

University "Ovidius" Constanța  
Doctoral School Humanities Science  
Domain - History

**EURASIAN INTERFERENCES  
REFLECTED IN  
ROMANIAN ICONOGRAPHY,  
XIV<sup>TH</sup> – XX<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES**

(Thesis Summary)

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Constanța

2013

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**EURASIAN INTERFERENCES  
REFLECTED IN ROMANIAN ICONOGRAPHY  
XIV<sup>TH</sup> – XX<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES  
SUMMARY**

*Keywords: art, picture, icon, eurasian interference, Europe and Asia, Christianity and Islam, iconography, aniconism, Biblical and Qur'anic symbols, religious painting, miniature, God, Allah.*

**“Eurasian interferences reflected in Romanian iconography, XIV<sup>th</sup> – XX<sup>th</sup> centuries”** is a work which reflects the way they do, overtime, human reporting to image, to religious image, to icon, to its power and vocation to discover and transmit historical and religious events of God’s “vision”.

Several circumstances led to undertaking this work, the past years research expressed in two large studies: “On Islamic Art in the Middle Ages” and “An Ecclesiological and Canonical Evaluation of Christian and Muslim Art” and also numerous researches made by Hermeneutics and their application by painting places of worship and icons. The argument for this paper can be found precisely in numerous studies, much too theoretical, where generalities are delivered, where theology is not intertwined with the languages of other disciplines, history, art history, aesthetics, philosophy, where Tradition must speak on iconicity as if it were a given common to all areas of theology, but which influenced and formulated the doctrines and techniques of homiletics and art (iconology and iconography courses are minimal, illustrative and focused on technique), theological terminology and periodization of Church history.

Today, and the practical result is visible, most of the churches built are iconically illiterate, disregarding the canons and most priests, artists and beneficiaries do not correctly define the religious image, they do not recognize the “spirit” in the kitsch-photos-images, nonetheless pious, on the religious commerce market, “the Church lacking founders and not church painters”, as Sorin Dumitrescu said.

**“Eurasian interferences reflected in Romanian iconography, XIV<sup>th</sup> – XX<sup>th</sup> centuries”** is an interdisciplinary study, providing a systematic research of the historical, theological, artistic base of iconography, a convergent study starting from a general, extended research, Europe and Asia, Christianity and Islam getting to the Romanian historical, religious and artistic space, being in the same time, a detailed and objective study, backed up by images meant to offer triple articulation, religious, artistic and instrumental efficiency or charismatic, dogmatic and artistic. The work studies the history of representation of Divine, rebuilding the history of art (without judging the taste of the works presented), the doctrines and ideas which focused on this representation, allowed or forbidden, from cases of innocence to devastating concepts which led to destruction of the images. The hermeneutical vocation of the religious image intensifies the iconing of the theological discourse and develops new levels of visualization, this work addressing the religious image in different historical periods, from a uniform and common perspective of local religions and traditions, often considered avatars of entropic processes and of gradual depreciation of faith and not of religion.

**“Eurasian interferences reflected in Romanian iconography, XIV<sup>th</sup> – XX<sup>th</sup> centuries”** in its overall scheme, historically ordered five chapters which, in their mystical ambition, have attempted to offer the Divine a dignified image, fearless of Eurasian historical and religious evidence, for and against, in a unitary, symmetrical structure, organized as follows: **Introduction**, containing the necessary elements in order to understand the subject discussed, followed by **Chapter I, Historical and Theological Reference Points of Eurasian Iconography, XIV<sup>th</sup> – XX<sup>th</sup> centuries** chapter structured in three parts: *Europe and Asia, Christianity and Islam, historical evolution, Art at the Confluence of Religions. God and Allah Al-Musawwir and The Evolution of Eurasian Iconography from the Beginning to the XIV<sup>th</sup> Century.* **Chapter II, Doctrinal Fundamentals and Dogmatic Conformity of Eurasian Iconography, XIV<sup>th</sup> – XX<sup>th</sup> centuries**, chapter structured in five parts, *Canonic expression of Christian Art, Icon, Ascensional Theories, Canonic Deviations and Modern Heresies, Iconography, Painting or Writing in Hermeneutics, Treatises on Art and Modern Textbooks, Muslim Canon, a Theological Scheme of Muslim Art, Aniconism or Hypostatic presence in the Forbidden Image or the Unseen Face.* **Chapter III**, entitled **Elements of Symbolic Language in the Eurasian Iconography, XIV<sup>th</sup> – XX<sup>th</sup> centuries** conceived in six subchapters: *Symbols of Biblical and Qur'anic Identity, The concept of Eikon in Eurasian Art, Mandorla, a Symbol of*

