UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

ABSTRACT OF THE HABILITATION THESIS TITLED:

THE POLITICAL PROJECT OF COLONIZATION AROMANIANS IN DOBRUJA

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Presenting scientific and academic results is a complex and demanding challenge, particularly when discussing oneself. Describing my personal and professional development has been a struggle, as it requires me to delve into personal aspects. However, I am convinced that I am (still) on an ongoing journey of academic and intellectual growth, a process that is continuously evolving and developing. I have mapped out and projected my evolution within the context of the perpetual competition that characterizes daily academic life. The scientific approach required for qualification becomes even more crucial as the demands of doctoral research intensify. The presentation of academic results can bring significant benefits in terms of one's research intentions and designing the strategy of academic evolution after obtaining the habilitation. In practice, there is a double benefit in presenting the academic progress towards qualification. The first benefit is the opportunity to clarify the personal research undertaken, which can lead to a deeper understanding and refinement of one's work. The second professional benefit is the critical process of reporting, over time, to scientific research and research activity, which can enhance one's professional reputation and contribute to the broader academic community.

The title of my habilitation thesis, ***The political project of colonisation Aromanians in Dobruja***, reflects my area of interest and concerns, which focus on the demographic and research evolution of Dobrudjan society. The choice for socio-anthropological research is based on my experience of knowing the multicultural area of Dobrudja. This experience was shaped by my research, which helped me understand the evolution of Dobrudja during a century and a half since it became part of the Romanian state. All these academic experiences express collaborations with researchers, sociologists, and anthropologists. My academic connections reinforced my belief that a community or society is not researched in detail if we refer to strict areas of specialization. In this context, the evolution of knowledge can be configured by appealing to interdisciplinary research. Collaboration between sociology and anthropology is also intrinsic to other sciences such as history, economics, or psychology. All these social sciences enable developments, opportunities, and dimensions of research that shape and deepen social phenomena. Therefore, we find, especially in Dobrudja, a unique and special social area in the Romanian space. Dobrudja was ceded to Russia by the Ottoman Empire because of war reparations, the tsarist power reserving the right to cede it in exchange for the three counties south of Bessarabia. Through this episode of diplomatic negotiations, Romania incorporated the Dobrudjan territory within which several

ethnic groups lived, which is contained in statistical data presented in the continuation of our exposition.

With the entry of the Dobrudjan territory into Romania, administrative measures began to be applied, and the intentions to modernize this new province passed from the administration of the Ottoman Empire under the authority of Romania.[1]The social processes in Dobrudja irreversibly transformed the ethnic composition, demographic structure, institutions, and administration system. The cultural influences in the Balkans built a unique type of human geography and identity specific to this cultural and political area with a distinctive collective mentality. The demographic developments and administrative measures in Dobrudja after 1878 produced irreversible economic, cultural, and even religious effects, the transformations being extremely complex.

The central and local administration faced problems generated by colonization, such as transportation, settlement of the population in temporary households, ensuring normal living conditions, and settling in definitive centers of colonization followed by the appropriation of agricultural land. After 1878, in the two parts of Dobrudja (north and south) administered by two different state authorities, massive colonization actions were started by Bulgaria and Romania to nationalize the newly acquired territory. What the Bulgarian state will undertake to bulgarize and de-Ottomanize Southern Dobrudja will also be undertaken by the young Romanian state to finalize the Romanization process of Northern Dobrudja.

For this reason, a competition was created between Bulgaria and Romania to claim the entire territory in certain stages of colonization and redistribution of the population, accompanied by a distribution of the landed property in Dobrudja. Another intention of the scientific exposition is to present the change in the demographic ratio in favor of the Romanians[2], which defined the vision of the administration of Dobrudja by the Romanian state, but also how the Romanian governments proceeded with the nationalization of Dobrudja. Based on the considerations outlined above, I have explained the phenomenon of settling Aromanian populations in Dobrogea from the perspective of Romanian political vision.

[1] Jelavich, Ch.&B.(1999), *Formarea statelor naționale balcanice*, trad. de Ioan Crețiu, Editura Dacia, Cluj- Napoca, pp.221-223.
[2] Here, we consider how in just half a century (1880-1940), from a Turkish-Tatar residential area of almost 70%, the province ended up being inhabited by a significant percentage of Romanians - about 65% of the population being made up of Romanians.

