant Ciubăr/ Dowry of the

daughter-in-law/ Tools of gold milk/ Treasures of great price/ Seven terguri of trade/ And three hundred estates/ Ear of gypsies thousands of thousands." The number of slaves exceeds that of all other goods offered as dowries. We know that Roma slaves were included in the dowry lists. However, what caught my attention, given that Ciubăr would have reigned, in the opinion of Gheorghe Șincai, in the fifteenth century, are the following verses: "And saying: "Where is Ciubăr. Our good father, / Where is his son Bogdan/ Let him deliver us from the Tartars,/ Who leads us like oxen/ And cuts us like sheep; Let us get rid of the Gypsies/ Who reign in his court,/ Since our good Lords,/ They perished and left us." (Stamati, 1868, p. 94; 117).

The reign of Ștefan Răzvan takes place in the sixteenth century, however being a popular ballad it is a product of the popular collective memory, therefore subject to transformations and adaptations according to the cultural needs of the group that creates it. There is a dilation and a restriction of historical time depending on the message that the ballad wants to convey. This cultural product clearly highlights the collective trauma of Romanians as a people harassed, invaded and sometimes from whose ranks the Tatars even take slaves. This image surpasses the one in which Romanians gave the Roma as wedding gifts, this being a normality, a "custom of the land". To all this is added the antithesis between Ciubăr and "The Gypsies Who Reign in His Court", Răzvan being called by Gheorghe Șincai as "the first of the Gypsies". The ballad has the tone of the lyrics of the national poet of Romania, Mihai Eminescu, from the Third Letter, dedicated to Stephen the Great: "How can you not come, Impaler lady, as if by laying your hands on them,/ To divide them into two groups: in the insane and in the mișei,/ And in two large prisons by force to gather them,/ To set fire to the prison and to the madhouse!" (Eminescu, 1881). The lyrics are full of questionnaires of an adverse fate of Romanians led by a corrupt political class. In addition to these elements of an adversarial history, Romanians also have to face the fact that "Gypsies reign in the ruler's court", here having reified the image of Ștefan Răzvan as a representative of all "gypsies".

The "Gypsy Emperor" as a national trauma is reflected both in the popular collective memory and in the cultured collective memory. The two memoirs shake hands to meet this trauma. Both memories are responsible for producing counter-narratives that heal trauma. The trauma of the "gypsy emperor" would also resonate during the interwar legionary period. In the political program of the Legionary movement, xenophobia — namely anti-Semitism as its main variant — is constituted, as is easy to assume, in a fundamental direction; It fully translates, in an autochthonous version, the racism promoted by the Nazis. "The racial purification of the Romanian people is a matter of life and death," wrote Traian Herseni. According to him, the dissolution of a people is caused precisely by its ethnic-racial alteration: "Undoubtedly, the decay of the Romanian people is due to the infiltration into our ethnic group of elements of inferior race, to the corruption of ancient, Geto-Roman blood, with Phanariot and Gypsy blood, and now ago with Jewish blood." In the vision of the legionaries, the idea of "gypsyization" had a special symbolic

charge, being associated with the historical episode in which a ruler of Roma origin, Stefan Răzvan, briefly occupied the throne of Moldavia. This reference was used as a negative example, to suggest the degradation of the ruling elites when "foreign blood" penetrates the power structure.

Romanians' fear of not being considered gypsies was a leitmotif in Romanian culture. The image of Romanians as Gypsies competed in the European imaginary even in the nineteenth century: "The Romanian spirit was so weakened that the Boerians were ashamed to speak Romanian, except for the Gypsies and servants. Even the Romanian Boer himself begs the prince, that no young Boer, who will not learn Greek books, will no longer be accepted into public office. What a shame!! "To such humiliation came the Romanian in his hearth. Again: and the glorious name of "Romanian" was loosened and answered: I am a Moldavian, not a Romanian; because Romanian was equal to gypsy" (Lăzăriciu, 1884, p. 95). In 1891, at a university course, the rector of the University of Chernivtsi. Fr. Schuler von Libloy, a fierce anti-Romanian, had offended the Romanians by saying that they would come from "gypsies". Aurel Băleanu, from Bukovina, present at the course, provoking him to a duel, forced the rector to retract his words and apologize in a public meeting (Chiper, 2014, p. 26).

Hașdeu's play had a strong echo in Romanian culture, especially through Hașdeu's mastery of writing, having William Shakespeare as a reference. The cultured answers were not long in coming, the intellectuals of the time processing the answer apparently coming from popular culture, of the "gypsy emperor", in order to counteract the possible transformative effects at the social level that Hașdeu's work could have produced. Racism towards Roma developed with the increase in the number of printed publications, which experienced an explosion starting in the second half of the nineteenth century. Anecdotes from the people about the Roma were a special section in some of these publications. "The Gypsies Hungry to the Steward", such an "anecdote", depicts the situation of a multitude of enslaved Roma, "before the emancipation", who were kept hungry by their master, "a large landowner", and only received food in the evening. Going in front of their master to ask for food, the Roma are unable to speak clearly in Romanian, resulting from their words that "they receive food three times a day and once in the evening". To these, the boyar answers: "You are scumbags, because they have fifty harapnics of each to shoot you." On the same page there are other "anecdotes" about the Roma, the last of them being "The Gypsy Emperor".

We learn that a "great-grandson of Pharaoh, in what land it is not known, had again come to be exalted to the kingdom." Ascending the throne and being surrounded by "the great and powerful of the country", his father approached him and said to him in a whisper: "Dear tetii! Dear tetii! Don't go for your gypsy impalement, because you are making fun of our nation, and we could no longer earn bread with the hammer! Ask others to lie to each other, for you only know how to behave, reign!" The answer of

"Chiaurică-emperor²" is to give as a first command to his subjects the hanging of his father, "to put him in the saddle" (Bogdan, 1891, p. 4). Looking at the structure of the "anecdote" there are two aspects that are of interest: the fact that it is not known in which country a Roma had become emperor and that he had arrived again. The lack of location has the role of reinforcing the idea that the Roma do not belong to any space, but especially to neutralize the presence of Stefan-Răzvan on the throne of Moldova. The fact that it is shown that another Roma, besides Stefan-Răzvan, had had the chance to become emperor again and that he behaves in the same way as the one before him, by killing his father, shows that the Roma are not compatible with positions of power, these being only occasions to manifest their self-hatred instrumentalized at the level of anecdote by denying and destroying their own origins – similar to the boomerang effect – the position of power cannot be attributed to a Roma – This finally turns against him by destroying him.

"Răzvan Vodă" as a literary means of building a hero who would reconcile us with the past

Before the play "Răzvan Vodă" was performed in 1867 in Iași, B. P. Hașdeu had published the work "Ioan Vodă cel Terit" in 1865, "his first great historical writing [...] of an unusual value in our historiography" (Apostolescu, 1912, p. 27). At the time of the performance of the play in Iași, the echo of the proverb related to "The Gypsy who became emperor..." it was already a strong one in Moldavia and Wallachia, as I. H. Rădulescu informs us. However, as we could see in Gheorghe Șincai's work, he was very strong especially in Transylvania, the place where the first "official" answer, "The Chronicle of Romanians and Other Nations", had come from in relation to the reign of Stefan-Răzvan.