*Break Out of the Transcendent, Hands Iconography or Symbolism of Mudras, Arabesque, between Vegetal Epiphany and Muslim Metaphor, The Mihrab, a Symbol of Muslim Identity.*

**Chapter IV, Eurasian Interferences in Romanian Miniature, XIV<sup>th</sup>-XVIII<sup>th</sup> centuries** is debated in three parts: *A history of Miniature, Miniature and Ornaments of the Manuscripts of the Romanian Countries, XIV<sup>th</sup>-XVIII<sup>th</sup> Centuries* and a final case study: *An Artistic Incursion in the World of Marcu, the Evangelist, from Toros Roslin to Gavril Uric*. **Chapter V**, the last chapter, entitled **Eurasian Interference in Romanian Religious Painting XIV<sup>th</sup>-XX<sup>th</sup> centuries**, detailed in five main ideas, maintains the previous symmetry, *Religious Painting in the Romanian Countries, XIV<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Expression of Romanian Autocephaly, Transition, Decline and Innovation in Romanian Religious Painting, XVII<sup>th</sup>-XVIII<sup>th</sup> Centuries, Modern Perspectives in Romanian Religious Painting, XIX<sup>th</sup>-XX<sup>th</sup> Centuries, Artistic Presences in some Donations of Romanian Princes to Athos Mountain* and a little case study, *Parvu Mutu, the last medieval painter, the first modern artist*. The final part of the research, **Conclusions**, represents a guide for those who will approach the study of iconography, being, in the same time, a starting point for future research.

It has been considered that, through this organization, the entire theme of iconography will be covered and it will be proven, on the basis of all that has been created, from the first religious images (which are theological, artistic and religious arguments) that religious art has progressed and perfected or declined, has devalued in the same time with human society, respectively the Romanian society. The main **Research Methods** used in the study are: thematic analysis, quantitative and qualitative, content analysis, comparison and case study, methods which helped in ordering and systematization of the researched material, which confirmed the fact that some studies succeeded to have asserted themselves in the study of iconography, while others failed to accomplish the mission they were created for. It has been proven that throughout the research a selection of the iconographic material was necessary, especially in the case of Canons, the material being quite bulky, not being of great importance for iconography, and the comparison has been used in order to emphasize the evolution of art and artists from a historical, theological, social and cultural point of view.

The first chapter, **Historical and Theological Reference Points of Eurasian Iconography, XIV<sup>th</sup> – XX<sup>th</sup> centuries** as the title suggest, is the prolegomena of a history and a

theology of Eurasian iconography, from its origin, with historical, cultural and religious consequences, where the approach of the confrontation between Asia and Europe has always had a hint of opposition, maybe because it was considered or perceived as a meeting point – a clash between Christianity and Islam. Just like the opposition between Occident and Orient, the one between Europe and Asia experienced a long-term geo-historical and geo-political status which exceeded the tension between Europe and Islam, some stating that during some periods of time, for example during the Crusades or during the Turkish-Ottoman hegemony in oriental Mediterranean and Balkans, the Euro-Asian duel and the oriental-occidental one has become something that, inaccurately, at least at symbolic level, has been called the battle between the cross and the crescent. The purpose of this historical development is to follow the way Europe traveled to come into contact with Asia, with the Islam, as well as the reasons and the ways this thing happened, the historical process according to which the relations, the plurality of aspects and concepts which configured and conditioned the reciprocal vision evolved, the Romanian, European and Christian territory being present here, actively interacting with Asia and Islam, all these leading to the modern vision of Euroislam.