The first chapter of this habilitation thesis is titled „***Epistemological Landmarks in Researching the Aromanian Issue as a Political Project***" and presents my epistemological perspective regarding the study of the social sphere and the Aromanian communities settled in Dobrogea by Romanian governments. The questions I have sought to answer through my studies and research are: How can a political project address social reality in such a way as to penetrate its essence?

Is just a causal understanding of phenomena enough? Can social reality be shaped? What is significant in understanding the social, and what sequences of the world camouflage deep understandings of social life? What is the most appropriate methodological formula in a sociological approach? Beyond the possibility of modeling, I insist on the need to promote an interdisciplinary perspective in sociological research. As for the option for the method, it leans heavily towards the qualitative area; my studies of observation, description, and analysis are clearly outlined.

Chapter Two of the habilitation thesis, titled „***Social and Political Antecedents in the Balkans and Their Role in the Aromanian Crisis***," outlines the social mindset within a multicultural context, examining how the Aromanian issue took shape and the realities of the era. The plan to settle Aromanians in Dobrogea was part of broader projects within the Romanian political system aimed at transferring its social and political model; it was within this framework that the actual process of community relocation unfolded. The process by which the province was included from the administrative point of view of the Romanian state is one of persuasion, peaceful with no incidents. The inhabitants of Dobrudja, who had become Romanian citizens, accepted the new political authority out of necessity. The Sociological School from Bucharest had a special vision of "configuring" the national space in which ethnic minorities were included.

The members of the royal student teams observed the particularities of the communities in the field. They got involved directly as collaborators of the School, Emanoil Bucuța[3] records in the era. In this context, the teams did social intervention work regarding aspects related to the daily life of the communities.

[3] Here, we can recall the efforts of the school's collaborators who knew how to talk openly about the social problems they identified but also about the particularities that specific ethnic communities had, Bucuța, E. (1936), *Institutul Social Român*, în „Arhiva Pentru Reforma și Știința Socială", an XIV.nr. 2, pp.576-583.

We have records from these field researches about how rural people perceived their existence, what kind of collective mentality existed in the Dobrudjan villages, and how the inhabitants "went about their days."[4] One of the members of the student teams recorded: “Our meeting with the Foundation's doctrine and with the life of the Romanian village did not happen without tension and emotional turmoil. In 1934, 1935, 1936 and 1937, the beginning years of the new Romanian labor volunteerism, our souls lived and live the strong creed of a new, strong and rich Romania. Nothing can stand against this general and total aspiration. (...) It is a new path that has not perfected its methods nor its goal. But it is a path founded on a Romanian truth: the village that demands a virtue that can never go wrong – work.”[5]

Unlike European cases where states carried out colonization, Dobrudja is offered as a model of colonization, where political authority is accepted peacefully, without incident, and without firing a bullet to impose the authority. At the same time, the team coordinators also spread the Romanian social culture. They familiarized the new groups colonized in Dobrudja with the province's specifics and the territory's peculiarities. Student training sessions were organized to provide information on what would be done as part of the Dobrudjan research teams.

Conferences were organized to clarify those from the local administration, magistrates, military prefects, and mayors about the role of research teams and village upliftment work. These conferences were supported by Dobrogen collaborators of the Gusti school: Emanoil Bucuța, Apostol D. Culea, Alex Lascarov-Moldoveanu, and C. Ifrim.[6] Therefore, this type of investigation was necessary to observe how colonization was effective in the Romanization process of Dobrudja so that we can speak of a Romanian culture in the province that belonged to the Ottoman Empire. The chapter is structured to define the concepts and methods through which we analyzed the period between 1880 and 1940 in the evolution of Dobrudja and the colonization process that took place during this period. We will refer to the monographic research model, a vital element of the Bucharest Sociological School.

