



The Public Defense of the Doctoral Thesis
in Medieval Studies

of
Teodora Artimon

on
The Proto-Myth of Stephen the Great of Moldavia

will be held on

Thursday, 19 March 2015, at 09:00

in the
Video Conference Room 201 – Monument Building
Central European University (CEU)
Nádor u. 9, Budapest

Examination Committee

Chair László Kontler (Department of History – CEU)

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(Department of Medieval Studies – CEU)

Marcell Sebők
(Department of Medieval Studies – CEU)

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(Department of Medieval Studies – CEU)

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(Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church)

External Readers

Ovidiu Cristea (“Nicolae Iorga” Institute of History, Bucharest)

Giedrė Mickūnaitė (The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities) – present through video conference

The doctoral dissertation is available for inspection in the CEU-ELTE Medieval Library,
Budapest, 6-8 Múzeum krt.

Doctoral Dissertation Abstract

The Proto-Myth of Stephen the Great of Moldavia

The proto-myth of Stephen the Great (1457-1504) refers to the period of Moldavian history which unfolded immediately after the death of the prince and lasted roughly until the beginning of the seventeenth century when, more or less canonically, it is suggested that the stories about mythical Stephen started to be disseminated.

This dissertation shows that Stephen's mythical aura started to be perceived during the very lifetime of the ruler. Because of this, the text is comprised of two parts: one section dealing with the fifteenth-century self-fashioning of Stephen the Great and another section focusing on the propagation and creation of Stephen's image in the sixteenth century. By analysing these two centuries imbued with the imagery of the prince, the nature of the proto-myth can be outlined.

While alive, Stephen started to pave his way towards "stardom" with the help of two basic means: dynastic construction and personal image construction. These means intertwined each other throughout the 47-year reign of the prince, giving birth to a "great" ruler: he enhanced both the past and the future of his dynasty, by means of tomb restoration of his predecessors at Rădăuți, by commissioning the first dynastic votive image in the history of medieval Moldavia (also at Rădăuți), by transferring the Church of Volovăț (the commission of the first Moldavian prince) into the premises of his main commission at Putna; he named his sons with symbolic names (his successor Bogdan-Vlad bore the names of both the Moldavian and the Wallachian first princes – suggesting his ambition to gain influence over Wallachia); he commissioned a huge number of churches and monasteries, giving birth to the myth that he built one church after each military victory; he used imperial attributes starting with the red shoes with which he was often represented in iconography, his marble tombstone, his marriages to two imperial-descending princesses, his appellative as "tsar" in court chronicles, and the probable staging of imperial entrances to Suceava; furthermore, he had his image commissioned in various media, including church iconography, liturgical cloths, and manuscripts, allowing his image to be transferred in an almost unaltered way into the sixteenth century.

The sixteenth century was the century of the proto-myth, when, on the one hand, Stephen's character and deeds were raised on a mythical pedestal, and on the other hand, he became a model for his successors. The sixteenth-century heirs to the throne followed in his footsteps by various means: Bogdan III continued Stephen's dynastic construction by exercising influence over

Wallachia; Peter Rareș built replicas of his father's main monastic commission (Putna), while he also developed Stephen's iconography resulting in the unique Northern Moldavian exterior iconographic programmes; Alexander Lăpușneanul used Stephen's old coat of arms and developed the architecture of his predecessor's most significant commission from a dynastic point of view, the Rădăuți Monastery. These examples, complemented by a variety of others, increased the perception of Stephen in the sixteenth century. However, the so-called public perception of Stephen was what ultimately balanced the perception of Stephen towards an ideal one. A significant number of people were indirectly influenced by Stephen and unintentionally contributed to the creation of Stephen's myth – such as the Moldavians born in the last two decades of the fifteenth century (at the end of Stephen's life) who were able to recall stories about Stephen from a personal perspective; the Szekler and Polish colonizers brought to Moldavia by Stephen who supported their new prince in return for the privileges they received; or simple passers-by, travelers, and diplomats who saw and documented the physical remains of Stephen's reign and victories (songs being sang about him, votive portraits or other types of imagery representing the late ruler, physical remains of war such as bones or battle pillars, foundation inscriptions on churches such as the one of Războieni, and so on).

