

**MEMORY, IDENTITY, TYPOLOGY: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY  
RECONSTRUCTION OF VLACH ETHNOHISTORY**

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to provide a detailed account of the ethnogenesis and ethnohistory of the Vlachs of southeastern Europe, using Anthony Smith's theory of the origins of nation and Mircea Eliade's concept of mythical scenario to theorize Vlach origins. The thesis also argues that the historical structure that enabled Vlach ethnogenesis was the Roman frontier army of *comitatenses*. It will be argued that these mobile troops, relying also on herding for their subsistence, after the fall of the Roman Empire, became the Vlach population and that the identity of this nascent ethnue was buttressed by a mythical scenario, the cult of the military saints. This is the cultural history of a Diaspora that never had a state—archaic, medieval or modern—yet left an indelible mark on the history and culture of the Balkans and lands farther afield.

## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

*"Tuti lucri iesu tu pade"*<sup>1</sup>

The Balkan area "is nothing but a vast field of conjectures, and so it is difficult to know where to begin."<sup>2</sup> This statement, a little over a century old, unfortunately still holds almost as much truth now as it did back then. In my case, I will start with an anecdote.

While growing up in communist Romania I remember learning in elementary school that the Romanian language has four dialects, what we spoke being one of them. To me, that involved obviously some other people that spoke the rest of these "dialects" that we knew nothing about, besides the fact that "they live south of the Danube." Nobody bothered to ask more questions especially after we got the hint that we should not insist on enquiring too much about certain things. I was to discover soon that it was a kind of taboo to talk about them so my first introduction to the Vlachs was brief and related to language.

The first Vlach I met in flesh and bone was Aureliu Ciufecu (a Farsherot) in USA, through some friends. I was very impressed by his "modern look" and spirit of character. It was in the year 1983 and the American Farsherots were celebrating the 80th anniversary of their "Benevolent Society." After a short discussion I received a little booklet printed for the occasion (it included some historical notes and many pictures) with a dedication and an autograph (Aureliu Ciufecu happened to be then the president of the "Society Farsarotul"<sup>3</sup>). What really struck me mostly was their determination and passion in preserving their identity (or anything else they did), much more so than my Romanian acquaintances, which had so

many extra advantages but did not follow up on them. It felt that something was definitely different about them. I began to ponder on the idea that maybe it was the extraordinary tenacity they exhibit that is somehow responsible for their survival into the contemporary era, in spite of all the difficulties.

As I started gathering materials and reading more and more about the Vlachs, I realized that there are so many controversies surrounding Vlach history. Who knows best and who is telling the truth? Since it was almost impossible to answer these questions, at that point I decided to find out on my own. I also discovered that I was not alone in this quest and the British historian Tom J. Winnifrith for example, like his British predecessors Alan Wace and Maurice Thompson, or the German linguist Gustav Weigand, thought that understanding Vlach history may hold (or provide) a key to Romanian history as well. If initially the Vlachs were considered more or less a footnote to Balkan history, it became clear to me that they do hold the key to understand not just Romanian history, but the entire area of south Eastern Europe. From this new perspective the Vlachs become the missing link of that history and in this role they provide the badly needed coherence in the history of the Balkans.

A resilient people or ethnic group about half a million strong, Romance-speaking (a language derived from Latin) and mostly Orthodox Christian, which claims Roman ancestry and is scattered throughout the entire Southeast European area; these - in a brief summary - are the Vlachs. But the Vlachs of today are a mere reminiscence of a much larger and stronger ethnic group which, historically, played a major role in the tumultuous Balkan history. In former times the entire area was permeated and unified by Vlach horse and mule tracks and transhumant routes, trodden on “the map of these unmapped places carried only in

the heads of the Vlachs,”<sup>4</sup> but who today are few in numbers and live isolated in various Balkan enclaves, divided by many political frontiers. Together with the Albanians and the Greeks they are indigenous peoples of the Balkan Peninsula, badly underestimated (and here we are not talking about census) and grossly misunderstood.

The real number is difficult to establish, especially since Greece, where the majority of the Vlachs are living, claims no ethnic minorities (which are based there on religious criterion), a former stiff stance which started to soften a bit lately. According to Thede Kahl, estimating the Vlach population is near impossible. The last Greek national census that differentiated between orthodox groups showed 22 735 Vlachs in Greece in 1951. The Lausanne convention of 1923 mentions between 150 000 - 200 000 Vlachs in Greece, while today's estimates are as high as 600 000. We should perhaps speak of a maximum of 300 000 Vlachs in Greece who consider themselves belonging to the Vlach nation, cautions Thede Kahl, of which about 100 000 are fluent speakers.<sup>5</sup> Tom Winnifrith estimates the Albanian Vlachs at about 200 000<sup>6</sup> while Thede Kahl, quoting various sources, between 50 000 (lowest estimate) to maximum 250 000.<sup>7</sup> In Romania there are between 50 000 and 100 000 Vlachs.<sup>8</sup> In Macedonia, the only country which acknowledges the Vlachs as a minority, according to the national census from 1994 there are 8 462 Vlachs, estimates vary again up to 80 000, Thede Kahl (2006, 60) giving the number of 25 000. There are also small numbers of Vlachs in Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia and even in Turkey, so our total number of half of million is safe or rather on the conservative side.



Figure 1: Vlach Distribution in the Balkans<sup>9</sup>

Part of the misunderstanding of the Vlach issues comes from the fact that history has been written as national history for each particular country “and still remains locked within several, mutually exclusive national (ist) paradigms.”<sup>10</sup> Though the Vlachs do not have a country of their own, they are living in every Balkan country. Even within the individual paradigms, the Vlach contribution has been distorted, downplayed or not taken into account and their identity, together with the history they created, was transformed into the identity and history of whatever nation-state they happen to live in. Usually these historical problems have been too often treated piecemeal, dealing with one or certain aspects of a particular issue, and rarely within a larger, more proper context.