[4] For example, Gheorghe Focșa's research in the campaign in the village of Runcu, Gorj County, *Contribuție la cercetarea mentalității satului*, în „Arhiva Pentru Reforma și Știința Socială”, an X.nr. 1-4, 1932, pp.159-173
[5] Neamțu O.(1938), *România Nouă- Prin Ridicarea Satelor* în „ Curierul Echipelor Studențești, an IV, nr.1,p.1.
[6] *Curierul Echipelor Studențești*, an IV, nr.3/1938,p.1.

Chapter Three, titled „***Political Programs for Land Allocation in the Context of Romanian Colonization in Dobruja***," describes how the social model transferred by the Romanian state to the region can be explained from a sociological perspective. In this context, how the public institutions were configured within this modernizing social project is also presented, as well as the effects of the colonization process on what the social modernization of Dobrudja through land allocation and the distribution of the land fund. In this context, a new social and political culture emerged—shaped by the prevailing political system—ensuring that the territory did not remain defined by the social and political culture typical of the East. In this context, a new social and political culture was influenced by the newly outlined system through which the provincial did not remain at a level of reporting specific to the oriental social and political culture.[7]

The mechanisms of social integration took shape under the same conditions established by the Land Grant Law for veterans of the 1877–1878 war; in 1912, officers who had participated in the conflict and their descendants were granted the opportunity to purchase up to 150 hectares of land in Dobrogea. The evolution of modernizing agents was rapid due to the effect of the Romanian government's sustained and consistent investments. However, it should be noted that the ethnic minorities of Dobrudja—Tatars, Turks, Greeks, Armenians, Lipovans, Bulgarians, Macedonians, and Jews—have preserved their own culture, which over time becomes a component of Dobrudjan culture, giving it a unique charm. Moreover, they defended their rights in various publications.

Following the promotion in the Dobrogen newspapers, we can say with certainty that it notices the economic developments and change processes of the Dobrogen society. We cannot talk or write about advertising without thinking that it represents a way of building a modern society. It means a strategy for the modernization of society that allows the penetration of goods from the West, which has the consequence of creating a system of commercial relations with it. Until then, there were closed communities, the dominant being the patriarchal component. It is important to remember what the city of Constanța looked like in the past, more precisely before 1879, when it became part of the Romanian state. The first urban development of Constanța dates back to 1858-1860 when Sultan Abdul Medgid granted an English company to exploit the port and the

[7] Ionescu, M.D. (1904) *Dobrogia în pragul veacului XX* , pp.323- 326; See also Ionescu, M.D. (2010), *Dobrudja în pragul veacului al XX-lea. Geografia matematică, fisică, politică şi militară,* anastatic edition with a study belonging to professor Valentin Ciorbea, Iaşi, Editura Tipo Moldova, pp. 192-195.

construction of the Cernavodă-Constanţa railway line. Then Constanta becomes a real Tower of Babel of communities. English engineers, German mechanics, Italian builders, Armenian workers, Greeks, Tatars, Turks, Lipovans, Bulgarians, and Russians arrived in Constanta. This agglomeration required more residential buildings, so numerous stone houses and constructions were built. Trade was boosted. Several shops run by Armenians, Greek taverns, export houses, workshops, and other enterprises necessary to expand city life have opened.

Chapter Four, titled „***Population Dynamics in the Balkans and Eastern Europe: The Demographic Reconfiguration of Imperial Territories***" presents the evolution of the territories that were part of the Ottoman Empire.

The Balkan Peninsula was characterized as having a very complex socio-cultural profile. Modern social patterns are well represented in urban centers and the nearby settlements. Still, we also consider the presence of many archaic social structures. Both models coexisted, and, as a general note, populations that failed to organize into nation-states preserved these structures much better. The structure based on tribes and clans is very well outlined in the case of Macedonian Slavs and Montenegrins. The basic characteristics of the zadruga are related to its organization and how goods are administered. Zadruga was a form of organization specific to the South Slavs, formed by a clan composed of several related families. Goods and money were held in common and managed by elderly men. This type of organization brought forward a deeply patriarchal structure, but there were significant differences in the economic prospects it promoted. We must bear in mind that this type of financial organization of a community is in total opposition to the capitalist and even neoliberal model that penetrated the region after the fall of communism. The Western model, imitated in various superficial forms, greatly emphasizes the individual's financial independence.