Art at the confluence of religions, an art situated between God the Creator and Allah Al-Musawwir, creator of faces, emphasizes that religions were all considered to be, each in their irreducible way, paths to God, for many theologians the theme of the ultimate truth, one and universal, threatening to fade, to disappear. If great religions are regarded, each, as having a specific access to the truth, this multiplicity has appeared to many theologians as a relativist attack to the integrity of the Truth itself, none of the religions being absolute, all being relative, even if they aspire to the Divine Absolute. Religion has become a tool of spiritually modeling the social conscience and any religion is a coherent system of postulates that admits, on the level of mystical knowledge, through unconditioned faith, the existence and the autonomous and total force of a divine supernatural world, creating and directing a visible and invisible world whose destiny is led by established laws or at will, as it has the right of life and death over it, since it is its creation. The symbols of divinity are mainly the ones of the father, the judge, the almighty, the sovereign, and the name of God is merely a symbol in order to signify the unknown being, while the being is merely a symbol in order to hint to the unknown God. There is no other name

given to God except for the one He Himself gave to Him: “I Am Who I Am”<sup>1</sup>. God the Creator or Allah al-Musawwir, the Creator, the faces Giver, had a dialogue with art, a dialogue for which the man was created by God in His own image, and being God’s image means being a partner for dialogue, communicator with God.

The last part of this chapter outlines the evolution of the Eurasian iconography up to the XIV<sup>th</sup> century and the desire to make art, an art that does not represent a linear track but an evolution, always refreshed by exterior contributions, in which the geographical and temporal blending and connections produced continuously mutations of forms and functions of art. Since ancient times, art has represented a form of manifestation, unusually spread, of human spirit, from the time of cave paintings in Paleolithic to Picasso’s or Dali’s paintings, from the liturgical hymns of the idolaters to the works of art of great composers, from psalterion to the symphonic orchestra, from cromlechs and dolmens to modern architecture. The huge load accumulated by mankind over time is an indispensable attribute of the man of culture and the religious art is the expression of the divine principle, both in Christianity and in Islam. Being a convergent study, inclining to the Romanian area, it is outlined the Eurasian impact and the direct influence of oriental iconography on Romanian art, since its beginning.

***Doctrinal Fundamentals and Dogmatic Conformity of Eurasian Iconography, XIV<sup>th</sup> – XX<sup>th</sup> centuries*** outlines the pneumatic and patristic genealogy of the icon, in the first three subchapters, which has become over time solemn and canonically bustling, discussed here, just like the religious image of the Islam, from the point of view of canons, of hermeneutics, iconological guides and art treatises. Captivating due to historical and canonical investigation, this chapter stands out also because of the artistic opportunity in contrast with the ignorance or the doctrinal knowledge of the icon painters, of the supporters of the image or of the iconoclasts and aniconics. What’s original is the vision in which the Muslim image is situated between Christians and Hebrews, extremes when it comes to image representation, the former being its followers, the latter completely forbidding illustrating living beings. But for Muslims, banning illustration was rather a recommendation, the Aniconism being a consequence of the absence of the Covenant and that is why the Qur’an didn’t bother to firmly forbid the image, the notion of

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<sup>1</sup> Biblia, Ed. Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1991, Ieșirea 3, 14.

God as it is formed in Qur'an being transcendental enough to discourage the artist in representing the being integrally, their face being most of the times illustrated white or covered.

In Christianity the vision does not represent an imaginative idea of the apparition but the empathetic psyche of the vision preceding it, the vision of the icon painter representing the shape the empathetic psyche of a holy theological vision gets in a symbolic way. The sacred art and that of the icon painting can only be understood in their whole content and meaning if they are integrated within Church and its liturgical and sacramental life, separated from religious life, the iconographic art can only be understood partially or incompletely. The icon, not only an object of worship but also created and inspired by religious, forms with it a homogenous whole, completing and explaining it. The idea of the canon corresponded and emerged from the divine authority, the divine revelation and the divine speech. It has always been possible to implement, even in art, the canon or the "guide" to rule the Church. Hermeneutics, expression of canonicity of ecclesial art was, in its form established by tradition – that of a guide, a study tool. For generations of painters, monks or laymen, it was, if not a fundamental book, a "handy book" both in workshops and on the scaffolds of the churches which were to be painted, decisively contributing not only to perpetuate the Byzantine tradition regarding the painting of Orthodox countries or regarding the stability, within the canonical "boundaries" of the Orthodox iconographic norm, but also to maintain the tradition of the church art unaltered and, in a great measure, of the own face of Orthodoxy. "Treatise on the proportions of the human body" by Polyclet, "Poetics" by Aristotle, "Treatise on Painting" by Cennino Cennini, „Aesthetics" by Boileau, "On the Imitations of the Ancients" by Winckelmann are not documents having the power of a law and they do not claim this such as Hermeneutics, which is not a piece of work with a single author wanting to spread a certain influence but it is the sum of the efforts of centuries of masters of iconography which became the law, but not in itself, but in the virtue of church recognition.