In modern historiography we have ideological, nationalistic, regional, biased, fragmentary, confusing and controversial accounts of nation states and of the Vlachs. In medieval histories, even if documents exist, religion was the main criterion used in distinguishing identity,<sup>11</sup> especially within the Ottoman realm (and the Ottomans were the masters in the Balkans for about five centuries), the stereotypical formula of Christian verses Turk (or Muslim) is not of much help either, as there was a large number of ethnic groups present in the area and in some cases local people converted to Islam. The Orthodox Christians were often subsumed under a Greek identity as the Patriarch of Constantinople was in charge of all the Christian subjects and certain advantages were available accepting “Greek” identity or, under the Habsburgs, as Serbian. The rest of the Christendom called the East European Christians schismatic.

To have a sense of the confusion, consider the fact that by linguistic criteria the Vlachs are classified as Latins (they do speak a neo-Latin or Romance language), a name used by the Orthodox people (starting with the Eastern Roman Empire) to designate the Catholics (Crusaders and Venetians in particular and Western Europeans in general, prior to the Reformation) and what the Vlachs (as a norm) are not; and by religious criteria, Greeks (or Serbians in the former Yugoslavian lands), what the Vlachs again are not. The Greeks also used to call themselves Romans (*Romioi*) en masse until "the Latins" sacked their capital during the the "crusade" of 1204, while the Turks still called them so until the end of their dominance in the Balkans. According to Walter W. Pohl, Romans did survive "as an important ethnic factor in Eastern Europe. It is perhaps the most contradictory form of ethnic identity we know from the Early Middle Ages."<sup>12</sup> He goes on to exemplify the Roman Empire of the Franks and Germans, a *Third Rome* in Moscow, Seljuk princes named after the Romans whose neighbours they were; and, the Roman Empire of the Greeks. Roman identity meant an example of civility and salvation, concluding that "large areas of ambiguity surrounded the notion of *Romanitas*." When it comes to the Greeks, we have to mention that although they called themselves Romans (in a political sense), it was a different term used for the Greeks, that of *Romioi* (*Romei*), to distinguish themselves from the real Romans (ethnically and linguistically), the *Romaioi* (Romans), the Latinophone speakers of the South East European area (our Oriental Latinity), a difference made by no other than a learned Byzantine emperor, Constantine Porphyrogenitus (912-959).<sup>13</sup> Whether the *Romaioi* of Porphyrogenitus are the Dalmatian "Romans," as some scholars argue<sup>14</sup> or proto-Vlachs (called later *Maurovlachs* or *Nigri Latini*), it does not matter in this context. The important thing is that a distinction is being made between a Greek speaking identity and a Balkan

Latin speaking identity, in which the honour of being *sui-generis* Roman (*Romaioi*) is given to the latter.<sup>15</sup> Some Christians, especially in Albania, Bosnia, Macedonia, Bulgaria (the Pomacs) or even in Greece (the Valachides) became Muslims but kept many Christian customs and their former language, complicating even more the concept of ethnic identity. The peasants of Western Macedonia for example go to mosque on Friday and to church on Sunday. When asked about their religion, identity or affiliation, these people declare themselves “Muslims, but of the Virgin Mary...”<sup>16</sup>

It is very difficult to pick out the Vlachs even from written sources at times; the names alone are not always helpful.<sup>17</sup> There was presumably a Vlach leader, a certain Boncoes who conquered the town of Arta in Epirus, who is called in the Greek Chronicle of Ioanina "Serbalbanitobulgarovlachos"<sup>18</sup> (in the year 1399), pointing to the Greek difficulty in establishing Boncoes' s real identity. The puzzle presented by the typical Balkan peoples to the authority (power/writers) and especially the Vlachs is also sensed in Catrari's lines, written in the fourteenth century: "Do you want to know what he is? He is Vlach by birth, Albanian by appearance, and by his manner Bulgarian-Albanian-Vlach."<sup>19</sup> Besides the obvious confusion I detect in here the ongoing process of Vlach acculturation within the Serbian, Bulgarian and Albanian cultures. The last examples are not used as precise historical data but to provide insights into the other's understanding of, and attitudes towards the Vlachs, even seven centuries ago.

Geographical and political factors are also a matter of confusion. Calling someone a Bulgarian, Greek or Serbian just because it happens that a person lived or came from any of these places does not necessarily imply that our subject is an ethnic Bulgarian, Greek or

Serbian, not to mention Bosnian or Macedonian.<sup>20</sup> The mixture and confusion of ethnic identities, which were present there, gave rise in French to a synonymous concept, in cuisine the term *macedoine* was coined to describe a mixture of fruit embedded in a jelly. Political frontiers often shifted according to the fortune (and misfortune) of the various nations or states. Macedonia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Epirus, Transylvania—areas with large medieval Vlach populations—are still considered "centers of conflict" by researchers such as Sarah Green, Tom Winnifrith, Alexandru Madgearu, Tim Salmon, Jean Nouzille and others. Southeaster Europe still features disputed borders, and there is an entire body of literature dealing with the confusion and "ambiguity" of the real frontier and the real identity of its inhabitants.<sup>21</sup>

The ancient and early medieval history is lacking in documents. "Native narrative sources are conspicuously absent from the early medieval history of Southeastern Europe. There is no Southeast European equivalent of Paul the Deacon or Bede."<sup>22</sup> Since the Vlachs left no records of their own (besides their oral tradition), whatever sources appear about them later on, mostly Byzantine references that depict the Vlachs pejoratively. The major indicator to be detected for Vlach identity is the use of a Latin language in the early sources, but even there, from 586 on, except for a somewhat dubious passage in the late sixth century, there is silence with respect to the Vlachs and they do not reappear in the historical record until the year 976.<sup>23</sup> I will be examining the Vlach history in the later chapters of this work.

The bibliography on the Vlachs is extremely large (but fragmented, as noted) and even the best informed scholars admit that no authority makes use of all the sources (so many languages, disciplines, controversies), from a firsthand historian as Robert Lee Wolff, to ethnographers like Alan Wace and Maurice Thompson (first from Cambridge, the other from

Oxford), or to a linguist of caliber like Victor Friedman (from Chicago).<sup>24</sup> The best most recent and most objective account written on Vlachs is probably Tom Winnifrith's work,<sup>25</sup> from the point of view of history, at least, aiming at a synthesis of Vlach history.