First, a significant aspect that must be considered is that the nation-state project succeeded among populations with a large share or held the majority within well-defined territories. The common space that the Ottoman Empire formed in the Balkan area allowed a very high mobility of populations, thus creating areas with a mixed population and places where no population held even a relative majority. The formation of the national state focused on the idea that the more numerous peoples of the Balkans took total control over their destiny, unlike the period spent in the old empire, where they could outline their own social, cultural identity, and economic path.

Chapter Five, titled „***The Colonization of Aromanians in Dobruja—A Political Project to Create Romanian Political Culture in the Quadrilateral***" examines a series of social phenomena through the lens of relocation and colonization strategies involving Aromanian communities. The chapter also addresses related aspects, such as a detailed understanding of demographic trends, an assessment of the colonization process in Dobruja specifically, and an in-depth look at facets of social life and local identities. Our aim also encompasses examining the specified period (1850–1940) through the lens of the complex social mechanism that enabled the transfer of the Romanian social and political project to Dobruja. Elements of Romanian social culture were subsequently established through institutions created by the Romanian political system and by the substantial groups of people persuaded to settle in Dobruja. To better understand the process of integration into the social fabric (Romanianization), we will outline the evolution of ethnicity-related issues in Dobruja from macro-social, demographic, and sociological perspectives. To this end, we will provide a brief history of the measures adopted by the Romanian state—as reflected in legislation and government initiatives concerning the status of ethnic groups—alongside an analysis of available statistical data. There are data and statistics from the period regarding the number and demographic trends of the inhabitants, their religious affiliation, population density, and so on. Regarding population density, Constantin Brătescu maintains that in 1913, Dobrogea had a density of approximately 25 inhabitants per square kilometer, compared to 5–6 inhabitants per square kilometer in 1878. The Six Chapter synthesizes the academic achievements made after obtaining the doctorate in 2011 and presents the academic development and research directions I will explore after obtaining the habilitation certification.

Synthesis of significant results

The personal university career development plan is designed on three dimensions: didactic, scientific research, and institutional development. During my years of study in these forms of academic education, I benefited from sociological, political, legal, and philosophical training with representative professors of the University of Bucharest, the "Ovidius" University of Constanța, and the University of Craiova. During my student years, I became very close to the sociology of ethnic communities, social anthropology, and the sociology of modernization. The readings and scientific accumulations during my university and master's studies represented fundamental elements in shaping the research and teaching model. Among the relevant authors in my academic training, I mention Emile Durkheim, Vilfredo Pareto, Robert Merton, Ferdinand Tonies, Max Weber, Raymond Boudon, Marcel Mauss, Claude-Levi Strauss, and Marc Auge. Among the Romanian authors who defined my academic training, I mention Dimitrie Gusti, Anton Golopentia, Henry H. Stahl, Mircea Eliade, Ion Petru Culianu, Constantin Dumitru Constantinescu-Mircești, and Ernest Bernea. During my doctoral academic studies, I collaborated with those who were my teachers and mentors: Rostas Zoltan, Ioan Goian, Dumitru Sandu, Daniel Barbu, Gheorghe Stoica, Mircea Dumitru are just a few names that I had as intellectual benchmarks, and who trained me during the years of doctoral research.

Starting in 2006 and until 2010, I attended doctoral studies at the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Bucharest, under the direction of Prof. Univ. Dr. Gheorghe STOICA. I passed all the exams from the first year up to the fourth year with the qualification "very good," and on May 14, 2010, I obtained, unanimously, the vote and approval of the members of the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Bucharest to be able to support the publication of the doctoral thesis. In 2011, I publicly defended my doctoral thesis with the title: "*Collective Identities and Political Institutions in Dobrudja 1850-1940*", after which I was awarded the title of doctor in political sciences (according to the Order of the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports No. 6468 of 07.12.2011). The doctoral thesis was published in 2012 at the Publishing House of the Institute of Political Sciences and International Relations-Romanian Academy, titled "*Identities and political institutions in Dobrudja -1850-1940*".