In this chapter, iconoclastic, iconophile theories have been presented, theories considered heresies, all these definitions, even the most abstract ones, being based on the idea that a face must be understood and defined on the basis of the one he/she was related to, this idea also implying a close relation and a precise distinction between the face and what was imagined. Modern heresies of art have been highlighted as being already artistic practice often seen such as

the destruction of the iconic message, sometimes deliberate devaluation of art and favouring the kitsch designated as a displaced structure which has evaded the law of non-transponibility.

The Islamic civilization was also based on the absolute uniqueness regarding the dogma, it was the first civilization calling to faith in the Unique God, He being the only one worshiped, the only one looked for, He is the one who can make the man strong or humble, who offers and gives in Heaven and on earth. This superior understanding of the uniqueness had a great influence on elevating the general intellectual level of man, on guiding the looks only to Allah, the Creator of all beings and the Lord of the Worlds. In the Muslim art there is an essentialization, a space between the characters, an imperious geometry setting everything in relation with an artistic universe emptied of extras, where man is not really responsible for seeking the Truth and Right, he only has to be open to truth and right, either through philosophical and rational way of the unique active intellect or through religious way of obedience towards the Prophet's revelation.

The third chapter named *Elements of Symbolic Language in Eurasian Iconography , XIV<sup>th</sup> – XX<sup>th</sup> centuries* has six studies which are not approached in a general manner, exemplifying in a new light symbols with Christian and Muslim identity, too little searched theologically and artistically, too little valorised, the concept of Eikon, Mandorla, regarding which there has always been confusion, the hands, their iconography and symbolism not having an important role so far in analyzing an image, an icon, the arabesque, which is not necessarily a Muslim artistic invention and the Mihrab, of Muslim origin, with a role similar to the shrine or the icon, in front of which the Muslim believer prostrates.

The universality of the symbols was explained in the study as representing the human conventions always indicating a community, a determined cultural area, local peculiarity, the signs being conventional, particular, related to a culture. The origin of the symbol speaks, paradoxically, about its cross cultural significance, literality, identifiable on the basis of a code of a particular culture the figurative meaning associating with it, transcending the borders of any culture. The symbol, in order to become explicit, can incorporate particular significations which can be coded, but it is not reducible to it, the symbol being not only an arbitrary image but being based also on a very strong internal motivation. Unlike the conventional image of the sign, the

symbol image involves a juxtaposition of two levels of signification, one literal and one figurative, one sensitive and one intelligible, the former asking for the latter. The icon is placed in line with the Holy Scripture and the Holy Cross, as one of those forms of revelation and knowing of God in which human and divine will and work merge. The icon, as artistic achievement and object of worship, capture the most eloquently the symbolic character of the Christian art, the art of icon painting implying a rigorous artistic method of execution, of appropriate rendering of the divine prototype, the canon deriving from an image not made by human hand, *acheiropoietos*. In Islam, a symbol of its identity, similar to the icon for Christianity, is the Mihrab, present in art as a way to ennable the matter, a symbol generating a captive beauty, a niche on the wall of Quibble, towards Mecca.

In this chapter, a touch of originality was brought by a numeric characteristic which Image, Beauty have as well as the whole created, sic being in the Scripture the number of Creation, shape, number covering the 6 directions in space, four cardinal directions to which the high and the low are added, the zenith and nadir, number also signifying a meeting in a double creative triad. The aesthetic of proportion was also discussed in the previous chapter where it took different and increasingly complex forms, also seen in painting and in all treatises and manuals on figurative arts, from the Byzantine ones of the monks at the Athos Mountain to the Treatise on painting by Cennini, manifesting the ambition of the plastic art to place itself on the same level of mathematical approach, proportion being not only an appropriate displace of matter but also a perfect adaptation of matter to form, proportion being the metaphysical principle through which it is explained the uniqueness of the cosmos itself. The Golden Section or the Golden Number wasn't limited to mathematics only, the concept making its way to explanations of natural phenomena and arts.

Mandorla also represents, in its turn, a novelty surpassing in this study the importance of the luminous halo or the crossed beam, often spoken of, Mandorla being mistaken for the for halo, illustrated almost similar to it, representing the emerging of the transcendent, of the unseen world, the world beyond. The study of Mandorla aims to highlight its symbolism, symbolism which may surpass the dualism of matter – spirit, earth – heaven in a harmonious unity all these reflected in icons such as *Transfiguration*, *Descending to Hell*, *Resurrection* and *Dormition of the Mother of God* illustrative material found in the Annexes of the study.