Ioan Budai Deleanu, as well as Gheorghe Șincai – one of the most important representatives of the Transylvanian School, the Romanian cultural-political unionist movement in Transylvania, wrote in the eighteenth century the first epic in Romanian culture, entitled "The Gypsy". We already notice a pattern: the first large-scale literary works of Romanians have Roma as their subject! Written at least five decades before Hașdeu's play, the epic names one of its characters in "The Gypsy Camp" "Răzvan". G. Bogdan Duică shows that Ioan Budai Deleanu, "referring to the gypsy cowardice", annotates the stanzas with allusions to certain historical events, the cowardice of the Roma being expressed through the character "Răzvan the blacksmith":

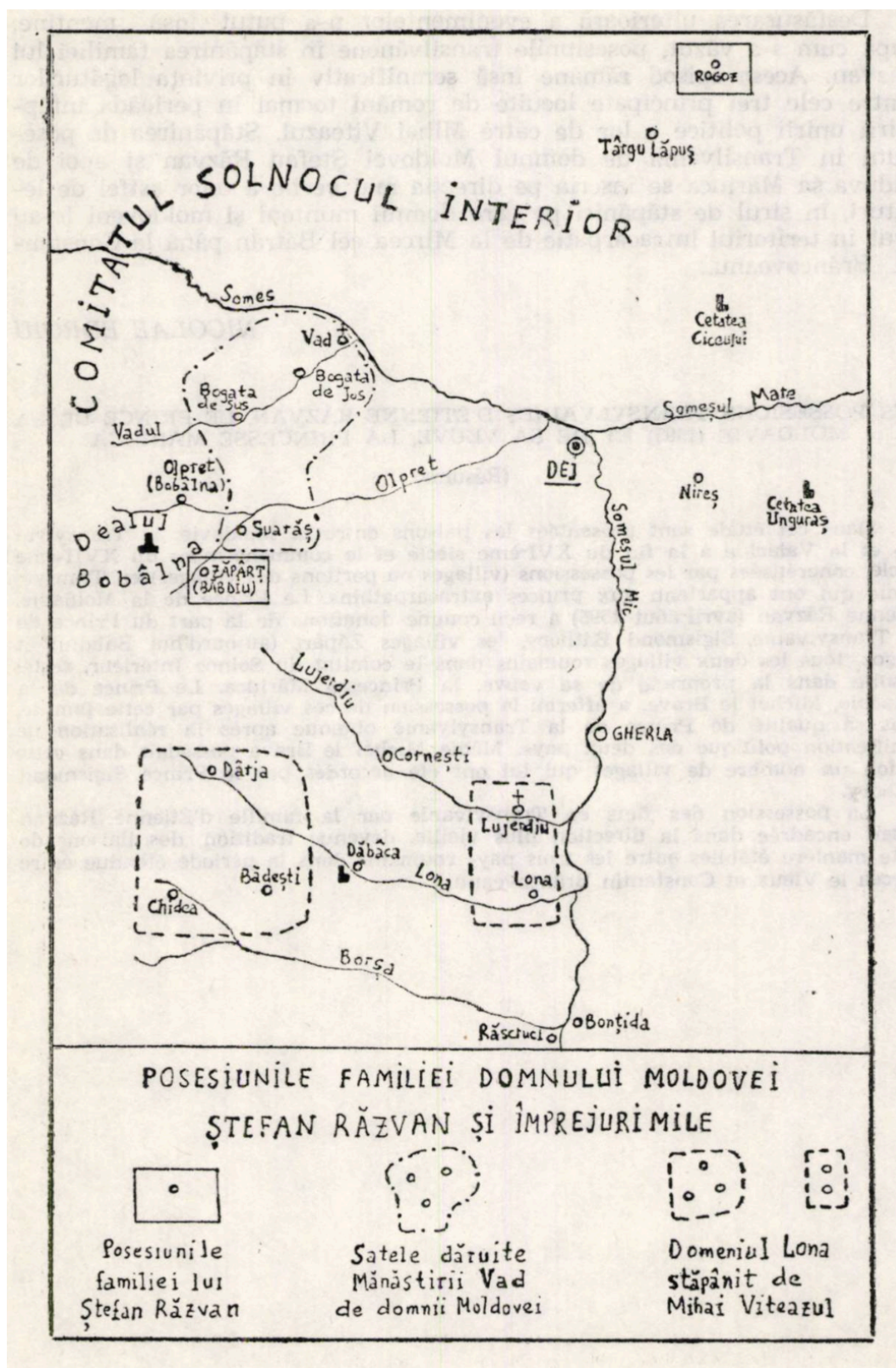
"But how much! Yes, we don't feel like fighting,
Why should we be so careful,
That it hurts the Turks not to cut us off?
What do we get the gun for?
When without weapons as without burden,
Escape comes much easier"

² From chavo to lb. rrom. = boy, son, child

(Duică, 1901, p. 492)

The history of Ștefan Răzvan had left deep traces both in the collective memory and in the historiography. Even if the throne of Moldavia or Wallachia had been occupied by rulers whose Romanianness was questioned, Ștefan Răzvan had to be imagined as the exception that confirms the rule. Lazăr Șăineanu, addressing the problem of the relations of the Romanian Lands with the Ottoman Empire, shows that the throne of Moldavia and Wallachia "since it had become an object of venality for the Turks was given to all nations – Germans (Iancu Sasul), Poles (Miron Barnowsky), Italians (Gaspar Grazziani), Jews (Aron Voda), Armenians (Ion Vodă cel Terit), Arnăuți (Ghiculesci) and Gypsies (Răzvan-Vodă)" (Șăineanu, 1900, p. 670). Even though Ștefan Răzvan is included in this list, he had not been appointed by the Porte, but had taken the throne of Moldavia with the support of the Transylvanian prince Sigismund Bathory, against and without the consent of the Ottomans.

If until the moment of romantic historicism the boyars of high rank and those of lower rank, the free peasants, the slaves and the slaves were informed about their historical past through the frescoes on the walls of the monasteries founded by various Romanian rulers and boyars (some of which were specially built as places of worship for the boyars, others for the peasants, and others for the Roma slaves, to which were added the princely courts and mansions as a permanent presence of the name of a ruler or a boyar family) with the beginning of the nineteenth century, called the "century of nationalities" or "the century of history", an extensive information and awareness campaign began on the historical past – a binder that the new society needed so much to constitute itself in a modern one: Historical drama was to be the middle. If until then the historical past, through the presence of the monastery, the church and the biblical scenes and the portraits of the founders painted on their walls intertwined local or regional history with Orthodoxy, through the historical drama, which secularized the past, we moved on to a new stage of construction of history, through means that involved the writing and acting of the actors, and implicitly of memory as the foundation of the new Romanian nation. The prints on Moldavian or Wallachian history were too few and had a low circulation, the books on the history of the nation had not been written, writing and reading were known by a very small segment of the inhabitants – the historical drama became the means of informing a privileged public consisting mainly of boyars and townspeople, but who easily became carriers and transmitters of the new message. As Nicolae Edroiu points out, "The multiple preoccupations of the scholar [B. P. Hașdeu] could have confused, and, regarding the reign of Răzvan Vodă, what was fiction could easily be confused with historical reality" (Edroiu, 1993, p. 513).



Facsimile 1

Until the union of Moldavia with Wallachia in 1859, the Romanian theater already had a history in the representation of abolitionist plays. Raluca Tomi shows that starting

with the third decade of the nineteenth century, plays presenting the life of slaves from the British or French colonies were performed on the stage of the theaters in Iași and Bucharest (Tomi, 2016, pp. 167-178). In 1842, the play "The Slaves" by August Kotzebue was printed in Iași, translated by Iancu Ganea, into the Cyrillic alphabet (КОЛЕБОВЕ, 1842). It had been originally published in German in 1796 under the title "Die Negersklaven – Ein Historisch-Dramatisches Gemählde in Drey Akten", and then translated anonymously into English in the same year under the title "The Negro Slaves – A Dramatic-Historical Piece in Three Acts" (Hologa, 2020, pp. 137-138). In 1843 it was performed on the stage of the theater in Iași, and the chronicles show that some boyars left the hall feeling that the play directly targeted them as masters of slaves. In 1855, Gheorghe Asachi's play, "The Gypsies", was performed on the stage of the same theater, on the occasion of the emancipation of the Roma in Moldavia.

Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu was influenced by Shakespeare's romantic work. It seems that he read his songs in the original (Braniște, 2021, p. 102). The title of the first act of the play, "A Slave for a Yellow", is only a small indication of Hașdeu's intention to imitate the one about whom Alecsandri, who had received the invitation to write the preface to the Romanian translation of the play "Romeo and Juliet", refused, saying: "*Who would have the courage to touch Shakespeare. I, for one, don't. I do not touch the holy things*" (Braniște, 2021, p. 106).

The attempt to decipher the hidden meanings of Hașdeu's work for an uninitiated in the field of literature is difficult and challenging at the same time. I will not actually resort to a literary analysis, I will try to sketch the portrait of Ștefan Răzvan in the light of the relationship between history and memory as it emerges from the play. B. P. Hașdeu relates the Romanian identity, through the "neighbor" (an enslaved Moldavian peasant) Tănase who became a beggar, and the "gypsy" identity through Ștefan Răzvan, as an enslaved gypsy. Tanase, who became a beggar through a combination of circumstances involving envy of himself from some fellow villagers and the loss of his property through an unfair trial, is now at the mercy of passers-by. One of the passers-by from whom he begs is the boyar Sbierea, who responds to Tanase's lamentations:

"Rather than a beggar, it is better to take the axe to work."
Tanase:

"Alas,! Oh, maiden... A Romanian doesn't beg,
He doesn't beg while he still has a straw of hope in his bosom!
I didn't beg either, lady, as much as I had vines,
And a land as far as the plough pulls, and a porch to the sun;

Sbierea, as the name suggests, goes on snorting without noticing that the bag of coins he had on his belt has fallen off. The one who lifts it from below is Răzvan. Even though he shouts at him to give it back to him, Sbierea also sees Răzvan as a beggar. He

continues his hurried journey shouting at Răzvan: "I have no enemy, enemy, enemy!"³ Considering Hașdeu's encyclopedic personality, the "bag of coins" refers to Michael the Brave's words about Stefan Răzvan, in which the Wallachian ruler stated that Răzvan stole a bag with six thousand coins from him.

Răzvan does not keep the bag of coins for himself, but wants to give it to Tanase. Now the mirroring of the identities I was talking about above enters the scene:

„TANASE

From a gypsy alms?

RĂZVAN

Dec! And yet the boyar,

If he had given you a disgust of brass, would you have ascended him to heaven?

TANASE

He's Romanian, anyway..."

Tanase's dignity as a Romanian peasant would have been damaged by the acceptance of pity from a "gypsy". The reception of "help" is refused because of Răzvan's ethnic belonging to a group that had been in slavery for centuries – a social and legal status inferior to the status of its neighbors in Moldova. The argument that Răzvan brings to Tănase to convince him to accept his help or mercy is that "[...] I'm not an ordinary gypsy, I swear. / [...] In my heart beats like an eagle/ The mother was Romanian...". Thus, Răzvan's main character trait, as presented by Nicolae Bălcescu, courage, is attributed by Hașdeu to Răzvan's "Romanian half", and the idea is expressed through the mouth of the character Răzvan. Upon hearing Răzvan's words, that his mother is even Moldovan, Tanase says annoyed:

"Moldovan? What do I hear, Lord! But this is a crime:

Where they were

That he got *together*

Crows with turtledoves

Snakes with flowers

Bears with deer

And the clouds with sunshine?...

A pigeon to bear a crowboy..."

The comparison that Hașdeu makes here through the intervention of the character Tănase, who would later become a trusted advisor to Prince Răzvan, but eternally reminding him of his "gypsy" and the "illegitimate right" to occupy the throne, is not accidental. Hașdeu's attachment to the theory of evolution and his intellectual appreciation

³ I chose to reproduce the quotes as they appear in the 1909 edition of the work: Hașdeu, B. P. (1909) *Răzvan și Vidra*, Leon Alcalay Bookstore Publishing House, Bucharest.

for Charles Darwin are evident from the content of the second volume of the *Critical History of Romanians*, published in 1875, where he extensively discusses the theory of evolution in relation to man and the environment (Haşdeu, 1999, pp. 565-576). Marriages between Roma and Romanians had been forbidden during slavery, with small exceptions during the reigns of certain rulers. In 1927, Gheorghe Sion published the work "The Emancipation of the Gypsies". He takes up Haşdeu's formulation in a discussion of his with Maria, a servant of other boyars, but who lived on his estate. At the center of the discussion between them was her marriage to Ion, a peasant on the estate of Zion: "But there is something in the middle: don't you know that the raven⁴ and the dove cannot mate? You, unfortunately, are a Gypsy, a servant. What would your masters say?" (Sion, 1924, pp. 13-14). The work presents the life of the "gypsy" Maria, who, as the author describes her, "still bore the features or traces of a true gypsy beauty. Her tall and slender waist, the extremities of her fine and delicate hands and feet, the regularity of her facial features, which gave her the air of an Indian statue, her fine skin, in which she seemed to fight whiteness with brownness, to chase away the bruise innate in her primitive race, her large azure blue eyes, shaded by long eyelashes and thick black eyebrows, slightly arched, towards the top rebridled towards the temples, and towards the middle of the forehead always coming together as if they wanted to show the worries and sorrows of the soul... here is briefly the type or ideal to which Ion Buruiană dedicated his Romanian manhood, although he was five or six years younger than her, although on her face the squabbles showed a state of decadence. But he did not seek to count her years, nor the teeth in her mouth, which, in truth, any queen could have envied, but sought to convince himself if she had the other qualities that await a worker from the companion of his life" (Sion, 1924, pp. 17-18).

Given that Ştefan Răzvan's father would have been a Roma slave and his mother Romanian, according to the custom of the land, the male child would have followed the fate of the father. The "combination" of a Roma with a Romanian woman, described in evolutionary terms, is presented as an anomaly of nature. Probably starting from Darwin's study of finches, the first comparison made is that of the mating between a raven and a turtledove. The list goes on with a series of pairs of different species, and Haşdeu uses this figure of speech precisely to highlight how much attitudes towards the Roma were dictated by racial differences at the time. In order to finally offer the audience the answer to "what Răzvan is", Haşdeu makes it heard through the character's own mouth, as a personal assumption: "But only Romanian does not call him, because I am much more Romanian..." (referring to the boyar Sbierea); "I'm not a Gypsy... I've told you before... You don't keep confusing me anymore...".

The issue of blood mixing actually has finer substrates in the context of Ştefan-Răzvan's reign and the problem of his legitimacy and that of his descendants on the

⁴ See page 77, there is currently a family of Roma, settled mostly around Bucharest who call themselves "corbeni". The name is actually a racialization of the Roma, and the Roma themselves have internalized it.

throne of Moldavia. By the fact that Răzvan actually had children with his wife, it can be concluded that these children, in the case of the male ones, could have claimed the throne, the throne of Moldavia thus remaining "defiled for eternity". The problem of blood mixing thus acquires a double meaning in power relations: the historians who will follow will try their best to make Răzvan "Romanian", and the Roma elite to make him "Roma". Therefore, only highlighting the usurpation of the throne by the betrayal of Aaron, would defend the throne of Moldavia and change the direction of historiography. The "Gypsy Emperor" – as an answer apparently from popular culture (in fact this answer was infused into popular culture by intellectuals, scholars) – would defend the throne and the impossibility of anointing a "gypsy" on it.

'GLASS

I'm a mother!

Here the child moves... Feeling it in my bosom,

I forget everything and I see now, I see that I'm a woman too...

(outside you can hear cries: long live Răzvan Vodă)

RĂZVAN

Listen, baby Otter! Listen, my dear wife...

Our blood in the cradle will inherit a reign..."

(Petriceicu-Hașdeu, 1909, pp. 158-159).