The thesis results from more than five years of research in the sociology of ethnic communities, political identities, and the anthropology of ethnic minorities. The innovative and scientific character of the work is given by the fact that each idea is argued by relevant and up-to-date statistical data (at the European and regional level) provided by research institutes. Moreover, for writing the thesis, a large part of the sources used came from foreign specialized literature, given that, until the end of 2010, in Romania, there were no reference scientific works in the thesis field. The work analyzes two social systems – the Ottoman political system and the French political system taken over by the Romanian Principalities in 1859. The analysis is undertaken at the national and regional levels of Dobrudja and the Balkan area.

The second doctoral internship took place between 2012-2017, which I completed by writing and publicly defending the doctoral thesis with the title: "*Colonizations and migrations in Dobrudja 1880-1940 - An approach from the perspective of the Bucharest School of Sociology*" following for which I was awarded the title of doctor in sociology (according to the Order of the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports no. 5745 of 28.12.2018). I carried out my doctoral research at the Doctoral School of Sociology of the University of Bucharest under the direction of Prof. Univ. Dr. Zoltan Rostas. My doctoral scientific research studied the demographic developments and administrative measures that took place in Dobrudja after its inclusion into Romanian territory. These measures produced irreversible economic, cultural, and even religious effects. I practically studied a series of extremely complex social and identity transformations.

The research activity that started during my doctoral studies continued in 2019 when I obtained a post-doctoral research grant in sociology through a competition within the Interdisciplinary Postdoctoral School of the University of Bucharest. The research topic was carried out under the scientific guidance of Prof. Univ. Dr. Laura Grunberg. The postdoctoral internship was based on the research on students' access to university education in Constanța, Tulcea, Călărași, and Buzău counties. From the point of view of the scientific research undertaken throughout the years of activity in the higher education system, I was concerned with the constant updating of the list of publications and communications supported at scientific events in the field, with the valorization and dissemination of the results of sociological research in which I participated, increasing the impact of publications.

However, the most important objective I pursued **was the realization of a coherent research path articulated around three research areas relevant to the fundamental field of Sociology: sociology of education, educational and social policies, and European public and social policies.**

During the period mentioned above, my first texts appeared in academic journals, collective volumes, and specialized magazines, and my first book (Identities and Political Institutions in Dobrudja, Publishing House of the Institute of Political Sciences and International Relations "Ion I.C. Brătianu"—Romanian Academy). Analyzed from the perspective of my scientific publications, this stage can be generically defined as the period of concentration of the results of scientific research about Dobrudja.

The scientific research for the preparation of the two doctoral theses was perceived as specific to my intellectual maturation and the shaping of my profile as a researcher. The Romanian cultural and university space offered me the chance to meet and know people of great intellectual scope, such as Marian Preda, Mihai Milca, Zoltan Rostas, Ioan Mărginean, Maria Larionescu, Ioan Bolovan, Cătălin Avramescu, Dumitru Sandu, Ilie Bădescu, Cosima Rughiniș, Nicu Gavriluță, Cristina Gavriluță who suggested me to deepen specific sociology topics.

All these personalities indicated in different ways that I should deepen themes of Dobrudjan sociology that were not researched or very little developed over time. In this effervescent university and academic context, I developed my critical spirit and outlined a series of personal options regarding epistemology and beyond. Thematically, this period is under the sign of the analysis of the sociology of Dobrudja.

Defense of the doctoral thesis with the title „*Collective identities and political institutions in Dobrudja 1850-1940*", under the coordination of Prof. Univ. Dr. Gheorghe Stoica, in June 2011 was the intellectual and academic maturity exam. The thesis was defended before a commission of prestigious professors and recognized specialists (Prof. Dr. Laurențiu Vlad - President of the commission; Prof. Dr. Gheorghe Stoica - doctoral supervisor; Prof. Dr. Daniel Barbu is a member; Prof. Dr. Ibram Nuredin is a member; and Prof. Dr. Anton Carpinschi - member). The award of the qualification "very good" confirmed that we managed to outline research about Dobrudja that did not exist before.