Apart from the insights of these categories of people, the public perception of Stephen in the sixteenth century should also be measured by three other matters: (1) the appellative "the great," although it started to be used during Stephen's lifetime, was conclusively crystallized in the first half of the sixteenth century; (2) Stephen's mythical propagation can also be grasped from fake documents (roughly 37 extant ones) which all rely on the image of Stephen in order for their creators to receive lands, privileges, or donations; (3) the study of legends circulating at the beginning of the seventeenth century reveal the roots of Stephen's mythical aura – such as the story of "The Hillock of Purcel" or the legend that Stephen built 44 churches, one after each victory.

Both sections of the dissertation end in two parts which exemplify, on the one hand, the accounts of Stephen's contemporaries on him and, on the other hand, the way Stephen was recalled in chronicles or official documents of the sixteenth century. This includes direct or indirect characterizations of fifteenth-century contemporaries such as Pope Sixtus IV, Jan Długosz, Bernard Wapowski, Maciej Miechowita, Antonio Bonfini, Jakob Unrest, Matteo Muriano, Aşık Paşazade, Tursun Bei, Mehmed Neşri, or Wallachians; as well as acclamations of Stephen as hero and saint, and recollections of war histories recorded by Martin Cromer, Marcin Bielski, Maciej Stryzowski, Miklós Istvánffy, Kemal Paşazade, and others.

This dissertation unveils the fifteenth- and especially sixteenth-century layers which stood as foundation for Stephen's myth. The image of Stephen the Great was built upon these proto-mythical layers creating the Stephen that Romanians know and admire up until this day: the ultimate defender of one's land and one's faith.

Teodora Artimon
Curriculum vitae

EDUCATION AND ACADEMICS

2010 – Present

Central European University, Budapest, Hungary
Medieval Studies Department, **PhD**

2008 – 2010

Central European University, Budapest, Hungary
Medieval Studies Department
MA in Comparative History and Medieval Studies

2005 – 2008

West University of Timisoara, Timisoara, Romania
Philosophy, Communication and Political Studies Department
BA in Communication and Public Relations

CONFERENCES

- 2014 *Stephen the Great of Moldavia: A Marginalized Prince?* At the “A Forgotten Region? East Central Europe in the Global Middle Ages” Conference, Budapest CEU – Hungary (March, 27-29)
- 2013 *Petru Rareș: O Nouă Interpretare a Picturilor Exterioare Murale* at the Colocviile Putnei Symposium, 14th edition, Putna – Romania (4-7 September)
- 2013 *The Saint and the Myth: Saint Gerard of Cenad and Symphonia Ungarorum between the Middle Ages and the Twentieth Century* at the Symposium “Opera Sf. Gerard de Cenad în Context Cultural și Biografic” (part of the Timișoara Academic Days), Timișoara – Romania (23 May)
- 2013 *Silens versus Clamans: How to be a (Dis)obedient Wife at the Courts of the Danubian Principalities* at the International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo – USA (9-12 May)
- 2012 *Medieval Philosophy and Philosophical Medievalism: The Public Understanding of Medieval Philosophy* at the International Workshop on the Historiography of Philosophy: Representations and Cultural Constructions, West University of Timisoara – Romania (22-23 September)
- 2012 *Managing Closeness to Death, or Visualizing Fear in the Romanian Principalities (15th and 16th centuries)* at the International Medieval Congress, Leeds – UK (9-12 July)
- 2010 *Extra-Conjugal Love: Concubinage and Adultery in the Middle Ages* at the International Symposium Research and Education in an Innovation Era, ISERIE 2010, Arad – Romania

- 2010 *Games, Mimics and Practice seen through Pieter Bruegel* at the International Symposium Research and Education in an Innovation Era, ISERIE 2010, Arad – Romania
- 2007 *Media and War: Case Study on the Iraq War* at the International Symposium “Educație și Cercetare Științifică la Standarde Europene”, Brașov – Romania
- 2006 *The Work of Art and Its Commentary* at the International Symposium Research and Education in an Innovation Era, ISERIE 2006, Arad – Romania
- 2006 *Primitive Elements in Modern Art* at the International Symposium Research and Education in an Innovation Era, ISERIE 2006, Arad – Romania

