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I. D. Petrescu and the Romantic Historiographical Perspective on the Romanian Middle Ages

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Abstract: I. D. Petrescu is an outstanding historian of the 19th century. As a participant in the great revolution of 1848, he was strongly influenced by Romantic historiography. After several decades of working as a teacher, he came to Târgoviște in 1868 and embarked on an extensive publishing activity in which his studies on the mediaeval period held the most important place. His preoccupations open up certain paths in the Romanian research work and, in this sense, we should mention the first writing dedicated to the reign of Radu the Great or the first monograph of the city of Târgoviște. In his books, the author complies with the scientific rigors of the time, using the most significant resources and studies. That is why many of I. D. Petrescu’s conclusions deserve a special analysis and great emphasis in the scientific field.

Key-words: Romantic historiography, monograph of Târgoviște, oral history, tradition, research direction.

I. D. Petrescu was born at Vălenii de Munte in 1818. As a young man, he stood out through his teaching activity that was animated by the innovative ideas of the 1848 generation. The revolutionary years would find him teaching at the Buzău Episcopacy Seminary and also working as a school inspector in Muscel and Vâlcea counties (I. D. Petrescu, 1892). His passion for the teaching activity is best emphasised by the author himself in an autobiographical work: “*Douăzeci și unul de ani de labore și devotament depusam...urmând a continua apostolatul, sau a direge opera neuitărilor, demnilor și fericților mei predecesori...cu a căror valoare dacă nu m-am egalat, dar cel puțin c-o vie dorință eu i-am urmat, în tot ce s-a referit la ale învățământului și devotamentului în cestiune*” (I. D. Petrescu, 1892) (which roughly translates as: ‘Twenty-one years of hard work and devotion... and then I continued my mission and followed into the footsteps of my

unforgotten, respectable, blessed predecessors. Maybe I have not equalled them in value, but at least I have been passionate about all that has to do with education and done it all with devotion’). The pride of being Romanian, along with the ardour with which he inspired his students in learning history, did not desert him throughout his life and was the foundation for all his scientific works: “*...bucăți din istoria națională sunt învățate de elevi atât de bine, că sunt gata la orice explicațiune a faptelor mai importante, și auzită narată din gura unor copii de 9-10 ani, se mișcă toate fibrele și se înalță în ochii noștri înșine, nu numai pe marii domni români, dar și numele de român.*” (I. D. Petrescu, 1892) (‘... pieces of the national history are learned by students so well that they are ready to explain the more important deeds and, when I hear it narrated by some 9 or 10 year old, it touches every fibre our being and makes us mighty proud not only of our great Romanian princes, but the name of Romanian

itself’).

He began his scientific activity at the dawn of the revolution by writing short studies such as *Cathehismul orthodox* or *Martirii crucii din ambele Dacii*. His arrival in Târgoviște, in 1868, increased his passion for history under the ruins of the old city, as he himself would later on state: “*Afară din cercul laborios alu catedrei și alu zelului predecesorilor mei, mai aflaiu în Târgoviște ș-un alt câmp de muncă mult mai întins de cât acela alu școlei; căci acesta localitate fost-a mult timp reședința țerei și prin urmare e terenul atâtor fapte istorice din tote timpurile și epocele românilor.*” (I. D. Petrescu, 1892) (‘Here I was, outside the laborious circle of education and beyond the zeal of my predecessors, in Târgoviște, on a much larger field than that of the school; for this place was, for a long time, the capital of the country, hence the land of so many historical deeds from all times and all ages of Romanians’).

Thus, the year 1870 would mark the appearance of a remarkable work within the historiographical field: *Mitropoliile Tierrei* (I. D. Petrescu, 1870). It is actually a history of the Romanian church, an admirable attempt of a seminary teacher (at Argeș, Câmpulung and Târgoviște, as he used to sign) given that most of mediaeval documents were not published. That explains the numerous, particularly chronological, inadvertences that are present in the book.

As regards the beginnings of Christianity in Moldavia or Eastern Dacia, as presented in the book, the entire construction is fanciful. The Cumans are seen as the successors of Avars and that is why even the Metropolitan Church of Moldavia was called ‘of Cumania’ (I. D. Petrescu, 1870). In the 13th century, the territory of former Romanised Dacia was divided into several small states, federative duchies, and one of the oldest was that of Bogdan I, the duke of the countries “*din ânturu*” (‘inside, within’), whose bishop was David. Around 1260, Bogdan II was the duke of Maramureș and Moldavia, with his own episcopacy (I. D. Petrescu, 1870). His reign over Maramureș prompts one to think that the author refers to Bogdan Descălecătorul ‘the founder of the Moldavian state, erroneously placed in time.