Hands iconography or the symbolism of Mudras evokes in a fresh vision the divine logos of proportions, of human anatomy. The hand in religious art, the hand common to Christianity and Islam symbolizes a future hand, its unusual and familiar antinomic morphology not being obtained by purifying the insignificant detail, by evading the accidental or by elevating the real to the legendary level of the myth, its contour signifying visually the anatomy of the future eon.

This chapter IV, *Eurasian Interferences in Romanian Miniature, XIV<sup>th</sup>-XVIII<sup>th</sup> Centuries* independently deals with miniature, as an art of its own, taken, indeed, from painting, but not being, as many call it, miniature painting or miniature art which is, as it is well known, an auxiliary science to history dealing with identifying, searching, describing and cataloguing various graphic representations having an artistic character (miniature) created in the header or the content of documents, manuscripts or printings in order to determine the signification of their artistic value. The science of miniatures is a science on the border between science and art critique, having practical utility connected more to documents restoration than to extracting information from studying them, the interpretation of various symbols being subjective. This chapter gets a new vision by defining miniature as an independent art with a technique similar to painting and combines various studies: history (a territorial, chronological study), history of arts and art theology, all having the role to transmit the historical and artistic fact. The historical records were kept in charters and registers, in notes and writings in manuscripts, which, besides the true artistic value, the manuscripts with miniatures completed the history, providing a series of very interesting data, through notes and writings, often replacing chronicles. This last study aims to underline the importance of miniature both in history and in art, to downgrade the phrase often used, even to this day, that “miniature is a minor art”, “giving it back” its rights of major art, independent, as it was considered in most of the Orient. The trajectory of miniature over time, both in Europe and in Asia, miniature schools and miniaturists are presented and then it is described the miniature and the ornament in the manuscripts in Romanian principalities in XIV<sup>th</sup>-XVIII<sup>th</sup> centuries, as starting from the modern period it turns into graphics, the miniaturist Popa Flor being the one who made this transition, from miniature to graphics.

This chapter also present a brief case study, a comparison between two artists, the miniaturists Gavril Uric and Toros Roslin, situated at a great geographical distance, both executing the same subject in a similar manner, Mark the Evangelist, otherwise a religious

subject, common in the art of the Middle Ages. In this case study, besides the artistic and historical analysis of the artists and the works, the problem of Gavril Uric's identity is mentioned, who, according to A.I.Iatimirski, might be the Bulgar Grigore Tamblak.

Chapter V, *Eurasian Interferences in Romanian Religious Painting, XIV<sup>th</sup> – XX<sup>th</sup> centuries* “closes” the study and, just like a painting with “closed” or “opened” subject, all historical, theological, symbolist and aesthetic converge to this point, Romanian art. Establishing a chronological division proper from historical and artistic point of view, the Romanian art, in its transition from medieval to modern, had periods of searching, assimilations and adaptations to Eurasian styles, periods of prosperity, innovation and decline, painting schools, artists and founders raising. This chapter focused on researching religious mural painting and on wooden icons, miniature representing an independent study within this work.

In the XIV<sup>th</sup> century, the Romanian medieval plastic art was under the Byzantine influence borrowing various iconographic motifs but the artists weren't every time concerned with the dogmatic aspect of iconography, creating an art full of life loving, attractive and full of colour. The XV<sup>th</sup> century was the time of endless fights meant to provide independent development for the Romanian space, as well as the time of major artistic achievements. The efforts the “Lordship” made as the supreme institution in the state were guided in two directions, that of consolidating the central authority towards the centrifugal tendencies manifested by the great lords, which explains certain moments of internal crises and, on the other hand, the direction of defending the borders against the threat of invasion the neighbouring powers represented. The XVI<sup>th</sup> century was, for Romanians, as it was everywhere, a period of turmoil and changes, internal political convulsions and fights for defending the independence against the exterior threats, a confusing period, of calamity and poverty which contrasted with the splendour of lavish monuments. In the evolution of Romanian medieval painting, the XVI<sup>th</sup> century marked the highest artistic peak, notable achievements occurring in all three Romanian principalities and the medieval artist of this century had already connected semantically the painted interior with the exterior painting, this happening because his mind had already been shaped to always give priority to the relation between the components of an assembly and only then to perceive the

perimeter and the visual relief of the part, the fragment, the sequence. In the Romanian principalities the synchrony with the Byzantine art emphasized three characteristics of Romanian art, first a slight distancing from the painting to plastic, a differentiation from tectonic elements, meaning the elements conferring the icon mass and weight, the tendency to materialize no longer being expressed in the elasticity of the surface but in the mobility of the mass. The second feature was a humanization of the dimensions, meaning reducing each element to human scale so that the works not to give meaning to exaltation and the third characteristic was the mystery specific to interiors of buildings. In the Romanian space a Romanian Christianity was built, no other nation being able to manage this, being orthodox an act of national, political and religious will which couldn't have any effect other than getting the autonomy and autocephaly of the Church.

