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The Orient and the Romanian world: between cultural model and representation(1856-1916)

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SUMMARY

The doctoral scientific research report *The Orient and the Romanian world: between cultural model and representation (1856-1916)* includes a significant part of our thesis, containing important sources for the study's argumentative discourse. These sources are meant to underline the digressions between Romania related imagery, as seen through the eyes of foreigners, of outsiders, and those self-images, created by Romanians themselves. The result is what we called negotiated image.

The first sources we took into consideration in our research are those related to Romania's participation to the 1867 Universal Exhibition in Paris, a significant year, because after the unification and the election of a foreign prince, Romania received a pavilion, separate from that of the Ottoman Empire. The didactic character of those events was well known in the era, as was the role of these exhibits in the creation of a self-image of those states that participated. From an anthropological point of view, these exhibitions acted as substitutes for solving problems regarding the self-pride of some of the major powers, enabling them to expose their best assets. In the case of provinces belonging to multinational states or recent states, it represented the occasion for their international debut.

The 1867 participation was marked by the recent unification of the two Romanian Principalities, with products coming from both provinces to illustrate the ethnic and linguistic identity. At the same time, the United Principalities pavilion was an attempt to demonstrate the continuity of Latin heritage, the ancient character of Romanian civilization and its people, the antiques collections of Major Papazoglu and the Pietroasa hoard were meant to emphasize the long history of the Romanian folk. But the message was somehow misleading, because of the interpretation given to the exterior aspect of the Romanian pavilion, which combined in a heterogeneous way the Byzantine heritage perpetuated in religious architecture and Ottoman influences. The combination between the Stavropoleos church, with its clear Ottoman influences and the episcopal church of Curtea de Arges, seemed bizarre in the eyes of reviewers. The pavilions'

architecture inspired analogies with Hagia Sophia or the Russian Kremlin churches, underlining the oriental, byzantine and ottoman heritage, being still a part of the Romanian cultural model.

The second category of sources present in this report is represented by memoirs written by foreign travellers, used by Romanian historians to complete the sources on the modern era. In our research they occupy an important part, because they give an outside perspective regarding Romania's image. Travel literature and its role as a historical source make the object of relatively recent theoretical research, most scholars insisting on the connections between this literary genre and the history of European colonialism, emphasizing the idea that travel writing represents an extension of colonial empires.

In the case of foreign travellers reaching the Romanian Principalities the situation is different, and an analysis from the point of view of postcolonial studies cannot be used, because the Romanian territories were not colonies. Despite this fact, travellers were not simple tourists, as demonstrated by the CROM definition, cited in the study by scholar Bogdan Popa *Structures and political transformations in the Romanian world. Analyses, prognosis and errors of foreign travellers (1800-1856)*. The CROM database made the distinction between c= travellers (*calatori*), r= residents, persons who spent a period of a few years or decades in the Principalities, o= occupation troops, m= travellers on a diplomatic, military or scientific mission. That being said, our research analyses images on the Principalities present in the memoirs of foreign travellers from the perspective of their own cultural background and the purpose of their travel.

In conclusion, this scientific research report represents a significant part of the thesis, underlining digressions between images created by foreign travellers, outside perceptions and self-images of the Principalities that wanted them presented before modern Europe. These digressions represent a negotiated image between that which is given and that which is perceived, the analysis of these aspects can bring interesting contributions to the study of modern Romanian history. Romania's process of transition to a modern state has known many difficulties, recorded by foreign travellers as part of a whole.