We should note the accurate, though not complete, presentation of the succession of Moldavian princes. However, I. D. Petrescu is especially interested in the periods of prosperity of Moldavia and less in its leaders, which are

secondary. Therefore, he dedicates many of his eulogies to Alexander the Good, in whose times Moldavia raised to prosperity, founded the first literary and religious institutions (I. D. Petrescu, 1870), and neglects voivodes such as Petru I or Stephen the Great.

In his work, he puts historical personalities in opposition in an attempt to encourage the reader to distinguish the good from the evil. It is the reason why an arch is built over time, by comparatively analysing the evolution of the church under Iacob Heraclid Despotul and Vasile Lupu. The former is a crowned monster who devastated Moldavian churches and banished all Orthodox people, as he intended to replace the Romanians’ Orthodoxy with the adventurers’ Protestantism. In contrast, almost a century later, Vasile Lupu “*făcu multe lucruri demne de memoria Prinților celor mai înțelepți...*” (i.e. ‘did many things worthy of the memory of the wisest Princes’), even if the Orthodox Church went through great turmoil in his time as well. I. D. Petrescu extensively refers to the Synod of Iași, in 1642, that condemned the writing of patriarch Cyril Lucaris, published in Geneva in 1629, which deviated from the Orthodox faith. He emphasised the powerful role played by the Moldavian voivode who managed to gather so many wise men prepared to root out such manifestations (I. D. Petrescu, 1870).

The religious history of Wallachia could only start with Argeș, first seen as a lofty Dacian citadel, then as a centre of Orthodoxy. Before Prince Neagoe’s “godly temple”, I. D. Petrescu dwells upon the princely church, supposedly the only thing that was left from Negru Vodă, along with his small fort (the ruins of the voivodal court) which could only serve as defence for the southern part of the town (I. D. Petrescu, 1870).

The foundations of the religious organisation were also set up by Negru Vodă who, in 1290, “*ca uă concepțiune cruciată*” (‘as a crusading conception’), started off to Argeș to save the eastern Orthodoxy and brought along the bishop of Făgăraș, Simeon. Based on a source which unfortunately was cited only in this book, a fictitious continuity is built, as the hieromonachs Mihail and Eremia, who supposedly shepherded these lands until the arrival to the throne of Wallachia of “*Vladu I*” (Vladislav I), whose rule is erroneously assumed to have begun in 1360 (I. D. Petrescu, 1870).

The book also mentions the effort of the

Catholic Church to attract the believers of this country during the reign of Alexandru Basarab, around 1353, and emphasises his effort to support the faith. In 1355, Alexandru Basarab called up a large assembly: "...compusă din Mitropolii țerei, între cari erau: Calist allu Constantinoplei, Mitropolitul Târnovei, allu Vidinului, allu Dobrociei, allu Severinului allu Albei Iulii și allu Preslavei, în a căror presință se făcu decisiunea, ca Mitropolia Daciei Australe, să oficia și de aici nainte tot la Argeșiu, în Bisecica Sântului Nicolau..." (I. D. Petrescu, 1870) ('consisting of the Metropolitans of the country, among whom: Kallistos of Constantinople, the Metropolitan of Târnova, of Vidin, of Dobruja, of Severin, of Alba-Iulia. With all present, a decision was made, that the Metropolitan Church of southern Dacia should, from then on, preserve its see at Argeș, at St. Nicholas Church'). The author also refers to a Metropolitan of Ungro-Wallachia, other than Iachint, namely Antim I, who, according to I. D. Petrescu, was acknowledged as such by all the above-mentioned hierarchs.

Inaccuracies also occur as regards the rule of Mircea the Elder. The author admits that the country's Metropolitan See remained at Argeș, but he puts forward an unsubstantiated assumption, namely that the princely seat was moved to Târgoviște in 1401 (I. D. Petrescu, 1870).