If Nicolae Bălcescu had presented Răzvan to the public as a "gypsy", Hașdeu presents him as a "Romanian". The explanation is simple and depends on the political context in which the two authors write their works: Bălcescu emphasizes Răzvan's Roma identity in order to push the boyar class to free the enslaved Roma, being an emancipatory symbol, and Hașdeu emphasizes Răzvan's Romanian belonging as a means of reconciliation with the past, for a history in which Moldavia's past had been "tarnished" by Răzvan's presence on the throne. Hașdeu presents Vidra, as a Romanian, bearer of the national ideal of the union of the Romanian countries. In a reply of Vidra, Răzvan even takes the place of Michael the Brave, the one who manages, after Răzvan's death, to unite the three countries. Vidra puts on his shoulders the heavy burden of the desire for union, showing that the one who could have achieved this national dream was an "emperor" and not a "voda":

VIDRA:

"A happy reign... And he still wants to be like hands

You should bind all the Romanian countries in a crown,

From the Black Sea to the towering Carpathians.

Do not reign like a voda, but like Răzvan the emperor!

Here, the message is subtly conveyed by Hașdeu to Carol I, as the new ruler of the Romanians, who had to have as a priority the ideal of union with Transylvania and the

other Romanian provinces. None of the Romanian rulers has ever been called, not even in a literary work, "emperor". Nicolae Iorga would try to show that the title of "ruler" was equivalent to that of emperor, as I will detail below. However, his statement must be seen in the broad context of the beginning of Romanian nationalism.

After the 1859 Union of Moldavia with Wallachia, the Romanian Principalities need a national historical narrative in which the mistakes of the past must be corrected or "covered", and B. P. Hașdeu's dramatic work will do just that: the final scene of the play depicts Răzvan wounded by his enemies and giving his spirit at the feet of the throne of Moldavia, without getting on it, Răzvan's last words being "Gypsy... Gypsy!... Water!... Water...". It is interesting the combination that Hașdeu makes between "Gypsy" and "Water". I do not consider it accidental, just as nothing is accidental in a literary work, but everything has a meaning, which is sometimes clearly revealed to the public, and other times, as is the case of Hașdeu – an intellectual of universal scope – the reader is sometimes left to be guided by the "beans" left to the public as author's clues. On the one hand, the water will extinguish the gypsy origin of this ruler, and another interpretation I am thinking of is the proverb "he drowned like the gypsy on the shore", Răzvan being so close to reaching the throne, but failing in his dream.

B. P. Hașdeu's play has been played intensely from 1867 until today. The theatrical chronicles do not shy away from making clear reference to the Roman origin of the ruler, which is often instrumentalized according to the specifics of the publication. By the way in which several proverbs about the Roma are introduced in the article, an advertisement from 1931 that informed the public that the play would be performed at the National Theatre caught my attention: "'Răzvan si Vidra" or "What happens when you go after a woman"'. It is said about Răzvan that, finding the bag of coins lost by the boyar Sbierea, "Instead of burning a mood in the law, he wants to give it to a poor man. That saying: the gypsy knows what saffron is!" This "saying" referred to the cultural backwardness of the Roma. The author, who signs with a pseudonym, wanting to emphasize Răzvan's attachment to Vidra, shows that "Răzvan, like any gypsy who praises his hammer, raises her to the glory of heaven and is ready to make a man's death [for her]". Here is a second Romanian proverb about the Roma inserted in the text! After making a series of comparisons between the political and military battles waged by Răzvan for the throne of Moldavia and some prominent politicians such as Nicolae Titulescu or Constantin Argetoianu in the interwar period, we find out that "The Gypsy, however, is still a Gypsy! urged by his wife Vidra wants to kill Aron Voda and take his place, always when the gypsy became emperor, he first hanged his father!" Here two proverbs are inserted at once, the last one being at most discussed here. Under the influence of Vidra he declared war on the Poles: "Here he got clogged and wrote he was going to drown on the shore." Another well-known proverb in Romanian culture, meaning that when the Roma are on the verge of succeeding, then they fail. The article ends apothetically with "Răzvan who falls in battle and thus eats his church" (Omul din culise, 1931, p. 6). This last proverb, of the

"gypsy who ate his church" is perhaps the most dehumanizing proverb towards the Roma in Romanian culture. He conveys that the Roma cannot have religious feeling, that they cannot understand the idea of divinity, spirituality.

Ștefan Răzvan between the imperatives of "Dominium eminens" and "low birth"

Between 1921 and 1922, Dimitrie Gusti, the founder of Romanian sociology, as President of the Romanian Social Institute, organized a series of 23 lectures occasioned by the need to adopt a new constitution. After his opening speech, the first speaker was Nicolae Iorga, his theme being entitled "The History of the Romanian Constitution". After a series of references to the national idea and the existence of a nation on a defined territory, he deals with the idea of Reign: "A few decades ago it was discussed with great enthusiasm whether "Ruler" is less than King or more, and the decision was made to make himself the "Ruler" of the Romanians – and "Ruler" is a newer term, who is not part of our most authentic treasure – the King of Romanians, in the belief that the Romanian monarchy was thus raised above its past situation. Historians can say, however, that the adoption of the title of King instead of that of Lord is a decrease, because "Lord" meant "Emperor", "dominus noster Imperator", as it was called in Rome, and the Pope himself, when he had an imperial character, was called "dominus noster Papa", or even "domnus noster Papa", instead of "dominus". The emperor lived in the consciousness of our people without interruption from Rome to Byzantium, and later, apart from Byzantium even, in the modest particular forms that we were able to give. The entirety of the imperial power was in the hands of the Romanian Lord." (Iorga, 1922, p. 8).

Iorga further highlights that the "Lords" throughout the sixteenth centuries, until the establishment of the Phanariot rulers, were appointed with the acceptance or freely expressed desire of the country's boyars, large and small. By "small boyars" we mean the peasants of the country themselves. Another idea expressed by Iorga in his speech is that men who had princely descent were elected to the throne of the country. The importance of this lineage is also treated by Cristian Antim Bobicescu in his article on the origin of Ieremia Movilă, the one who succeeded Ștefan Răzvan to the throne. The author shows that the Duke of Sessa, Spain's ambassador to Rome, informs his king, Philip II, about a discussion between a Polish messenger and the Pope in which Ștefan Răzvan is called by the Moldavians "a man of low birth" ("mal quisto"), and Ieremia Movilă – "Jeremiah from the lineage of the ancients ("antiguos") voivodes". (Bobicescu, ..., p. 36). Therefore, Ieremia Movilă invokes a "legal" right to occupy the throne of Moldavia, and Ștefan-Răzvan does not.

Gheorghe Ghibănescu, genealogist, analyzes the composition of the divans of Moldavia and Wallachia in the sixteenth century ("liberal demagogues" or "Răzvan's deputies"), as well as the lineage of the rulers: in Moldavia, from the line of Stephen the Great, and in Wallachia, from that of Mircea the Elder. He identifies 26 rulers in Moldavia, of

which 5 are considered usurpations, the rest being "righteous rulers", i.e. recognized by the Porte. Ștefan Răzvan appears in the list of righteous rulers, although he had not been confirmed by the sultan, but by Sigismund Bathory. Ghibănescu introduces a contradiction: although he includes Răzvan in the list of official rulers, in the analysis of the divans he mentions a certain Ștefan Radu, a confusion coming from Miron Costin's Letopiseșul. The historian P.P. Panaitescu shows that Miron Costin made mistakes, inventing two non-existent reigns, including that of Ștefan Radu.

Nicolae Iorga uses this confusion to claim that Ștefan Răzvan could not be a ruler without a princely origin, rejecting the idea that a common man, especially a "gypsy", would have been accepted as a ruler. However, he considers him a "gypsy of royal bone", thus justifying Răzvan's reign (Iorga, 1930,, p. ?) Bogdan Teodorescu emphasizes the lack of a clear royal lineage, but acknowledging his intelligence, culture and ambition. The suspicion of betrayal appears in his relationship with Michael the Brave, who accuses him of fraud and desire for power.