The examples I used above illustrate some of the major problems we encounter studying the Vlachs. Nonetheless, the abundance of existing material has to be put together and reinterpreted, because I see a continuous and coherent narrative of Vlachs' early history and identity. The major constituents of that narrative are the long military tradition and transhumance as practices and lifestyle, the identity with the dense forest and the mountain, which is extremely important and finds also its reflection in language, popular literature and other ethnographic expressions (including rites of passage amongst others),<sup>26</sup> and all together tied within the limits and tradition, both functional and calendaristic, of the military saints, Saint George and Saint Demetrius. During the research, which required a very thorough analyses, I read, analyzed and reexamined hundreds of books and articles, primary sources and secondary information pertaining not only to history but also to various problems posed by the Vlachs, including aspects of their tradition, religion, customs and folklore (including the military saints), toponymy, their relationships with the Slavs, which, all together and put into perspective, provided new insights and fresh avenues of exploration.

The Vlachs should have disappeared several times over in history especially since they had no overarching political structure, no major institutions promoting the use of their language and the preservation of their identity such as state, church, or school. Vlach survival is a riddle. An even more surprising element is the absence of a center, a central land occupied through history, an "ancestral homeland." The territorial imperative is crucial

because, according to modernist theory of nation and nationalism, without the state the Vlachs and a Vlach identity should not have existed prior to the modern period. This thesis seeks to make an important contribution to anthropological and political theory in examining the ways in which peoples emerged and identities were consolidated in pre-modern times. It questions the work of theorists such as Eric Hobsbawm and Ernest Gellner in that it suggests a mechanism whereby a population can become an *ethnie* and, if it had not been for the lack of a discrete territory in the case of the Vlach, a nation.

Eric Hobsbawm in *Nations and Nationalism*; besides considering "nation-making" as the result of modern progress, he states that the nation belongs exclusively to the modern historical period and to the modern, territorial, nation state<sup>27</sup>. Ernest Gellner<sup>28</sup> in a more subtle way provides a similar "classic" argument; if "the modern territorial state" of Hobsbawm is missing (or not achieved), he allows its replacement with a historic territory or a specific territory for a nation or an ethnic group. This is precisely the missing component of the Vlach nation (*ethnie*); in spite of the fact that they have several "historic territories" they appear all over the southeastern European map. I am arguing that the Vlach historic or (and) specific territory is the mountain and the forest, as a generic type, with the adjacent plains in the winter. Wherever this relationship worked best (mountains plus adjacent plains), these places appear as Vlachia, Valachia, Vlasca, Valaska, etc., which indicates that the Vlach element was the dominant one, though from the Vlach perspective they were diasporas (the plains especially, seen as temporary, winter habitations). Their real centers and where they felt "at home" were what the Slavs called Zagoria(s), and we also have several of them, but that subject will be explained in the chapter "The Land beyond the Forest." The case of the Vlach runs counter to the presumed modernity of national and ethnic identities as the Vlach

developed a distinct identity though they shared the religious faith of their neighbors and were in constant interaction with their neighbors over many centuries. This thesis will chronicle how one ethnic emerged in European history, providing new theoretical insight into the processes of ethnic and national formation.

## **PROPOSED RESEARCH**

To reconstruct the Vlach ethnohistory, find out what they have been, properly understand them and their contribution to the so called Balkan mentality and history, I have to consider a much wider sociological, historical, geographical, cultural and methodological framework, which will be visible throughout the body of my thesis. I am using a variety of methods and concepts, by necessity, to fill in the gaps, presented further in this chapter. I would like to express here the view of Gilbert Durand who would call our "interdisciplinary approach" an earnest study, "an indispensable cure to the paralyzing effects of the compartmentalization of the university *disciplines*, the *methods* of which had become scientifically incoherent, thus creating the necessity for systematic pluridisciplinarity."<sup>29</sup> This issue is the subject of an entire new book which argues that "scholars have fallen prey to inward-looking myopia that resulted from-and perpetuates-a flight from reality;" and adds that "in the method-driven academic culture we inhabit, researchers too often make display and refinement of their techniques the principal scholarly activity," losing sight of the objects of their study.<sup>30</sup> The argument is elaborated in Ian Shapiro, and also, according to Pierre Bourdieu, the artificial boundaries between disciplines (called by him "pure products of academic reproduction") have to be "trespassed", as part of any method which honestly aims at a real solution; "trespassing ...is a prerequisite for... advance."<sup>31</sup>

First, I am trying to show that the general, traditional view of the Vlachs (stereotypical and idyllic) as shepherds is partially right but incomplete. The historical record attests to martial tradition inherited from antiquity that will be analyzed in the second chapter entitled "The Long Military Tradition or Defending Imperial Borders." The warrior myth expressed and embodied through the military saints, including their iconic representation, will complete that theme as part of the Vlach history, culture (especially folklore, rituals and customs) and identity in a following chapter.

Another major component of Vlach identity is represented through the mountain and the forest. By contrast with the Slavic nations, which prefer the plain and identify with it (being agriculturalists), I reconstructed a set of relationships, a historical pattern which I call the Latin-Slavic symbiosis, reflected in language, toponymy, and ethnopsychology, dealt with and explained at large in the last chapter, "The Land beyond the Forest."

One important concept I will be using is the *mythical scenario*, an idea taken from the historian of religions Mircea Eliade, which constitutes a sort of ethnic specific (cultural) paradigm, a "mythological codification of experience,"<sup>32</sup> similar in many ways with what Anthony Smith calls an ethno-symbolic approach.<sup>33</sup> Through language (analyzing certain terms and concepts) and toponymy we can detect the process of "othering" or rather the incipient stage of identity formation, "we" versus "they," from the Slavic viewpoint. Hermeneutics will be another part of the methodological approach and we'll use also Fernand Braudel's concept of *longue durée* (the historic rhythm), which brings in structure.<sup>34</sup> It is this structure that also becomes the objective classificatory type (and how "the others" see the Vlachs; the etic analysis),<sup>35</sup> hence, our typology in the title, compared to and complemented

by the Vlach (self) definition (emic analysis) and collective memory (tradition). Structure here means an organization, a coherent and fairly fixed series of relationships between realities and social masses.<sup>36</sup> This approach has the advantage that, at least partially, can be verified historically.