Church hierarchs are also regarded as historical personalities. In this context, our attention was drawn by the pages dedicated to Antim Ivireanul and the author's fierceness (under the influence of the Romantic school) to promote the Romanian origin of the metropolitan ("*Biografia lui Antim, martirul țerei noastre, âncu nu este cunoscută; căci i se negă chiar și origina sa română...*") (I. D. Petrescu, 1870), which translates as 'The biography of Antim, the martyr of our country, is not yet known; for his very Romanian origin is disputed') and deny his Georgian descent which he dismisses as a trifle. The metropolitan is, according to I. D. Petrescu, the son of some Moldavian fugitives who left along with voivode Ștefan Tomșa and found refuge around the Azov area.

The bibliography used to write this first extensive work is not to be neglected, as the author uses the most important sources of the age. Thus, there are quotations from *Magazin istoric pentru Dacia*, edited by Treboniu Laurian and Nicolae Bălcescu, Dionisie Fotino's *Istoria generală a*

Daciei, Cronica românilor by Gheorghe Șincai, Andrei Șaguna's *Istoria bisericească*, alongside of original sources such as *Chronograful Argeșului de dascălul Enache, grămăticul lui Iosif al Argeșului*, whose authenticity our historiography doubts (G. Ștrempel, 1997).

A decade after the appearance of his first extensive work, I. D. Petrescu chose to dwell upon a personality of the Romanian Middle Ages that was less known to his contemporaries: Radu the Great. The lack of documents, most of them unpublished, made the author's endeavour difficult and it was because of this only that his mistakes were accepted.

However, this is the first volume dedicated to the great prince, *Radu the Great (1490-1508)*, which went out at Târgoviște, in 1880. Chronology errors, which are visible in the title itself and which have been explained above, are offset by the author's use of the still living tradition, in the mid-19th century; he thus opened a direction of research he perseveringly pursued in his later studies. The bibliography provides soundness to the work and includes, among others, *Magazin istoric pentru Dacia*, Aaron Florian's *Istoria românilor* or Treboniu Laurian's *Teșanas*.

The text structure is clear and concise; the author first deals with the country's evolution during the prince's reign and then with the monuments he founded. The main aspect that has to be emphasised is the assumption, ground breaking in that age, according to which it was Radu the Great who began the construction of the Metropolitan Church of Târgoviște (I. D. Petrescu, 1880).

I. D. Petrescu himself was convinced that this was a pioneering study, one which had to be continued by a thorough research, especially since the eminent historians of the country could not have the final say in this matter. This can only be explained by the fact that a way to "...desgropa trecutul nostru atât de mult înțelenit de câmpul desăvârșitei uitări" (I. D. Petrescu, 1892) ('... uncover our past, so deeply buried in the land of complete oblivion') was not yet found.

The next historiographical attempt was completely original and had been meant to be that way. In 1888, I. D. Petrescu published the first monograph of Târgoviște. The author mentions the longstanding documentation, as some of the sources and documents are novel: *Chronograful Argeșului, Epistola tipică a Mitropolitului Ștefan ot Târgoviște, Epoca lui Vasile Lupul și a lui Mateiu*

Basarab written by the historian G. Missail or Grigore Tocilescu's *Istoria Română*.

In addition, I.D. Petrescu also relies on the extremely valuable oral history as a working method: "...cu atari isvore în mână, în cursu de mai mult timpu de când suntemu stabiliți în capitala Basarabilor (20 ani) și pururea aflându-ne în amenunțite cercetări, făcute printre bătrânii din localitate, dintre carii mulți numai trăiescu...puturâmu stabili de o cam-dată nesce atari preliminari, ce ne conduseră în șirul acestei schițări istorice și topografice..." (I. D. Petrescu, 1888) (which roughly translates as: 'having such sources at hand, for so many years since we settled down in the capital of the Basarabs (20 years) and constantly carrying out thorough research among the elders of the city, many of whom no longer with us, we have been able to establish some preliminaries which have led us to this series of historical and topographical sketches').

After a brief geographic presentation, the study deals with the beginning of the city, but regrettably the conclusions have nothing to do with the historical truth. Although I. D. Petrescu admits that no chronicle specifies when it was founded, he considers that Târgoviște played an important role in 1240-1716 (I. D. Petrescu, 1888). The first date is not chosen by chance, but taken from *Istoria română* written by Grigore Tocilescu, who erroneously believed that Târgoviște was the centre of Seneslau's voivodeship. The two writers had similar working methods. Just like Tocilescu, I. D. Petrescu would complement his historical view by gathering information from the local people, by travelling and carrying out field investigations (I. B. Cătănciu, 1991).