Looking at the fact that a multitude of sources outside the Romanian territory raise the question of the origin of Ștefan Răzvan and the way in which he died, we conclude that they were noted precisely because they represented unusual aspects in relation to those times (Decsi Janos, 1866, pp. 238-240). Ștefan-Răzvan's image as a tragic hero is therefore not only a product of the work of Bălcescu, a romanticist from Pașoptist. Bălcescu relied on a number of Romanian and foreign sources, most of them detailed by Ștefan Grigorescu. The question of his origin was therefore an important aspect for foreign courts as well, Răzvan being the example of a person outside the nobility, "humiliquindem genera natum" (Grigorescu, 2015, p. 51) who could succeed to the throne – a reversal of medieval values regarding the right to rule.

The discussion on the origin of Ștefan Răzvan and the establishment of the Roma origin on the paternal or maternal line is crucial. The "gypsy" paternal lineage, especially from a slave, would have involved an even greater "soiling" of the throne – which was said to be occupied only by descendants of rulers. As Iorga presents the problem of legitimacy – the Romanian rulers drew their sap from Trajan – "prince" being the same as "emperor".

Around the ethnic origin of Ștefan Răzvan there is a whole historiography stretched between the coordinates of a princely lineage, an illegitimate son, and those of a low birth, "gypsy". In fact, it was precisely this theme that became a mythology about this historical figure, "Romanianized" by Romanian historians and "Romaized" by Roma historians. The debate is based on the social and cultural representation of the two groups. While for some it is a national trauma, for others it is a symbol of regaining dignity.

Against this background, the chancellery documents signed by Ștefan-Răzvan in his short reign must also be considered, I fully reproduce one of them that refers to the strengthening of the right of the Neamț Monastery to search for and take back its Roma slaves, probably fugitives:

"1595 (1703) May 16, Iași

I Stephen Voievod, by the mercy of God, ruler of the country of Moldavia. I have given this book of my reign to our prayers, to the abbot and to the entire council of the holy monastery of Neamț, so that they may be strong and strong with this book of my reign, to gather and take their righteous Gypsy slaves who have them in privileges, or wherever they will be, or in the country or among the Gypsies of my reign or among the boyars or among the monks in another monastery or wherever they may be and have them He brings it back to the monastery.

For this reason, let no one dare to keep them or stop them before this book of my reign.

Written in Iași, in the year 7103 <1595 > May 16.

The Lord Himself commanded.

Alexa, the logophate, learned.

Bucșuleaiu <wrote >.

Arh. St. Buc., M-rea Neamț, LXXXIV/3.

Slavic orig., paper, stamp affixed."

(Roller, et al., 1950, p. 120)

Răzvan's tumba

Miron Costin would leave the information on the place where Ștefan Răzvan had been buried. From the text of the *Ietopiseț*, Răzvan's mound emerges as a place of memory of the victory of Ieremia Movilă, the "earthly lord", over Ștefan Răzvan, the "usurper of the throne" (Costin, 1944, pp. 11-12). Nicolae Bălcescu, taking over the information from the Moldavian chronicler, also left for future generations a mnemonic clue with an essential role in the construction of the memory of all the figures of rulers, kings or emperors – the place where Ștefan Răzvan was buried: "On the road that goes from Suceava to Baia and until today, *the mound of Răzvan-Vodă is shown and mentioned*, place where the remains of the valiant lord lie forgotten" (Bălcescu, 1887, p. 236).

In 1859, the poet Dimitrie Bolintineanu launched, in a suggestive volume entitled "The Battles of the Romanians", the poem "Răzvan's Movila" (Bolintineanu, 1859). The purpose of Bolintineanu's poetry is to dispel the memory of Ștefan Răzvan, so well anchored in the national narrative by N. Bălcescu: "[...] Leah asks for the country as an inheritance/ The Hungarian sends Răzvan c-oștire/ Only we, the Moldovans, have not yet spoken! [...] The field drowns in a lake of blood/ The Hungarians bow, they look defeated/ The Moldavians are the traces of rage ignited/ The Hungarians flee, the Moldovans chase them away/ They kill, catch them or disperse them" (Bolintineanu, 1859). After August

1595 Răzvan lost his throne, the Poles installing Ieremia Movila in his place. Stefan Bathory offers military support to Stefan Răzvan in order to regain his reign.

If in Bălcescu Răzvan is a "brave gentleman", who should be recognized and integrated into the national memory by the country, in Bolintineanu the figure of Răzvan is portrayed in antithesis, on the idea of a traitor. The betrayal is understood by the danger of the Moldavians moving away from Orthodoxy and that of the rapprochement with Catholicism through Răzvan's alliance with Bathory, the Catholic prince of Transylvania. Also, this "alliance" meant the submission of Moldavia to the prince of Transylvania through a treaty signed on June 3, 1595, Stefan-Răzvan being only a deputy of Bathory. After Răzvan's proclamation as ruler "the Transylvanian Diet took a series of measures regarding the administration of the revenues that entered the country's treasury" (Emandi, 1978, p. 114).

Maria Magdalena Szekely, discussing the princely necropolises in Moldavia as places of memory, shows that until Stephen the Great, the rulers of Moldavia were buried in the churches of the monasteries of Rădăuți (Bogdan I, Lațcu, Petru I, Roman I, Ștefan I), Bistrița (Alexandru cel Bun), Neamț (Ștefan II) and Probota (Bogdan II). Stephen the Great chose his final resting place in Putna, where Bogdan III and Stephen the Younger were also buried. Petru Rareș and his son Ștefan were deposed in Probota, and in Slatina, Alexandru Lăpușneanu. Ștefan Lăcustă seems to have been buried in Mirăuți, and there are no certain data about other gentlemen or they were buried in places other than the monasteries in the country (Szekely, 2022, p. 190). These places, summing up both Orthodoxy and the idea of a ruler by divine right, entered through the intervention of history and memory into the circuit of a mnemonic pilgrimage that combines national history with Orthodoxy.

The tombs of the rulers are part of the spatial morphology of the monasteries, their image surpassing the destination of these spaces as places of worship. At the same time, the image of the rulers as shadows that watch over these spaces is ensured, they are sometimes canonized as saints by the Romanian Orthodox Church. The idea of the perpetual presence of the ruler in relation to the monastery and the protection of the nation emerges from the poem "Mircea's Shadow at Cozia" published in 1843 by the fabulist Grigore Alexandrescu, as part of the program of Romanian romanticism: "Kiss, old shadow! Receive worship/ From the sons of Romania that you have honored:/ We come to your tomb to lay our wonder/ The centuries that have nourished your name for the nations" (Boldea, 2010, p. 50). This morpho-mnemonic scheme is characteristic of all spaces where there has been a monarchy of divine right: see the necropolises of the kings of France in the cathedral of Saint-Denis or that of the kings of England in the cathedral of Westminster Abbey.

The record of the place where Stefan Răzvan had been killed and buried after his capture by Ieremia Movilă was still in the memory of the inhabitants around the village of Areni at the beginning of the last century. This is reflected in the travel notes in Bucovina

made by a teacher from Olt county and published in "Albina": "Here — continues Gheorghe, when we were returning — up there is the village of Ipotești. See the small mound next to the large ?... In it is buried Răzvan, the one killed by the order of Aron-Voda. The princely court at that time was in the slum of Areni and Aron took him out of here and carried him there on the hill behind the city, so that he could be seen by all. It was also in this slum that those punished with death were put to the pitchforks" (Popescu, 1911, p. 306).