*“The Romanians gave Christianity a Romanian character, that’s why for us, throughout our whole history, the contradictions between spiritual and secular were nonexistent.*

*We have our own style in architecture, present in churches construction but also in houses construction.*

*We have our own music, painting, stone and wood sculpture.*

*We have our own language in Church.”<sup>2</sup>*

Transition, decline and innovation in Romanian religious painting, centuries XVII<sup>th</sup>- XVIII<sup>th</sup> shows the signs of novelty appeared since the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, established as a pre-modern chronological entity only in the XVII<sup>th</sup> century, being, as Razvan Teodorescu said, the century of baroque and of first actual modernity, a century of proto-national political and spiritual forms. Understanding the Romanian civilisation around 1700 as a decisive period of transition to modernity, without censorship, without dramatic upheavals, in a slow but determined gesture of synchronising with the rest of European culture gained more and more followers and in its centre it has become necessary to precisely understand Brancoveanu’s personality, the measure giver monarch, by himself, through the scribes and artists at the court he surrounded himself with for what the science of combining tradition and novelty meant here,

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<sup>2</sup> Antonie Plămădeală, *Dascăli de cuget și simțire românească*, Ed. IBMBOR, București, 1981, p. 153.

three centuries ago, the dynastic idea and the aulic pomp expressed in religious and residential architecture or in mural painting, with the new feeling of the worthy man, of the man who starts to know how to live a comfortable and civilised life, abreast with Europe<sup>3</sup>. These times were, as Lucian Blaga called them, “a wonderful mixture of Renaissance and Byzantine, of Baroque and Orientalism”<sup>4</sup>, a comforting hint to what could have been true Romanian history. Moreover, it was an impressively organic reality in the years of blooming of the Brancovenesc style, modelling the future for at least a century in the area of plastic forms, inspiring a revival of modern, romantic attempt to capture the Romanian soul.

In the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, the new concept of the world found a different expression for each social level, the urge to explore the reality got the meaning of ratification for the defenders of bourgeois regime, the opposition saw in this call a way to reveal the disgusting character of bourgeois reality of those times and to show the way to a better future. In the XIX<sup>th</sup> century life became inspiration for works of art, idea about which Baudelaire wrote in 1845: “The one who will succeed to take the epic aspect out of actual life and make us see and understand, by means of colour and drawing, how great and lovely we are, in our ties and shoes, that one will be a painter, and a real one.”<sup>5</sup>

On Romanian territory, the process of transition from medieval art to modern art, going off with exasperating slowness over a period of transition lasting more than two centuries, was, at the beginning of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, a phenomenon occurred all over the country. In the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, two trends occurred in Romanian iconography, especially regarding fresco painting, one based on the tradition style of Byzantine origin, applied especially in the country and in small towns, and another one, of Western influence, used by icon painters who had studied abroad, trend which was more widely spread in the second half of the century in Bucharest and great cities. The distinctive feature of Romanian iconography, besides the inclusion of folkloric elements in frescos and icons, was that iconography wasn’t characterised by rigidity or an immobile attitude of the holy people painted.

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<sup>3</sup> Razvan Theodorescu, *Civilizația românilor între medieval și modern*, Vol. II, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1987, p.63.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 64.

<sup>5</sup> Apud Jacek Debicki, Jean-Francois Favre, Dietrich Grunewald, Antonio Filipe Pimentel, *Istoria artei*, Ed. Rao, București, 1998, p. 213.