He would continue Grigore Tocilescu's theory and consider that three decades later, around 1272, Litovoi's brother, Bărbat, having been set free by King Ladislaus IV of Hungary, had been sent to Târgoviște as well (I. D. Petrescu, 1888). And this is how Târgoviște became, in the works of the second half of the 19th century, a true voivodal centre of a structure that had political and dynastic continuity. In the decades to come, a thorough research of the sources and the beginning of the first systematic archaeological excavations would completely discard these views.

Unfortunately, in his book, the history of Târgoviște during the 14th-15th centuries pendulates between the rule of Mircea the Elder and the second

reign of Vlad the Impaler. In-between, there is only the memory of Vlad Dracul and his conflict with Iancu de Hunedoara resulting in the plundering and burning of the city by the Turkish troops that were bringing the son of Mircea back to the throne.

Târgoviște was not meant to die but to revive, arising from the ashes like the Phoenix during the age of Țepeș. The author assumes that it is then that the city fortifications with water-filled ditches were built to prevent the attacks of sultan Mehmed II's army. The prince's efforts were in vain, for his brother, Radu the Great: "...strica șianțurile și țăriile, dărâma și Curtea-Domnească de aici..." (I. D. Petrescu, 1888) ('... would destroy the dikes and fortifications and pull down the Princely Court here'). According to I. D. Petrescu, this moment was crucial, because Târgoviște, though restored, seemed to lose the status as capital of Wallachia and became the summer residence of the Basarabs (I. D. Petrescu, 1888).

The war fought by Michael the Brave against the Turks brings the old city back to the fore. Sinan Pasha occupied the city and set up his defences here, at the Princely Court, for it had the shape of a castle and could shelter up to 4-5,000 soldiers. A monastery nearby the court was turned into a fortress and a rampart with palisades was built around. The author assumes, without providing solid arguments, that the city may have been surrounded by a stone wall and beams, in addition to a very deep 12 feet wide ditch. All these elements of fortification were destroyed by Michael the Brave, who had returned from Transylvania, and were brought back to life by Matei Basarab (I. D. Petrescu, 1888).

The author is familiar with the difficult moments Târgoviște went through in the 17th and the 18th centuries, as he mentions Grigore Ghica's order that all fortifications should be pulled down and the burning of the city under the rule of Constantin Mavrocordat. The restoration works of the Princely Court, initiated by Grigore II Ghica, is seen as having a hidden purpose, namely to search for the alleged treasures and even plunder the princely tombs (I. D. Petrescu, 1888).

Chapter III deals with the city of Târgoviște during Matei Basarab's reign, for: "*Cea mai mare și mai vie lumină ce a strebătutu asupra vechei străluciri a Târgoviștei este cea din timpul lui Mateiu Basarab și a Mitropolitului său Ștefan.*" (I. D. Petrescu, 1888) (i.e. 'The greatest and most vivid

light that shone upon the olden glory of Târgoviște is that which glowed in the times of Matei Basarab and his Metropolitan, Stephen’.)

It is on this occasion that an outstanding source is mentioned, The Typical Epistle of the Metropolitan Ștefan ot Târgoviște, which minutely describes a rain procession. The author tries to rule out any doubts regarding this source by showing in a note that it was copied, word for word, from the original epistle that was in the care of the priest Daniel from ‘Sfânta Vineri’ Church in Câmpulung (I. D. Petrescu, 1888). Its originality was later disputed by historians such as Nicolae Iorga who would not find, in any of these lines, the style of Matei Basarab’s epoch. Nevertheless, it remains of great importance, as it is the oldest source which mentions the Gates of the city of Târgoviște, a key that can help reconstruct, as accurately as possible, the fortifications built by Matei Basarab (D. P. Condurățeanu, 1886; V. Drăghiceanu, 1915; R. Gioglovan, 1973; A. Erich, M. Oproiu, 2012; M. Cârciumar, R. Cârciumar, 2017).

Petrescu uses the data gathered from the elders when he analyses the Princely Court and the mediaeval monuments of Târgoviște, to which he devotes important pages in the book. In our opinion, it is extremely important that the author cites older works, which can provide an earlier picture of the great restoration carried out by Prince Gheorghe Bibescu.