Răzvan's mound had remained a landmark at the level of the local collective memory in Suceava County, even if it was not marked by official tablets. An article in the newspaper "Zori Noi", organ of the Suceava County Committee of the Romanian Communist Party and of the County People's Council, reported in 1976 on Răzvan's mound. The news integrates, by subordination, the memory of the mound in the history and broader memory of Suceava as "Vast and moving museum, built under the open sky, of stone and earth and especially of deed, with names and places, Suceava and its surroundings preserve, dense, the turbulent history of the ancestors". Răzvan is presented as the ruler of Moldavia, whose figure was to inspire the drama of B. P. Hașdeu. The heart of the article is the support given by Ștefan Răzvan to Michael the Brave in the anti-Ottoman struggle in which "Răzvan proved to be a partisan of the realization of a Romanian anti-Ottoman front of Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania, ideal of the most important rulers of the Romanians". The article, according to the communist principles aimed at criticizing the boyar class, shows that Răzvan "was a gypsy and not a 'princely bone'". This statement is contradicted, however, by the following statement in which it is shown that he was the son of the ruler of Moldavia Petru Șchiopul and "of a gypsy" (Iacobescu, 1976, p. 1)! This last statement reflects that they were nevertheless interested in the idea of continuity of reigning blood on the throne of Moldavia.

In the eyes of the communists, the emphasis on Răzvan's identity is placed on his "gypsy" side, which could easily be equated with belonging to a social class, the Roma not being officially recognized as an ethnic minority by the communists. At the same time, by having a "gypsy" mother, therefore a slave, he was presented as a victory of the oppressed classes over the ruling ones. The historiography created by Nicolae Iorga around the origin of Ștefan Răzvan did indeed show that Ștefan Răzvan was the son of Petru Șchiopul and Irina, "a tire". A school textbook on the history of Romanians from 1912 presents Ștefan-Răzvan as "probably a descendant of Lăpușneanu" (Aguletti, 1912, p. 119). This historiography had the role of showing that "a gypsy" could not have sat on the throne of Moldavia. The narrative produced by Iorga was later disputed by historians contemporary to him, such as Ion Sârbu, who show that the son of Petru Șchiopul with the Roma slave was not Ștefan Răzvan, but "Ștefan-Vodă din Bozen" (Grigorescu, 2015, p. 48).

In 1981, modern agricultural works in full communist expansion determined the leveling of a mound located on the land of the Experimental Agricultural Station in Suceava, about 100 meters from the Suceava – Fălticeni road. We find out that

"Unfortunately, the leveling of the mound, carried out with the bulldozer, was not supervised, the thoughtless destruction of this monument not having any approval from the competent bodies. [...] it had a particular significance, being known, by the surrounding inhabitants, as "Răzvan's Mound". The recording of the mound by Miron Costin, the chronicler of Moldavia, and the preservation of the place in the local collective memory, were just two of the factors that determined the archaeological excavations on the place where the mound had been erected. As a result of the excavations, more than 80 human skeletons were discovered, some of which were decapitated. No objects other than skeletons were discovered in the mass grave, which shows that those killed were previously deprived of clothes and personal belongings (Ignat, 1981, p. 101).

The accidental destruction of Ștefan Răzvan's mound represents not only a loss of archaeological heritage, but also a failure in preserving cultural memory. Although Miron Costin and, later, Nicolae Bălcescu had carefully recorded the place as a symbolic landmark of Răzvan's tragic destiny, the leveling of the site in 1981 erased a veritable *lieu de mémoire*. Unlike the necropolises of the Moldavian rulers in monastic spaces — Rădăuți, Putna, Probota or Slatina — which became both sacred and political landmarks, Răzvan's mound remained poorly preserved, unmarked and vulnerable. This negligence reflects the ambiguous place he occupies in Romanian history: "usurper" for the supporters of Ieremia Movilă, "brave ruler" for Bălcescu, "traitor" for Bolintineanu and "class symbol" for communist historiography. The absence of institutionalized care allowed political interpretations to dominate memory, while the physical marker disappeared. By contrast, the tombs of rulers canonized as saints perpetuate a protective aura over national and religious identity. Răzvan's mound, being leveled without supervision, reveals the fragility of the disputed memories in the face of utilitarian modernity. Archaeological discoveries of mass graves confirm the violence of its collapse, but the lack of a material monument leaves the collective memory without a point of support. The destruction thus symbolizes a deeper reluctance of Romanian society to integrate a ruler of Roma origin into the pantheon of legitimate princes. Finally, the fate of the mound shows how silence, neglect, and erasure can function as tools of historical exclusion.

The significance of how Ștefan Răzvan was killed

For the audacity of having sat on the throne of Moldavia, as a Roma, Ștefan Răzvan had his nose and ears cut off and then he was impaled. In the throes of death, he watched the beheading of his brother. No other ruler has received this punishment before him. "This terrible punishment [...] It was not at all a habit at the time, especially as far as noble people were concerned" (Grigorescu, 2015, pp. 124-125). The archival documents speak of "Răzvan's slutting". The sources talk about impaling him, others about cutting off his head and putting him in a hair in front of the fortress of Suceava. For Ștefan Grigorescu, the mention made by the Moldavian chronicler Miron Costin about Răzvan's death, namely

only about the cutting off of his head and not about impalement, is based on the embarrassment that the chronicler would have been involved in noting that such a punishment was applied to a ruler of Moldavia, borrowed from the Turks, and applied only to villains. Dragoş Ungureanu describes the way in which Ştefan Răzvan was killed as being "by a pathological sadism, totally gratuitous, there was practically no need for such a thing" (Ungureanu, fără an). "There, overwhelmed with sleep and fatigue, he was caught and taken to the prince Jeremiah, and first his ears and nostrils were cut off, then he was impaled with unbelievable cruelty, with all his entreaties not to be punished in this terrible way, being innocent" (Decsi Janos, 1866, p. 239).

The death of Ştefan Răzvan in Bogdan Petriceicu Haşdeu's play takes place in the throne room of Moldavia, Răzvan dying with dignity in battle, but without managing to climb the throne of Moldavia. Haşdeu thus offers him a dignified death for a Romanian ruler and a dignified end for a "gypsy" – who does not get to see himself enthroned. In reality, Stefan Razvan was a gentleman like any other gentleman in the history of Moldova. A collection of documents from Moldavia from the period 1591-1600 contains numerous documents signed by Stefan Răzvan in his capacity as ruler: reinforcements of possession of some gypsies, whom he calls "mine", confirmations of ownership of villages, estates, waters, lands for various monasteries (especially Neamt Monastery) or state servants (Roller, et al., 1950, pp. 120-126).

The way in which Stefan Răzvan was killed, in his capacity as a ruler, resonated in almost all the royal courts in Europe, including the Vatican.

The church Răzvan

In the center of the capital there is a church built in the sixteenth century called "Răzvan Church". On the Orthodox Christian website, the history of the church shows that "In the "Ancient Calendar" of 1875, Bucharest, pages 84-85, it is said that "it is 278 years old, being built by Stephen II, Razvan Voevodu, the ruler of Moldavia", as a sign of the brotherhood of the Romanians from the sister countries. So, this happened around 1597." Below is a note by the parish priest from 1935 who states the same thing, only with the difference that the church was built by Stefan Răzvan in 1596. The opinions of some researchers are then reproduced according to which "The church is much older, built by a captain of Matei Basarab (1635-1674) named Razvan, perhaps on the ruins of an older one from the 19th century. XVI, after the tombs found around him" (Creştin Ortodox, fără an).

A press article in Universul, in 1935, entitled "Historical clarifications regarding the Răzvan church in Bucharest" showed that due to the lack of an old inscription (inscription, usually in stone, showing the founders of a church or monastery) it is not possible to know exactly when it was erected. We find out that the legend or tradition of Bucharest says that the church, which later became a monastery, was built by Stefan Răzvan, "who was Lord in Moldavia (between 1594 Aug. and 1596 March), at the time when Michael the Brave was

Lord in Wallachia. He founded it *for the twinning of sister countries*. a fact shown in an old commemoration, *which is no longer today*." (Caselli, 1935, p. 4). Stefan-Razvan reigned in Moldavia between April and August 1595, after August Ieremia Movilă was installed on his throne by the Poles. In both sources, the period in which Răzvan reigned is either advanced or enlarged. No wonder, this is one of the attributes of memory, namely that it is not accurate. Basically, the 1935 source is based on the 1875 one, but the article, as I will show below, is intended to be a deconstruction of this truncated memory. He attacks the idea of building the church "for the brotherhood of sister countries". In support of his argument, Domenico Caselli brings to the public's attention the fact that "Michael the Brave, eternally distrustful, as was his nature, makes Răzvan in a letter, *a traitor, that he stole 6 thousand Hungarian coins from him, that he is a gypsy, that he deceived him and others*. Do these "beautiful words" of Michael fit with the idea of the brotherhood of sister countries?"