I will be trying to unfold and evoke what the Vlach mythical scenario meant and why they adhered to that particular cultural paradigm in the first place. Starting with a description of the military and martial virtues of the Thracians as described by their contemporary Greek and Roman writers, the religious cults of the Danubian Riders (Knights) and the Thracian Knight (Horseman), and the origins of the cult of Saint Demetrius at Sirmium (in Serbia), which under barbarian pressure retreated to (and became patron of) Thessalonica (in Greece), obviously following movements of populations that carried it along, I will follow the relationship between the history and fate of the saint and that of the Vlachs. The parallel between the two is punctuated by certain historical events (the conquest of Sirmium by the Avars, the conquest of Thessalonica by the Latins) and the shared desire of each party to be free (unconquered), as seen within the Assen interlude (Second Bulgarian or Vlach-Bulgarian Empire), events and attitudes which, by their nature, show a very close and special connection. Certain customs and beliefs, as well as the traditional iconic representation of the saint farther corroborate to our findings. By considering the two major holidays which celebrate "the mounted saints," Saint George and Saint Demetrius, which are the definite markers of the Vlach calendar (religious or liturgical year), as well as their cyclical, traditional way of life, together with the saints themselves, I will try to reconstruct, as much as possible, part of the Vlach unknown history in parallel to the mythical scenario. The two elements should reflect each other, if my approach is valid, and the mythical scenario must

be compatible with Vlach history in that case.<sup>37</sup> All this material will be dealt with in the chapter entitled The Military Saints. The arguments will be organized more around concepts, events and culture, pursuing themes rather than following a strict chronological order or a linear narrative, since this study is not based solely on historical criteria.

## **THESIS STATEMENT**

Here is the core of my thesis. As the inheritors of Rome's name and its language in Eastern Europe,<sup>38</sup> the Vlachs in principle preserved in their cultural matrix<sup>39</sup> the characteristics of yet another Roman institution, namely, of the frontier army, created as a solution to the great military and social crises of the third century, started by the emperor Diocletian (284-305) and continued under Constantine (306; 324-337), who also founded another capital (Constantinople) and legalized Christianity.<sup>40</sup> The main characteristics involved and which will remain the hallmarks of Vlachness are mobility, autonomy (more of a local or regional type) and love of freedom, the capacity to read a complex and difficult situation and make the best of it, self discipline, self reliance and an extreme endurance, the element of surprise, and a set of particular relationships with a center (core, base) area, inherited from the *comitatenses*.

The frontier army was of two kinds. The first, *limitanei*, was an army stationed on the frontier (*limes* - fortified border, hence "limit" in English) to defend it; the other, *comitatenses*, an elite mobile striking force behind the frontier, moving quickly around to intervene wherever was danger.<sup>41</sup> When Rome fell and the frontier system followed suit,<sup>42</sup> the function of the *limitanei* transferred (moved) over to the mountains and mountain passes, in the hands of the locals, while the features and role of the *comitatenses* lived on within

both, the Vlach military tradition and their life style.<sup>43</sup> When historically "resurrected," these features and the entire (Vlach by now) package are contained in the Slavic concepts (terms) of Vlach and Zagoria.

There is a very specific type of polarity, which runs through the entire Vlach history and culture, including the relationships already mentioned, between a center (fixed) and a diaspora, a periphery (mobile), detected still in the modern institution of *pecalba*. It also includes the military and pastoral features, mountain and plain, summer and winter, the Latin-Slavic relationships, the two main saints as complementary factors, to name but the most important ones.

In my thesis I provide an alternative explanation of the dynamics of Vlach ethnogenesis, which implies a specific Roman diaspora. This is an original case of the emergence and maintenance, in a region of continuous mixture, of an ethnic group and identity, Latin speaking and preserving Roman identity after the fall of Rome, dispersed and lacking an "ancestral homeland," at least in the modern acceptance (or use) of the concept. According to all modern theories, the Vlachs should not exist.<sup>44</sup> But they do exist and I will try to explain how frontier, myth, and mountain shaped Vlach history and identity; hence, the corresponding chapters: The Long Military Tradition or Defending Imperial Borders, The Military Saints, and "The Land beyond the Forest"(Mountain).

## **VLACH ORIGINS**

The ancestors of the Vlachs were basically the indigenous Balkan populations, with a certain Roman admixture, which adopted the Roman identity in various stages. The first

stage started with the Roman conquest of the area, which was completed by 106 AD. During the next stage the cults of the warrior hero were developed, continuing the warlike tradition for once, and in order to be protected from their conquerors, for another. We assume that transhumance, first recorded in the area by Herodotus,<sup>45</sup> was an already established pattern.<sup>46</sup> The last stage is marked by several events, which happened almost simultaneously. The central power (Rome first, then Constantinople) gradually loses the control of the area; the barbarians (see the Avars) conquer the cities and the fortresses. The Latin language loses its status and use (officially) to Greek, which replaces it, making the future Vlachs feel "foreigners" within their own confines. It is now, when the Romans are not a threat (or considered conquerors) any more, that some of the Bessii and other tribes like the free Dacians joined in to partake of the Roman identity, as a contrast to the newcomers ("barbarian" invaders). One or more tribes never did (or only did partially) because they must have been the ancestors of the Albanians. With their centers taken and the Roman Empire collapsing, the Vlachs retreat in the mountains and the deep wooded areas, a phenomenon traceable in folklore, certain customs, and especially in language (what I call the historical "involution"); these features will be addressed in the chapter The Land beyond the Forest. Finally, the last event of this stage, towards the end of the sixth century, is the coming of the Slavs. They will develop a special type of relationship with the Vlachs, which I call the Latin-Slavic symbiosis. At this point in history I consider as present all the Vlach main ethnic markers.