An 1816 report mentions that the Princely Court ruins continued to cover a pretty large area. Of the numerous vaults, corridors, halls, barracks, only two rooms, near the Church Gate (the Great Princely Church), still stood. Important details also concern the size of windows, the length of which was a man-high, or the princely cellars that were in very good shape and needed only little upkeep. Chindia Tower is analysed based on the information provided by an 80-year-old from Stelea Monastery who said it had been in good shape around 1805, when on top of it was a beautiful wooden turret resting on stone columns (I. D. Petrescu, 1888).

The Princely Church was “*de o rară frumusețe a timpului ei*” (‘of rare beauty in its time’), with its iconostasis brought all the way from Italy, at the order of Petru Cercel and, in the nave, a representation of rulers dressed in their imperial robe, a sign of power and of their status as founders (I. D. Petrescu, 1888). The secular history and its hardships are presented fairly accurately. The

author thoroughly analyses all tomb slabs and their inscriptions. But he makes a mistake as regards the stone on Mateiaș’s tomb when he takes for granted the information provided by the priest Musceleanu who served at the Princely Church. He thus assumed that the bowl-shaped stone, used in child baptism, in which there was an inscription in the form of poetry, had been taken out from the prince’s tomb when his remains had been moved to Arnota (I. D. Petrescu, 1888). In fact, it is the epitaph dedicated to Mateiaș Basarab by his own father, the writer Udriște Năsturel, in 1652.

I. D. Petrescu does not forget to mention Coconilor street, which was inhabited, on the right side of the palace, by the Drăculești branch of the family and, on the left, by the Dănești branch. He also refers to the baths near the princely gardens, considered to be an imitation of the public baths of Constantinople, and to Matei Basarab’s printing house that was located further on, “*la Bărbătescu*” (I. D. Petrescu, 1888).

The City Gates hold a special place, as he got his information from eyewitnesses and the tradition passed on from the elders. Thus, there were four gates: one to the north-east, The gate of Dealu; to the east or south-east, The gate of Buzău, where there was the district of *Roșiorii de țară* (later the *seimeni*), beyond the Biserica Albă; then, lower down, southwardly, beyond the shops which sold Genovese, Venetian, Constantinopolitan goods and which were located parallel to the Metropolitan Church, there was The gate of Bucharest (in the area of the future Ciocârlan barrier). The last Gate was to the west, called Poarta Argeșului “*...ce mai ducea și la Dolgopol (Câmpulung), aici era târgul ghotelor, pronunțat azi Oborul-Vechiu*” (I. D. Petrescu, 1888) (‘which led to Dolgopol (Câmpulung) and where there was the fair of mobs, today known as *Oborul-Vechiu*’).

As regards the population, I. D. Petrescu used the information received from the traveller Paul of Aleppo, according to which there were more than 70 churches in the city, hence the conclusion that there must have been around 60-65,000 inhabitants. Still, this information is compared to the situation presented by Dionisie Fotino in his history of the early 19th century, which mentioned that Târgoviște had three monasteries (the Metropolitan Church, Stelea, Polnița-Biserica Albă), a high tower in the courtyard of a ruined palace and 22 churches, of which three were desolate and five without a name

(I. D. Petrescu, 1888).

The last part of the book deals with the administration and the army, which the author analyses only over certain periods, the most preferred being the ages of Matei Basarab, Constantin Brâncoveanu and the end of the Phanariote epoch.

In the end, we note the author's regret for the unjust fate of Târgoviște. He does not try to find those responsible for the decline of the city, even if he briefly mentions the measures imposed by the Turks. To I. D. Petrescu, Târgoviște represented the perfect city of Wallachia and the comparison with Bucharest is eloquent. Târgoviște had larger and more beautiful houses, larger neighbourhoods, and longer, wider and straighter streets than those of Bucharest (I. D. Petrescu, 1888).

The closing tone is sad and Vasile Cârlova's lyrics emphasise this. Nevertheless, we are left with Petrescu's message addressed to the indifference of the future fathers of this city, saying that the ruins of Târgoviște are not those of Bastille, Arnota or Plumbuita, but are the holy relics of the skeleton of our glorious past (I. D. Petrescu, 1888).