In Romania after the year 1918, when Transylvania reunited with Old Romania, new churches were built all over the country, most of them being painted either in al fresco technique, either in tempera and were made by the painters of the time, successors of Byzantine iconographic tradition. The most important achievement of the period after 1948, when the head of the Romanian Orthodox Church were the patriarchs Iustinian and Iustin, was the fact that, despite the new communist regime, some churches were restored architecturally and aesthetically, especially those which were renowned and could attract tourists. The return to Byzantine canons in religious art continued during this process too, besides icon painters, archaeologists, art historians, engineers and the leaders if the Romanian Orthodox Church – specialists grouped within the Historical Monuments Committee, founded in 1959 – playing a major role. The Painting School of Romanian Patriarchy was very active trying to restore religious painting in Romania, bringing it back to what was considered to be the normal track, Byzantine oriented painting, this institution being founded in 1947 under the Patriarch Nicodin Munteanu, still in function under the same Commission for Religious Painting of Romanian Patriarchy.

The first three subchapters, dealing with Romanian art, since medieval times to the XX<sup>th</sup> century, exposed chronologically the Romanian history and artistic phenomenon, giving numerous examples of artistic assemblies, artists, called either “thin painters” or “thick painters”, icon painters, princes and lords, boyars, founders, influencing, in a way or another, positively or negatively, both the Romanian history and culture. Thus, the subchapter *Artistic Presences in some Donations of Romanian Princes to Athos Mountain* outlines briefly, technically the Romanian lords’ cultural contribution and their generosity in creating beautiful and unforgettable things, all the mural paintings, the icons, the miniatures and the embroideries ordered by these passing the test of time, many of these being found even today in the monasteries of the Athos Mount.

The little case study, as it is shown in its title Parvu Mutu, the last medieval painter, the first modern artist, shows a painter in the Middle Ages, renowned not only during that period and who remained in history as an artist who made the temporal and artistic transition to modernity, being considered the first Romanian modern artist. This artist, Parvu Mutu, broke Sorin Dumitrescu’s subjective schematism, the one who defined medieval man as a man with no ideas,

model which in this work does not cover the human reality, typological diverse, being an unjustified and excessively pejorative theory, this period must be considered and analysed with medieval “eyes” and not from the perspective of actual times.

For a better understanding of the artistic and historical phenomena, the study was made in a manner appropriate to the present days but viewed with the “eyes” of the periods analysed without contemporary subjectivism, without absolute European or Asian opinions, only leaving room to personal interpretations and visions, objective, unbiased, focusing on what seemed so far insufficiently or superficially treated. The materials on the basis of which the new and old information was valorised, a series of historical and artistic phenomena and events, renowned or less known that were interpreted, reassessed or revealed cannot be categorised as important or less important, each having its role in achieving the identity of this study.

Art does not aim to offer faces and views of the possible, but has become in time a leaven of the ordinary, suggest the impossible by itself and offers itself, broadcasting itself eucharistically, as a sign of trust in its potential and the religious regimes were and are unequally favourable to image. When the Divine is not perceived any more, the impressive silence of the deserted world emphasises the greatness of the divine idea, and art definitely becomes, as Hegel stated, a thing of the past. In the artist’s eyes matter is not limited to breadth and light is not limited to corpuscles and where he cannot represent things, not even in naturalist manner, without a surplus to appear, although it is not known whether this comes from things, artist or God but which attracts admiration and praise. In contemporary art there is a polarisation, the profane and sacred dissociates, the scared being an individual one, belonging to the artist which neither seeks nor finds a social base, the image aspires to the sacred but the sacred is closed when the image is absent. There is no fatality in the death of the image, it relives in unknown places, in unexpected forms. *Mensura, numerus, pondus* may come back together to stabilise the sacred and the profane, one through the other, in order to propose the divine images giving life to things and profane images giving a body to the divine and they only prosper together for long.

Although this study “*Eurasian interferences reflected in Romanian iconography, XIV<sup>th</sup> – XX<sup>th</sup> centuries*” was initially conceived in a different way, being extended only between the XIV<sup>th</sup>-XVIII<sup>th</sup> centuries, because of some inevitable and uncontrollable factors, it came under the

observation of Mr. Gheorghe Buzatu PhD, Professor, who, kindly and wisely, did not change the direction of the study but extended it, including a longer period of time, the research getting to the XX<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, part of the research, including the chapters dedicated to Romanian art, were reformulated and adapted for a more extended period of time, without insisting on the known historical and artistic aspects, others, less advertised, being focused on. Starting from the idea that the man is not complete, thus being unable to create something complete, the accomplishment and completion of this research is due to the scientific assistance of the coordinator, Mr. Gheorghe Buzatu, PhD, Professor, to whom I thank sincerely.

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