It is worthwhile to mention a very recent study done about change and continuity in late antiquity, *Transformations of Late Antiquity: Essays for Peter Brown*, edited by Philip Rousseau and Manolis Papoutsakis (2009), in which the authors show how fundamental

characteristics of Roman society were given a new form, a late antique ability to turn the past to new uses, to set its wealth of principle and insight to work in new settings. Besides much change, these in a position to play now the role of heirs were well able to appreciate how suited to their needs the Roman past might be and, by taking it up in their turn, they were more securely defined and yet more creatively advantaged. Especially relevant is the essay of Averil Cameron, "Old and New Rome: Roman Studies in Sixth-Century Constantinople." Though he is dealing with the capital (and certain individuals) and our subjects are peripheral (in both senses of the word and treated as a group), the principle stands for both cases, even more so for the Vlachs. When cultural identity is the concern (at the time when the Greek language replaces the Latin language), in the case of "Romanness," Averil Cameron considers as main criteria knowledge of Latin, consciousness of Roman tradition, and Roman self-identity, all requirements fulfilled by the Vlachs (but, curiously enough, the Vlachs are not mentioned in his work).<sup>47</sup>

## **THE EXONYM VLACH**

It is time now to clarify a little more the term Vlach. Historically, we find the term applied by outsiders (as a consensus) to all the Romance-speaking (neo-Latin) inhabitants, throughout the entire southeast European area. In this larger sense it includes "the ancestors of the Romanians"<sup>48</sup> as well. As a reminder of this fact we have the former Romance speakers of Moravia (in the Beskid Mountains of the Czech Republic), contemporary Slavic speakers, who were called Vlachs (and their area Valassko) until modern times. The historiographical tradition outside Romania is quite unanimous in calling all these Romance speakers Vlachs until the early fourteenth century. In a history of the Byzantine emperor

John Cantacuzene VI, there is information related to the Bulgarian tsar Michael III, that in the year 1323 he occupied the throne with Bulgarian subjects and with the help of the *Ungrovlahi*. These are the Vlachs from the later Wallachian state (South of the Carpathians in Romania), which occasionally was called in some Byzantine records Ungrovlahia.<sup>49</sup> It probably represents the first differentiation between Vlachs in general (geographically and politically at least) and in the same time we have the first name given to the Romanians in particular.<sup>50</sup> Throughout their history and until the revolutions of 1848, the Romanians are referred to mostly as Wallachians, differentiated in this way by their brethren living south of the Danube, which alone remained called Vlachs. For the purpose of this paper the term Vlach therefore will include all the Romance speakers (the oriental Latinity) up to the differentiation we mentioned above.

Considering the spheres of influence of the major political powers of the area in the early medieval times, Byzantium, Hungary, and old Rus (Kievan Rus), along with the fact that they all mention and deal with the Vlachs, we can classify the Vlachs as Byzantine Vlachs south of the Danube, Hungarian Vlachs west and south of the Carpathian Mountains, and Rus Vlachs or Kievan Vlachs (in Moldova, Galicia—part of present day western Ukraine—and Slovakia) east and north of the same Carpathians. As we mentioned earlier, transhumant pastoralism is a Vlach institution by which almost all outsiders perceive the Vlachs. *Vlahos* in Greece signifies "shepherd" indicating the transference of the ethnonym to the profession or lifestyle commonly associated with an ethnic group. In Albania, the opposite occurs, and *choban* "shepherd" comes to mean Vlach.<sup>51</sup> This is an old occurrence; the term Vlach and shepherd have been synonymous from Byzantine times.<sup>52</sup> Vlach is also a generic name given to mountain inhabitants.<sup>53</sup> The Croatians use the term (in a derogatory

way) for Serbians, while for the contemporary Serbians Vlach is related to the most potent spell.<sup>54</sup>

The word Vlach, as most linguists argue,<sup>55</sup> is a Celtic (Gallic) tribal name, the *Volcae*. The German tribes (most probably the Goths) that came in contact with them transformed it in *Walhos* (\*walhs), with the derivative *Welsch*. After the conquest by the Romans of this Celtic people, the Germans called first with this name the Romanized Celts and afterwards, by extension, all Romance language speaking peoples. In the transfer to Gothic, via Latin, "the ethnonym took on the meaning "foreigner" or "these folks over there" or "Romance speaker."<sup>56</sup> The term did not come directly to Eastern Europe via German, as the theory goes, but through Slavic languages. There is a little problem with the location of where the process took place. It implies that all these three peoples should have been somehow in proximity. The most logical places are either on the Danubian plains or (and) the Pannonian planes, where the Slavs, in their western and southern initial dispersion, first came across the people which they will baptise as Vlachs. Two more arguments support this idea. It is along the Danube, in Dacia, that the Goths enter history (become a historical entity) and form their identity which, strangely enough, adopt the history and mythic ancestry of the local peoples, the Getae (this is how the Greeks called the plain tribes of the Dacians), the ancestors of the Vlachs; the other argument is that even the Byzantines received and accepted the name of the Vlachs from the Slavs, when they entered the Balkan peninsula, coming from the north. The form taken by the Slavs from the Germans was *Walh*; through metatheses it became Vlah for the Slavs, *Blahoi* or *Blahos* for the Byzantines.<sup>57</sup> The Polish people call an Italian a *Wloch*; the Germans call Italy *Walschland*. According to Isaac Taylor the German root *wal* (as in Welshman or Wallachian) means foreign, since all nations of Teutonic blood have called the

bordering tribes by the name of *Walsche*, regardless of their origin.<sup>58</sup> From the same root *wal* we also obtain the German *waller*, a stranger or a pilgrim, and *wallen*, to wander or to move about. The movements of some of the Vlachs is also captured in the Byzantine expression "*Vlachoi hoditai*"<sup>59</sup> which has yet to be satisfactorily explained; it has "something to do with traveling or guarding the roads, as they have done through the centuries," or "an alternative translation of highwaymen."<sup>60</sup> In some early Serbian records the form "*kielatores*," (*calator*, Latin for traveler) is found. This particularity of Vlach culture will be explained better within the context of metanastic movements (including center-diaspora, transhumant and pecalba pattern). Latins or simply "foreigners," here are our Vlachs.