The book which concludes the studies on the Romanian Middle Ages is special owing to the chosen topic. I. D. Petrescu acquired enough experience to deal with one of the most controversial figures of our history: Negru Vodă. A century of historiographical analysis was not enough to unravel the mysteries surrounding him and that is precisely why the perception of this legendary character in those times is extremely interesting, especially as the lack of awareness of documentary and archaeological sources leaves room for interpretations that are unacceptable nowadays.

Descălicarea lui Negru Vodă și Cetatea sa după Dâmbovița (1290) was published in 1894, at the age of full scientific maturity of the author. I. D. Petrescu started his writing with a literary exercise. He speaks about the Păpușa Massif, a mountain that connects Transylvania and Wallachia and along whose paths the traveller is taken right to Câmpulung. According to an old tradition from around Făgăraș, Negru Vodă, a great voivode, would hunt in these mountainous woods to please his princess who greatly appreciated the game here (I. D. Petrescu, 1894).

In showing the dismounting process, Petrescu returns to scientific arguments, noting the existence,

as early as the Tatars' invasion of 1242, of federations of *cnezats*, grouped under their voivodes, that had to withstand this disaster caused by invaders. Having retreated to mountainous areas, they went out about four decades later and submitted their voivodeship to a supreme duke, Negru Vodă, the ruler of Făgăraș and Amlaș (I. D. Petrescu, 1894).

From here, the author steps again into the realm of imagination, by inserting numerous geographical elements. Thus, he imagines that Negru Vodă chose either the valley of the Lerești river that bathes Dolgopol and ramifies in Mount Păpușa or the little Rucăr river, a tributary of the Dâmbovița. He speaks about two troops that supposedly climbed down the two valleys to meet somewhere in the Dâmbovicioara area (I. D. Petrescu, 1894). These groups were made up of the families of those who would set up villages here: the Lerești family, the Nămați (Nămăiești), the Bădeni, the Stoeniești.

Negru Vodă dismounted at Câmpulung probably, I. D. Petrescu thinks, because he wanted to escape "*supremația ungară*" ('the Hungarian supremacy'). Wallachia had to be released first and Petrescu reveals that the old tradition preserved the memory of a captain of Negru Vodă, Cotea (who gave its name to the village Cotenești), who frightened the Tatars to death. One of his prods to battle was collected by the author from the elders of those places: "*Voi cu ghiogele de ulm/ Căutați-vă de drum/ Și ăia cu traiste de tei/ Iată treaba ce vă cer:/ P-ăi cu tolbele de țap/ Loviți-i mereu la cap, / Curățind țara de ei/ Că-s prădalnici și prea răi.*" (I. D. Petrescu, 1894).

Negru Vodă settled at Dolgopol with the consent of the chiefs of those places, whom the voivode gave many lands in mountainous areas. I. D. Petrescu is confident of this information especially after talking to the 80-year-old Popa Macarie from Valea Mare and the former *potecaș* 'border guard' of the mountains, Ion Miloș from Lerești, who divulged that they had seen Matei Basarab's charter which confirmed all these land grants made by Negru Vodă (I. D. Petrescu, 1894). It is not the only document about Negru Vodă the author saw. In the house of the vestry of the Câmpulung estate, I. D. Petrescu studied a document from which he extracted the names of the five captains of Negru Vodă: Cotea, Leresu, Nămațu, Badea and Stoian. This document is

mentioned only in this work and it seems pretty obvious that it is a fake. The reasons why and the conditions in which it was made remain unknown.