Caselli excludes, however, the idea that the "twinning" could have been based on the real support given by Răzvan to Michael the Brave in the anti-Ottoman struggle, of which Caselli is not unaware of the facts. He emphasizes the way Michael the Brave described Răzvan and the lack of help Michael the Brave deprived him of when he was fighting to regain his throne. "And with all these harsh words of Mihai, said perhaps in anger, Răzvan behaved like a brother towards Mihai and not like a gypsy, he jumped to his aid, in his great distress, something that Mihai did not do towards Răzvan when his enemies caught him and killed him" (Caselli, 1935, p. 4).

The name "Răzvan" was not a common one in the sixteenth century. However, the church has survived with this name, including the street on which the church is located is called "Răzvan". Over time, various archaeological excavations have taken place around the church with the intention of revealing the history of this place, which has become one of memory: "The main objectives were to establish as precisely as possible the moment of construction and to capture some possible testimonies of the existence of a previous place on this Ioc. At the same time, we tried to collect as much evidence as possible of the connection between the name boy Răzvan and the church under study." As a result of the excavations, the existence of a wooden church from the sixteenth century was discovered. In addition to this, "the huts and ovens – furnaces, of the blacksmiths who lived here, where, later, the street was recorded with the name "Frânge iron"" (Ștefănescu, 1999, p. 189). Most likely those blacksmiths were Roma slaves, the vestiges discovered having a special importance in the current context of recovery of the history and memory of the Roma in Romania, along with the human remains discovered in Răzvan's Moor, among which could be the bones of the ruler of Moldavia.

The archaeological excavations finally led to the discovery of the inscription of the wall church, built by Ianache Văcărescu, the trusted servant of Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu. However, the archaeological research did not lead to the discovery of the founder of the first church built on this site, the wooden one from the sixteenth century. In

these circumstances, the name of the church continues to be divided between the name of Ștefan-Răzvan, the ruler of Moldavia, and Captain Răzvan from the army of Prince Matei Basarab. There is a relationship of interdependence between the figure of Ștefan-Răzvan, as the blasphemed ruler of Moldavia, and the Răzvan Church. It seems that the church is based on his name, as ruler of Moldavia, and his name – so controversial by the constructions of history and memory – is based on the church. A relationship from which both partners benefit. Probably the Răzvan church was even built in honor of the fact that "on October 12, 1595, the ruler of Moldavia, Ștefan Răzvan, occupied Bucharest, defeating the Ottoman garrison that had occupied the city, after the battle of Călugăreni" (Institutul Național al Patrimoniului, 2021).

Ștefan Răzvan and his monetary issue

A little-known fact is that Ștefan Răzvan in his short reign also minted coins. Two types of coin are attributed to him, having the value of three thick (Dincă, 2019, p. 1).



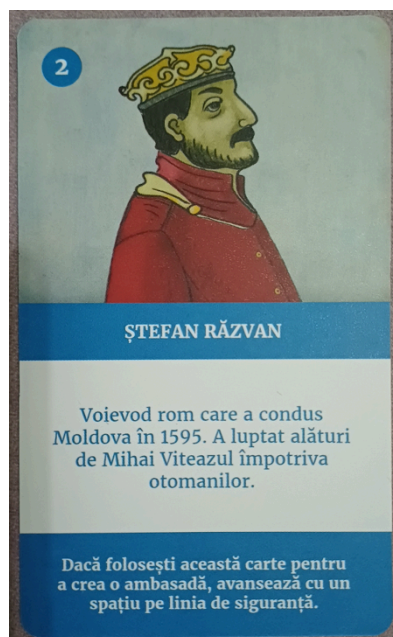
Emisiune monetară de tip imitativ din timpul lui Ștefan Răzvan din Moldova. Pe avers este inscripționat capul de bour încadrat într-un cerc perlat, iar pe revers este bustul lui Ștefan Răzvan purtând o coroană pe cap. Sursă.

Captură de ecran 1. Sursa: <https://cimec.ro/stefan-razvan/>, accesat în 25 septembrie 2025

Ștefan Răzvan as a hero in modern Roma culture

The textbook on "Roma History and Traditions" presents a detailed case study entitled "The Reign of the Roma Voivode Ștefan Răzvan in Moldova" (Petcuț, Grigore et. al, 2003, p. 32-33). On the website of the Roma Party "ProEuropa" we find an article entitled "Răzvan, the Roma ruler".⁵ In the Roma Calendar on the website of the ProRoma Association, April 24 is declared as "The Day of the Roma ruler Răzvan Vodă", finding out about him that he was "the only ruler of Roma origin of a Romanian country".⁶ Petre Petcuț, emphasizing the effects of an uncomfortable memory, presents him as: "Ștefan Răzvan, a "gypsy" at the helm of Moldova" (Petcuț, 2019, p. 82). The figure of the ruler was also included this year in an exhibition of Roma personalities, organized by the National Center for Roma Culture, suggestively entitled "Roma for Romania". A portrait of the ruler had already been included in the brochure with the same title, made by Norica Costache at CNCR-RK, and launched in 2018 at the Romanian Presidency, on the occasion of Romania's national day in December (CNCR-RK, 2018, pp. 31-34).

A Monopoly game about Roma history has recently been released. Among the Roma personalities presented is Ștefan-Răzvan, along with Ceja Stojka, Katarina Tajkon or Nicolae Gheorghe. The game was made by Roma Education Fund, Romania and the Cu Alte Cuvinte Association. Ștefan Răzvan is presented as "the Roma voivode who ruled Moldavia in 1595. He fought alongside Michael the Brave against the Ottomans."



These are just a few examples that show how the figure of the ruler enters the process of forming the modern Roma identity. They could still go, but due to the limitation of space I stop here. Ștefan-Răzvan's example is perhaps one of the most telling that invites reconciliation with the past. His figure has generated in Romanian culture

⁵ <https://partidaromilor.ro/razvan-domnitorul-rom/>, accessed on 07.07.2023.

⁶ <http://www.asociatiaproroma.ro/site/index.php/domeniu/cultura/calendar>, accessed on 07.07.2023.

expressions of popular, historical, literary, theatrical culture and power relations that have not been debated in an integrative way so far, as the present work does.

Viorel Achim shows that the rise of Ștefan Răzvan clearly illustrates the existence of a certain social mobility in Romanian society, where some slaves had the opportunity to gain their freedom and, in exceptional situations, could reach noble ranks and high positions (Achim, 1998, p. 43). Is that so? The case of Ștefan-Răzvan is exceptional in this regard. Apart from him, there is no other example of a Roma slave who rose from the ranks of slaves and obtained a noble rank, even if it was lower than that of ruler. Such an opinion can only distort the nature of the institution of slavery in the Romanian space. A freed slave could not even marry a free woman, barely his sons or daughters could do so. Ștefan Grigorescu, the one who dedicated an entire work to Ștefan Răzvan, presents all the hypotheses regarding the origin of Ștefan-Răzvan, except for one: Răzvan's descent from a Muslim Roma father and a Romanian woman, "negligence" imputed to the author by Bogdan Teodorescu, secretary general of the Romanian Society of Historical Sciences, also the preface to Grigorescu's work (Teodorescu, 2016, pp. 195-210). Ștefan Grigorescu, as I show by the motto of this work, states that "in the rush for arguments, today's pseudohistorians have not shied back from inserting, in materials on the history of minorities, that Ștefan-Răzvan's father would have been, no more and no less than a Muslim gypsy [...]" (Grigorescu, 2015, p. 47). In this case, the "demonstrations" of historians such as Ștefan Grigorescu or Nicolae Iorga, who tried by various means to show that Ștefan Răzvan would necessarily have a princely descent, close the door to any intercultural dialogue and fair representation of history, in terms of social justice.