The first reference to the Vlachs in English we encounter in Geoffrey Chaucer's poem *The Book of the Duchesse*, written in 1369 (verses 1024-1025), where the Romanian Wallachia is mentioned amongst other east European states: "Ne sende men in-to Walakaye. To Prusy and in-to Tartarye."<sup>61</sup> In 1427 a person called Paulus from the Thessalian Wallachia went to London, where the king (Henry VI) granted him an allowance on account of his being ruined by the Turks.<sup>62</sup>

The term Vlach is an exonym, which, if it means Roman or Latin speaker, would conform, via "the other," their affinity to Roman identity and origin. The oriental Latins all called themselves at any given time nothing but Romans, from the Latin *Romanus*.<sup>63</sup> Their self-designation is *Roman*, *Ruman*, *Arman*, *Aroman*, *Rroman*, *Rroman*, *Rumar*, etc. There is a small modern exception from this rule; the Megleno-Romanian branch that converted to the faith of Islam, calls itself Vlach (Vlash), but used to call themselves *Ramani*. Historically it seems that there were no exceptions.<sup>64</sup> The scientific term Aromanian was introduced by

Gustav Weigand more than a century ago;<sup>65</sup> the term for the largest group thus became a blanket term for all the Vlachs. Almost without exception the German and the Romanian authors make use of this form. Though it emphasizes the Roman identity and is a self-appellation, both instances justifying their use, the term Aromanian seems somehow restrictive. The Aromanians constitute numerically a great proportion of the Vlachs but not all Vlachs are Aromanians. Historically all the groups are known as Vlachs and, for objective reasons as well as for our purpose, we have to consider not only all the southern Danubian groups (the "Byzantine Vlachs"), but also the entire oriental Latinity until the first differentiation (when the Romanians become an identity of their own) which we established by 1323. In this case Aromanian would be inaccurate and create even more confusion. I would much prefer the term oriental Latinity or oriental Romanity for the old sense of Vlach, including all Romance speakers in southeast Europe, and divide it in northern Danubian (Romanians, former Valachians/Wallachians) and southern Danubian (the Vlachs), to which group the Aromanians belong.

### **EASTERN ROMANCE LANGUAGE(S)**

A further clarification has to be made when it comes to linguistic criteria. The linguists divide Balkan Romance in Eastern Balkan Romance (the proto Romanian) and Western Balkan Romance (the ancestor of the now extinct Dalmatian).<sup>66</sup> In regards to the Eastern Balkan Romance (Eastern Romance for short) there are also some divergent opinions whether we are dealing with one language, which contains four dialects or four different languages all together. The eastern Romance language<sup>67</sup> is called Romanian and considered to have four dialects:

1. Daco-Romanian, spoken in Romania and the Moldovan republic;
2. Aromanian or Macedo-Romanian, spoken in Greece, Macedonia, Albania, Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania;
3. Megleno-Romanian, spoken in Macedonia, Greece, Turkey; and
4. Istro-Romanian, in the Istrian peninsula of Croatia, next to Italy.

The Istro-Romanians are also called Cici or Ciribiri. Aromanian shows influences from Greek, Albanian and Macedonian (a Slavic language), Megleno-Romanian and Daco-Romanian strong Slavic influences, while Istro-Romanian is considered closer to Transylvanian dialects of Daco-Romanian. The oldest dated Vlach text comes from Ardenitza in Albania, written in 1731 by Nectarie Tarpu, in parallel to Latin, Greek, and Albanian.<sup>68</sup>

Usually the Vlachs differentiate between themselves by adopting the name of the region, mountain or even the village they live in. Some of the Aromanians inhabiting the Pindus range call themselves Pindeni; the ones around Grammus Mountain Gramosteni and have a great diaspora. This two Vlach groups are classified as southern (linguistically at least), as opposed to the northern groups (and dialects) of the Farsherot, Muzechiars, and Moscopoleni. The Farsherots are named so after Frasher, a place in Albania, and have a large diaspora throughout the Balkans. Another name for the Farsherot group is Doteani<sup>69</sup> but they always call themselves Rramani and consider the other names as derogatory. Until very recently they were entirely nomadic. The Muzechiars are from central and southwestern Albania and the Moscopoleni, dispersed widely, named so after the former flourishing Vlach city of Moscopole,<sup>70</sup> destroyed by the Albanians of Ali Pasha of Ioannina. Greeks also call

the Albanian Vlachs Arvanitovlachs<sup>71</sup>. Victor Friedman, following Nicolae Samarandu, follows the northern and southern division of the Vlachs and, respectively, their dialects. Others, like Matilda Caragiu-Marioteanu, consider the classification invalid since there is too much of a mixture of various groups with too many subdivisions.

Victor Friedman acknowledges the taxonomical difficulty, which is complicated by patterns of transhumance, hardening of borders, forced migrations (see the burning of Moscopole and the diaspora it created), political and economic conditions and so on. The Megleno-Romanians for example, live surrounded by Slavs, Greeks, and Turks, in the vicinity of the Aromanians (as other Vlach group), but are closer to the Daco-Romanians on linguistic grounds and have a regional dialect (in Luminitsa) which resembles the Istro-Romanian, another separate case. The Vlach dialect of mount Olympus demonstrates the greatest degree of influence with the Greek language, clearly due to the longer period of contact with this latter language. There are also anywhere between 50.000 to 100.000 Vlachs in Romania (mostly in Dobrogea region), who were brought as settlers from Greece and Macedonia between 1925 and 1938<sup>72</sup> (during the Greek-Turkish exchange, when also some Muslim Vlachs ended up in Turkey<sup>73</sup>) which still cling to their language and identity.

## **THEORY**

Traditionally, our topic would have been either the domain of history, with the main concern of digging up the Vlach beginning and past from whatever scanty historical records, or the domain of anthropology, studying a group of some present day Vlachs and trying to infer, through certain theoretical models, how to classify their kinship, patterns of subsistence, class structure, etc.<sup>74</sup>This thesis seeks to provide a fuller understanding of Vlach

history and identity through an interdisciplinary scholarship. The enormous body of disparate material chronicling the Vlachs warrants a fresh synthesis and new approaches, and this study combines history, anthropology and the study of literature and folklore to analyze the ethnogenesis and continued survival of the Vlach identity in South-East Europe and elsewhere.

I am not trying to diminish the role of history at all, because I like it very much, but I would just like to point out that history itself is neither complete, through lack of documents, nor necessarily true, when the documents (as evidence) are there, not to mention the multiple possibilities of interpretation. As the British historian John Vincent notes: "History is deeply male. History is essentially non-young. History is about the rich and famous, not the poor. History favors the articulate, not the silent. History is about winners..., not about losers. History is about assessing distortions, not copying out truth...One-sidedness lies at the heart of historical knowledge."<sup>75</sup>This research combines the historical record with the cultural history to give voice to a population that has been largely silent in history, the Vlach.