Having dismounted at Câmpulung, Negru Vodă was confronted with the Tatars' advance along the Dâmbovița river; that is why he decided to close this valley where its sides were closest. According to tradition, the fortress lay on both banks connected by a bridge; however, I. D. Petrescu is aware that the traces of a citadel can only be seen near the rock hewn church of Cetățeni: "*Cine a vizitat această barieră naturală a piscurilor arătate, lesne poate înțelege cât de formidabilă a fost atunci baricadată valea Dâmboviței prin tăria acestei vechi și naturale redute.*" (I. D. Petrescu, 1894) (i.e. 'Whoever visited this natural barrier of these peaks can easily understand how formidably barricaded was, in those days, the valley of the Dâmbovița by the strength of this old and natural redoubt'). The author collected here several folk songs which preserved the memory of the enigmatic figure. One of them goes even further than the legend recorded in chronicles and emphasises the coming into power of the Basarabs from beyond the Olt river: "*Negru Vodă munți străbate/ Ca să ridice-o Cetate/ P-ale Dâmboviței stânci/ Apărate de voinici/ O zidi și-o întări/ Și din cuibul ei sări/ Cu-ai lui soți și mari gloate/ Pe tătari că mi țî-i bate./ Țară nouă își așază,/ Rânduindu-i așa pază./ La Cetate-n Dâmbovița/ El avea și o domniță./ Domnița cu dragi coconii/ De viță Basarabeni./ Domnița cu ei trăia/ Și-n pază bună-i avea./ Pe când nimeni nu gândea./ Oaste mare năvălea/ Cetatea o-n presura/ Dar voinici-i omora./ Când lupta să înglota/ Toți striga: „Măria Ta !/ Alei doamnă mai degrab/ Dă-ne nouă-un Basarab./ Basarab din Caloian,/ Că-i sămânță de Oltean/ De Oltean de Craiovean/ Să ne fie nouă Ban/ Domnița atunci le dete/ Pe cel mai lat între spete./ Să le fie domn isteț/ Din Olteț până-n Cerneț.*" (I. D. Petrescu, 1894) (roughly translated as: 'Negru Vodă crosses the mountains/ To raise a fortress/ On the rocks of the Dâmbovița/ Defended by brave men/ He built and consolidated it/ And from this nest/ He swooped down upon the Tatars/ And defeated them. / He founded a new country/ And prepared its defences./ At his castle upon the Dâmbovița/ He had a princess./ A princess with beloved children/ Of Basarab blood./ The lady lived with them/ And was guarded well./ While no one was thinking./ A great army attacked / And surrounded the castle/ But the

brave men killed them./ They all shouted: "Your Majesty!/ Give us one Basarab./ Basarab from Caloian/ For he is of Olt origins/ from Craiova/ Give one to us/ To be our *ban*/ And then the lady gave them/ The strongest to be their wise prince/ From Olteț as far as Cerneț').

The lack of specialised bibliography points to how precarious information on this historical figure was. Furthermore, it reveals the direction of research of I. D. Petrescu who, for the first time in this book, abandons other authors' information and relies exclusively on the tradition provided by the people of those lands. He rejects studies that thoroughly approach this topic, such as *Istoria critică a românilor* (Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu, 1875) or the extensive synthesis of A.D. Xenopol, *Istoria românilor din Dacia Traiană* (A. D. Xenopol, 1925).

Ioan D. Petrescu's view of Negru Vodă is not, therefore, one of a pronounced scientific nature. The absence of sources pushed him to build history by himself, to create scenarios where there was no trace of support. Nevertheless, he opened up a path of research that, decades later, would be preferred by a part of modern historiography, which of the tradition preserved from generation to generation, completed by interesting analogies built up by means of toponymy and hydronymy.

The novel *Buchetul*, I. D. Petrescu's last extensive attempt, published in 1889, comprises, as shown in the title, various sayings and maxims. Some of these have historical themes and are of particular importance to mediaeval history.

For example, he analyses the cruelty of Prince Vlad the Impaler, a topical theme in that epoch as well, mentioning the episode of the field of pales during the Sultan's campaign of 1462. His conclusions are accurate, Petrescu suggesting that these practices and barbarisms were common in that age and other Romanian rulers, such as Stephen the Great, also made use of them as (I. D. Petrescu, 1892).

Speaking about the death penalty, the author reveals the place where the spears and gallows were placed in Târgoviște: at the end of the Câmpulung barrier, where once were the gate of Argeș and the people's fair, or later the old market. In those days, the house of the merchant Mihai Stăulescu was still there. His words have gone through the times and reveal the bad fate that forced his ancestors to build homes and shops here, in this cursed, vile place

(I. D. Petrescu, 1892).

In conclusion, after completely examining the historical writings of I. D. Petrescu, we can assert that they remain a significant barometer of the progress made at historiographical level in the second part of the 19th century. In fact, Petrescu is not in the middle of the scientific world and therefore he is not aware of its unrests and doubts. However, he manages to bring forth some unclarified aspects of the Middle Ages. His contributions regarding Târgoviște and its monuments, the carefully arranged data about the reign of Radu the Great or the tradition regarding Negru Vodă, all are meritorious attempts which needed to be recorded and never be forgotten.

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