The author "avoided" by Ștefan Grigorescu is Constantin Rezachevici, who, referring to the origin of Ștefan Răzvan, shows: "The key to the enigma, however, lies elsewhere. An account from January 2/12, 1596 of the Venetian bailiff of Constantinople, Marco Venier, To the Doge, from January 2/12, 1596, escaped the attention of the researchers of the period, in which he wrote about the arrival at the Porte of two Ceausians sent by Hasan the beilerbei of Rumelia with the news of the defeat of Răzvan in December 1595 by Ieremia Movila. Among the 800 prisoners [of Ieremia Movilă] was Răzvan (about whose execution the Turks had not yet learned), who, now the new news comes, had to be brought here (at the Porte - n.a.) in order to receive the punishment of having become a Christian from the Turk as he was before" (che doveva esser condotto qui a ricevere il supplicio d'esserai fatto Christiano di Turco che era prima) (Hurmuzaki, IV, p. 212))" (Rezachevici, 2001, pp. 783-784). Rezachevici was a researcher at the Nicolae Iorga Institute of History of the Romanian Academy, I don't think Ștefan Grigorescu referred to him as a pseudohistorian.

Ștefan-Răzvan is the image of the foreigner, of the one who must be forcibly adopted by the nation, due to historical and socio-political circumstances, such as Carol I, the first foreign prince of Romania. If Michael the Brave had received help in the anti-Ottoman struggle from a "gypsy", then the image of Michael the Brave would have

suffered as well. What Bălcescu manages to do, with Michael the Brave in the spotlight as a symbol of Romanian unity and independence, is to amplify Michael's image as a brave man by the fact that he receives help in the anti-Ottoman struggle from another brave man – creating the image of Ștefan Răzvan as a tragic hero. The fact that in the chronicles of the time Mihai refers to the origin of Ștefan Răzvan does nothing but later detract from Mihai's greatness, Bălcescu thus uses Răzvan from two perspectives: he raises Mihai's image and criticizes society for the backward norms. Dimitrie Cantemir, as Ștefan Grigorescu points out, barely mentions Ștefan Răzvan in "The Description of Moldova". An important aspect is that the chronicles outside the Romanian space also refer to the origin and death of Ștefan Răzvan, essential aspects to understand his place in Romanian historiography.

Ștefan Răzvan is historically divided by both Roma and Romanians. While for some it represents a hero, for others it is a cultural trauma for the healing of which the forces of history, literature, popular culture, theater, religion and finally memory have been set in motion. The fact is that there was no discussion about his place in the panoply of the rulers of Moldavia and about the long-lasting effects that his reign generated in Romanian culture. The image of Ștefan-Răzvan was usefully instrumentalized by Nicolae Bălcescu, as an emancipatory figure – of the man equal to others before God and who has the right, like the others, to rise from the dust. Of course, Bălcescu, as a Pașoptista revolutionary, offered the public an idealized image of Ștefan Răzvan, but his action of inscribing Ștefan-Răzvan in the history of Romania, and of offering him a place among the other Romanian rulers, then generated a whole process of mystification of Răzvan's origin and his place in the history of Romania and in the history of the Roma. It represents a good means of understanding the construction of racism towards the Roma, its image sometimes going through stages of Romanianization, cosmeticization or involuntary destruction of memory – Răzvan's mound. The way he was executed is specific only to him, as a "gypsy". Even if Răzvan's mound was destroyed, his image in Romanian culture and in modern Roma culture is a place of memory. But not one in which memories intertwine, converge, for the purpose of understanding the past and its effects on the present, but one in which the two memories diverge, without ever meeting.

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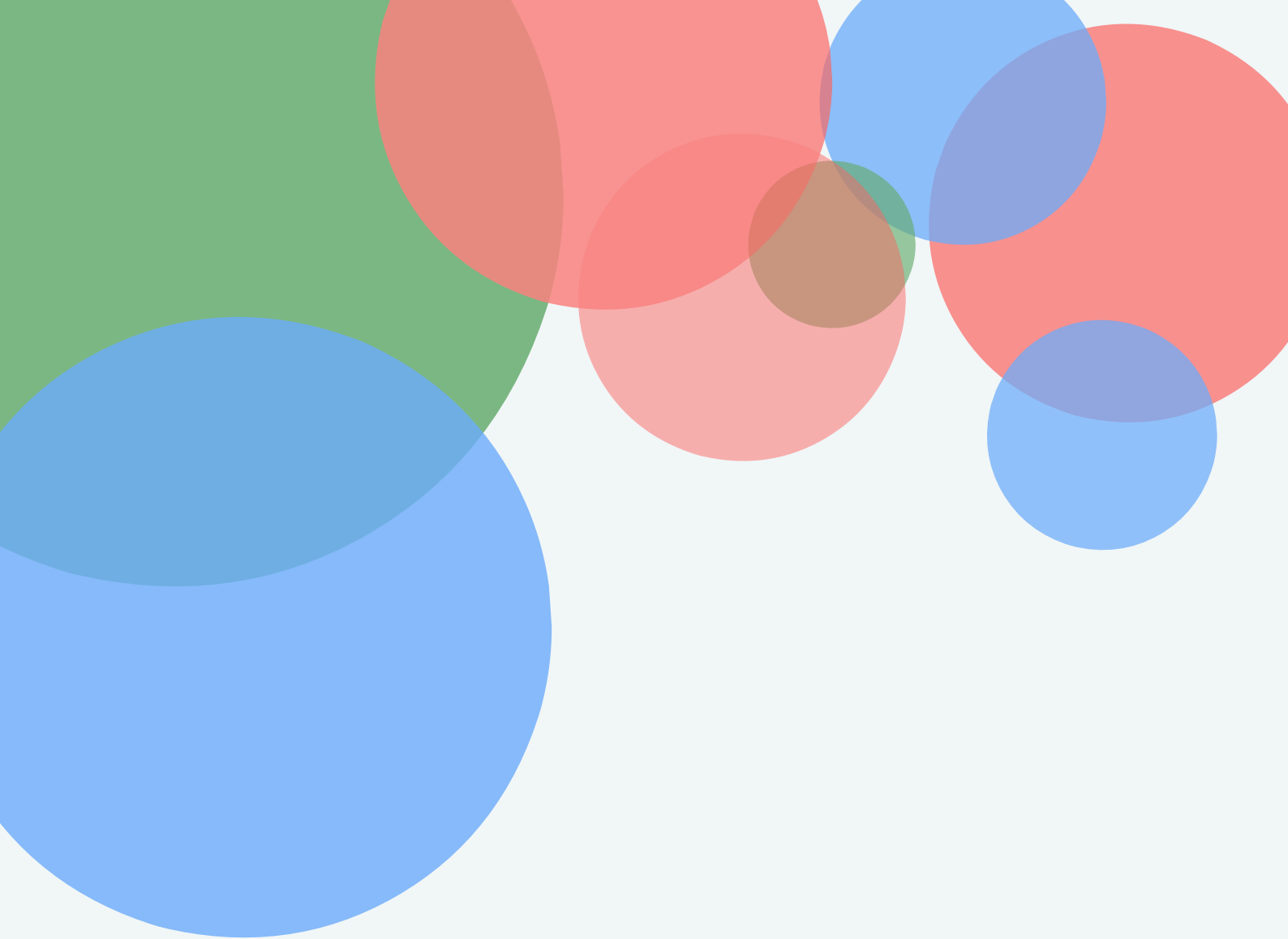
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JEKHIPE

Reclaiming Our Past, Rebuilding Our Future:
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