When there are documents, we have to consider the timing, the rhetoric, the choice of style, the circumstances, the audience, the omissions which according to John Vincent "are evidence, as much as the most palpable fact: what a speech or a letter omits to say, may be the most important fact about it. Silence is evidence"<sup>76</sup> and in this respect, for our case of Vlach history, we have plenty of it. It is usually in the bureaucratic chancelleries of power and authority that "evidence" is created, handled, destroyed or preserved. Anthropology on the other hand encounters its own problems. It is a better tool for studying a phenomenon in a synchronic fashion, good at theorizing and creating models to work with, but it misses the

depth, the third dimension which history provides with its diachronic approach, enriching the anthropological flatland. Although there were anthropologists integrating history into their disciplinary work, traditionally anthropology did not make extensive use of history. History provides a verification of sorts to the theorizing of anthropology. If history provides "evidence," anthropology tries to describe and interpret it. The theoretical interpretation is not quite enough either and it does not tell us much about its subject. As a matter of fact sometimes it tells more about the describer than the subject described. Describing a phenomenon, a cultural act, like the empiricism of the historian, is not enough for the process of understanding that phenomenon. Scientism and positivism are no longer the only and the ultimate explanation and besides descriptive, we also need analytical tools and contextual interpretation.

Since interpretation was mentioned, it is time to say a word about hermeneutics, which traditionally belonged to the field of philology, another tool we try to employ. Hans Gumbrecht argues for a return to the philological tradition of not just collecting and editing texts and fragments, but historicizing them and adding commentaries, teaching them to contemporary readers, as an alternative to an often free-floating textual interpretation. In reference to the Vlachs, see the interpretation of "father" Mandici (Dominik Mandic), a Croatian priest who wrote a book in 1956 entitled "*Postanak Vlaha*" (The Origin of the Vlachs), in which he argues that "the Vlachs are not of Slavic ethnic origin" and, more interestingly, since they present "semi-black features" and are called *Mauro-Vlachs*, *Morovlachi* or *Nigri Latini*, their ancestors were Moorish soldiers (from Mauritania, Africa) brought in the Balkans by the Romans to serve their military twenty five years term. He quotes as evidence "the Moorish military colony *Ad Mauros*" near Vienna and

*Maurocastrum* in Basarabia (Moldavian republic; it simply means the Black castle or citadel), called so by the medieval Genoese merchants and which has nothing to do with the ancient Moors but eventually the colour of the rocks (building material) which, by the way, the Slavs and the Romanians call them—and the castle—white (Bolgrad and Cetatea Alba respectively). I will deal with the Mauro-Vlachs in a later chapter. Some people believe that the emperor Caracalla's edict of 212, through which all the free subjects within the empire received Roman citizenship, was also responsible to give them as well "the Latin speech" or identity. One explanation for the word *Tsintsar* (this is how the Serbians call the urbanized Vlachs) is somehow between the relationship of the Roman Vth Legion (*Macedonica*) and the way the Vlachs pronounce five, *tsintsi*, and the examples can continue.<sup>77</sup> Other arguments come in support of an educated interpretation. "Knowledge will be lost if philological standards decline, so too will fields of study die if their representatives cannot find meaning for today's readers,... at a time when literature in printed form has taken a back seat to television, film, and music." In reference to texts, philology is described "not just a grand etymological or lexicographical enterprise. It also involves restoring to works as much as their original life and nuances as we can manage. To read the written records of bygone civilizations correctly requires knowledge of cultural history in a broad sense: of folklore, legends, laws, and customs."<sup>78</sup> This is not a simple and quick operation (as the fashion is today) but necessitates, amongst other things, very serious and time consuming work, an abundance of lectures, tedious study, complex analyses, cross references and verifications, power of synthesizing, obtaining or translating sources and so on. This is cultural archaeology.

## ETHNO-SYMBOLIC ANALYSIS

The ideas and theories, which I will employ, could roughly be categorized under the large umbrella of ethno-symbolism. A classic example in the field is the work entitled *Myth and Memories of the Nation*, written by the professor of ethnicity and nationalism at the London School of Economics, Anthony D. Smith. In it, the author explains four major claims of the ethno-symbolic approach and which are also pertinent to our study. The first claim is that, if we want to grasp the power and understand the shape of modern nations (valid for ethnic groups in principle as well), we must trace the origins and formations of nations, as well as their possible future course, over long periods of time (*la longue durée*).<sup>79</sup> Nations are historical phenomena, Anthony Smith states, "not only in the generic sense that they are embedded in particular collective past and emerge through specific historical process, but also because, by definition, they embody shared memories, traditions and hopes." The relationship of shared memories to collective cultural identities is crucial: "memory is integral to cultural identity, and the cultivation of shared memories is essential to the survival and destiny of such collective identities,"<sup>80</sup> concludes Anthony Smith. This "cultivation of shared memories" constitutes a tradition, a durable ethnic rhythm of spiritual life which unifies the development of an identity, and is transparent through its calendar and its holidays,<sup>81</sup> which helps to maintain it. I will elaborate more on this subject in the chapter The Military Saints.

It is also important to look at what Pierre Bourdieu called *habitus*<sup>82</sup> (that which "goes without saying") in its relationship to memory embedded in structure and encoded in these ethnic myths, symbols and rituals on one hand, and identity, on the other hand, which

follows closely and in silence the memory path. We cannot even talk about identity without considering memory to preserve it. And there is no possibility of memory without tradition. The individual senses to some degree a threat to his own survival if his group or lineage is threatened with extinction.<sup>83</sup> This fact points to a deeper and stronger level of identity and the memory that maintains it, and which is rooted in the collective memory of the group. "One cannot build a world without collective support, the faces and voices of the world of the fathers."<sup>84</sup> The deeper level of memory implies that both, history and identity are collective to a greater degree than presently admitted; individual is only the culture hero but even he stands for the whole group, every individual identifying with the hero in his or her turn. In ancient Greek culture a person was considered dead not when it ceased to breathe but when its memory was lost. Among the Coast Salish people of British Columbia the word *smela:lh* is translated as "worthy people;" upon elaboration by the fluent elders we discover that the reference is to "people who know their history," in contrast to *s'texem*, "worthless people," because they have "lost or forgotten their history."<sup>85</sup> "People who lose their history lose their soul" states an old Australian Aboriginal saying.