The defense of the second doctoral thesis with the title "Colonizations and migrations in Dobrudja 1880-1940 - An approach from the perspective of the Bucharest Sociological School" under the coordination of university professor Dr. Zoltan Rostas, in December 2017 represented another critical step in my intellectual and academic maturation. The thesis was defended in front of a commission made up of recognized specialist professors (Prof. Dr. Poliana Ștefănescu - President of the commission, Research. Șt. Dr. Ion Goian - member, Prof. Univ. Dr. Mihai Milca - member, Prof. Dr. Maria Larionescu - member). The awarding of the qualification "excellent" confirmed that I completed the research on the phenomenon of colonization that the Romanian governments put into practice research on Dobrudja, research that had not existed before the defense of the thesis.

Starting with obtaining the scientific title of doctor was also when I focused on scientific activity and academic research. In this interval, several of my studies and articles, books, ISI articles, coordinated volumes, BDI articles, coordination of national projects, participation in conferences, and symposiums of academic impact appeared. From a didactic point of view, I had the opportunity to develop new concepts and methods related to the courses I teach in the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences and the Teaching Staff Training Department.

The proposal for the development of the university career

I am currently a doctoral lecturer in the Department of Psychology, Educational Sciences and Social Assistance related to the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, "Ovidius" University of Constanța. The didactic activity focuses on supporting and teaching the concepts in courses and seminars within the Bachelor's and Master's specializations. Among the courses taught at the undergraduate level are: Social Policies, Sociology of Education, Social Assistance of the Unemployed, Social Assistance of Vulnerable Persons, Educational and Social Policies, Quality of Life and Anti-poverty Policies, Social Assistance in the European Union, Public Policies, Diagnosis and resolution social issues, Human Rights and anti-discrimination strategies.

In the package of courses held at the master's specialization, I mention Educational policies-comparative approaches, Non-formal education, Didactics of social sciences, Design and management of educational programs, and a Research seminar on elaborating the dissertation. In the didactic perspective for the development of my teaching career, I propose the following:

- I want to experiment and then introduce a new way of working with students and master's students. The way of working will focus on corroborating the learning and research activity of students and masters' students. I propose this way of working because I have noticed a change in the profile of the student and master's student (more and more students and master's students have service obligations or come from different specializations adjacent to the profile of the faculty in which they are holders). The classic way of teaching, individual work, and evaluation becomes cumbersome, which is why I propose a more practical learning formula by collaborating with several public institutions that deal with the problems studied: the County School Inspectorate, the Gendarmerie, Directorates and Centers for Social Assistance, Centers for evaluation and monitoring.
- I intend to propose new courses in the master's specializations in which aspects related to community space, education, and social modernization will be studied more. In addition to the fact that the respective themes are in the foreground, I noticed a preoccupation of the master's students with knowing more aspects related to these themes.
- I aim to offer students as complete a material as possible that will bring together the basic theories and approaches from the sociology of deviance and social control, but I will also propose my interpretations and perspectives on deviant phenomena.
- Also, in the teaching activity, I propose promoting two-way interactive methods, which stimulate students' involvement in the teaching-learning process, simulations, micro group activities, collaborative work activities, such as blended learning, peer-learning, research projects, etc.
- Another didactic development project is related to the proposal of a course on the sociology of modernization for students in the Social Assistance specialization that will bring to attention an anthropological and cultural approach to the multi-ethnic communities of Dobrudja. Doctoral studies opened my perspective on the field of community inclusion policies specific to areas with rich ethnic and cultural diversity. During the research period for my doctorate, my attention was drawn to multiple aspects existing in acculturation and

community integration. An older project I have not given up on is teaching an ethnic sociology course at the "Ovidius" University in Constanța. Such a course would be extremely attractive for a multi-ethnic area like Dobrudja, which owes so much to the visual. In addition, it could interest specialists who use the information of socio-anthropological studies.

Therefore, we introspect daily social life to explain the dimension of social existence that we can identify in apparently small, insignificant, marginal, or obsolete facts and social phenomena. I believe that social research remains a continuous challenge, and the complexity of social life can be understood by examining obscure, latent, and less visible areas. Of course, this approach is neither simple nor easy. Many of the answers the sociologist seeks are found in the unfolding of daily social phenomena. However, they account for the subtle mechanisms of social functioning. Although, from the point of view of scientific visibility, such an approach does not offer immediate satisfaction, from the point of view of knowledge, it provides unsuspected fulfillment and intellectual satisfaction.

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