PUBLICATIONS

Articles

- 2015 “All Moldavian Eyes on Ottomans: Perceptions and Representations at the Turn of the Fifteenth Century” in *Early Modern Orientalism. Perspectives of the Other*, ed. Marcell Sebők and Marianne D. Birnbaum (Budapest: CEU Press, *under print*)
- 2015 “‘Face Lifting’ National Myths Through Historical Film. Stephen the Great as a Romanian Case Study” in the *Mediaevalia Annual of the Centre for Medieval Studies at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń*, ed. Jaroslaw Wenta (*under print*)
- 2015 “Petru Rareș: O Nouă Interpretare a Picturilor Exterioare Murale” *Analele Putnei* 1/2015 (2015), [*under print*]
- 2013 “The Saint and the Myth: Saint Gerard of Cenad and *Symphonia Ungarorum* between the Middle Ages and the Twentieth Century” in *Filosofia Sfântului Gerard de Cenad în Context Cultural și Biografic*, ed. Claudiu Mesaroș, Szeged: JATE Press, 2013.
- 2013 “Medieval Philosophy and Philosophical Medievalism: The Public Understanding of Medieval Philosophy” *Philosophy Today* 57:2 (2013), 182-194.
- 2011 “A New Approach to the Moldavian Exterior Wall Painting using Visual Rhetoric” in the *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU*, vol. XVII, ed. Alice M. Choyke and Daniel Ziemann
- 2010 “Grandeur and Moderation in the Age of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos: Relics and Holy Men” in the *Analele ENEC 2010* and the International Symposium *Education in Nowadays European Context*, Târgu-Jiu
- 2007 “The Battle of Words in Iraq” in *AUVT* vol. XIX/2007 – the Annals of the Department of Philosophy, Communication and Political Sciences, West University of Timișoara

Editor

2014 – present

Editor at Trivent Publishing

(<http://trivent-publishing.eu/>)

2013 – present

Assistant editor for the journal *Medievally Speaking*

(www.medievallyspeaking.blogspot.com)

2013 *Proceedings of the International Workshop on the Historiography of Philosophy: Representations and Cultural Constructions 2012*, eds. Claudiu Marius Mesaros, Teodora Artimon, György Geréby, Florin Lobont. Elsevier, 2013.

Book reviewer

2012 Review of *Ritual, Images, and Daily Life. The Medieval Perspective*, ed. Gerhard Jaritz in *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, issue XXX/2012

2012 Review of Leslie Brubaker's *Inventing Byzantine Iconoclasm* in *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, issue XXX/2012

GRANTS

2013 **Central European University**, *Henrik Birnbaum Memorial Scholarship Award* for participating at the International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo 2013

2012 **West University of Timisoara**, conference grant (under the Romanian Funding Authority for the Higher Education and Scientific Research (UEFISCDU) Bucharest, within the grant PN-II-ID-WE-2012-4-032) for the *International Workshop on the Historiography of Philosophy: Representations and Cultural Constructions 2012*

2012 **Central European University** Doctoral Travel Grant for attending the International Medieval Congress (Leeds, 9-12 July)

2010 – 2013

Central European University, Full scholarship for the PhD program in Medieval Studies, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary

2008 – 2010

Central European University, Full scholarship for the MA program in Medieval Studies, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary

ASSOCIATIONS

2012 The Society for the Public Understanding of the Middle Ages

2012 The International Society for the Study of Medievalism

2012 The Medieval Electronic Multimedia Organization (MEMO)

WORK EXPERIENCE

2014 – present

TRIVENT Publishing, Budapest, Hungary

Developmental editor

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2009 – present

TRIVENT Conference Office, Budapest, Hungary

Associate organizer for academic and cultural events (<http://trivent.eu>)

LANGUAGES

Romanian: native

English: fluent

Hungarian: medium to fluent

French: medium

Spanish: basic