The second theme of Anthony Smith's ethno-symbolic approach deals with the long-term relationship between national past, present, and future, and it has been treated under the headings of recurrence, continuity, and reappropriation. These headings point to the nature of oral character in both, structure and function, and are concerned with the persistence of cultural components, being handed down through the generations, such as names, symbols, languages, customs, territories and rituals. The third theme is concerned with the ethnic foundations of nations and nationalism, which have been formed around ethnic cores, and united by presumed ties of shared ancestry and vernacular culture.

The fourth and last theme (and claim in the same time) of the ethno-symbolic approach is that the pre-existing components and long-term continuities of ethnic groups are cultural and symbolic rather than demographic. As a variation to this theme we have to mention Gottfried Schram's theory in regards to the eastern Romance speakers (the Romanians and the Vlachs), which he calls "mobile continuity," in time rather than in space (since, according to him, cannot really determine the original homeland), rejected at first by the Romanians but now it is been considered by some linguists and historians as being at least partially true.<sup>86</sup> The initial approach, pioneered by Fredrik Barth (on which will elaborate soon) and developed by John Armstrong, states that the contents of the myth-symbol complex tend to differentiate ethnic groups and guard the cultural border of the community against outsiders. Anthony Smith considers that "the differentiating function needs to be complemented by an analyses of the unifying role of a whole range of cultural and symbolic components - myths and symbols, but also values, memories, rituals, customs, and traditions" which do mark out ethnic boundaries but "they also serve to unite the members of each *ethnie* (ethnic group) and structure their relations and activities."<sup>87</sup> In The Long Military Tradition chapter I will be arguing that the institution of *comitatenses* provided the structuring of Vlach relations and activities, crucial in developing the Vlach ethnic core and ethnic markers. We have here a more complete approach, Anthony Smith enriching Fredrik Barth's original idea.

## **ETHNIC BOUNDARIES**

What Fredrik Barth and others<sup>88</sup> did, starting in the late sixties, a period of ideological and social upheaval, was to bring to the forefront the concept of ethnicity, which replaced the

older concepts of race, culture, tribe, peoples, and was a more maneuverable (and less derogatory) entity. From the exotic and far away, the attention moved closer to home (see suburban, immigrant, gender, minority group studies, "margins" of society). These groups were more accessible and better monitored, not to mention that the existing social problems present in the system needed some solutions. Fredrik Barth is the first to incorporate a subjective systematic approach to the field by introducing a theoretical model,<sup>89</sup> but there were previous isolated and neglected attempts.<sup>90</sup>

Barth looked at the edges, at the "ethnic boundaries" and how they are perceived and maintained by the members of the group themselves, as a self-defining system.<sup>91</sup> It is probably helpful to mention that Fredrik Barth introduces within the social sciences an approach already used by the hard sciences, the so called Popperian<sup>92</sup> epistemological approach in which, instead of looking at the center (core), you look at the margins and, by elimination, you know what something is by knowing what is not, increasing also the likelihood of approaching the truth. In order to observe and explore different processes, which involve generating and maintaining ethnic groups, Barth shifts the focus of investigation from internal constituents and the history of the ethnic groups to ethnic boundaries and boundary maintenance. One finds that stable, persistent, and often vitally important social relations are maintained across such boundaries, and are frequently based precisely on the dichotomized ethnic statuses. In other words, ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of social interaction and acceptance, but are quite to the contrary, often the very foundations on which embracing social systems are built.<sup>93</sup>

The idea of boundary or marginality has profound implications. Concepts such as contact, interaction, and exchange close the world of isolation (static) and opens up a vibrant, dynamic system, the challenge and response pattern of history. Important here is the fact that cultural diversity and identity can persist despite inter-ethnic contact and interdependence, as Fredrik Barth showed. A recent application of Fredrik Barth's concept of flexibility on ethnic boundaries, in the case of the Albanian Vlachs, we find in an essay of Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers.<sup>94</sup> We also have the example of the agriculturalist Fur and the pastoralist Baggara which occupy separate niches in the Darfur region of Sudan, and which live in a complementary relationship.<sup>95</sup> The same pattern and results will be exposed in our treatment of the Latin-Slav relationship. As a matter of fact, after almost a millennium and a half of complementary relationships and intense interaction, these two cultures preserved not just their separate identities, but even their particular life styles. It is within this special relationship (or symbioses) that we can access part of the unknown Vlach history.

I dedicate a whole chapter to the history and the idea of the Vlachs as being frontier people and another one to their identity. What I want to emphasize here, since we talk about ethnic boundaries, is the importance of the concept and the Latin-Slav relationship in elucidating many factors otherwise unknown. As mentioned, no people can live in complete isolation from other peoples. If no man is an island, no culture is an island either; at some point it has to reach a border, a margin where it ends and another identity begins. The origins and early history of our Vlachs are presented as an enigma. After the coming of the Slavs in the area<sup>96</sup> and the change of the official language from Latin to Greek, the Vlachs (or their ancestors) fall off the screen (of records). But the Vlachs have survived, as Winnifrith writes, "and there must have been Latin speakers who survived the Slavs, by all accounts a great

deal less ferocious than other invaders, ancient or modern. What we lack is any real evidence of how and where they ensured their survival."<sup>97</sup> This problem I am approaching and trying to solve through the Latin-Slav relationship (previously mentioned), in the chapter The Land beyond the Forest.

There is a hint already that in Bulgaria, Macedonia and northern Thessaly, from very early on, the Vlachs "had been living amicably" with the Bulgarians (and the other Slavs, as Victor Friedman states), and there is no evidence of any 'national' conflict or rivalry between these two people at this time."<sup>98</sup> John Fine, an American historian of the Balkans, mentions that the Bulgarian Slavs were chiefly peasants farming the lowlands, while the Vlachs with their flocks dominated the mountains,<sup>99</sup> and that both groups would have developed a common cause (from sharing their fate) against the Byzantine authorities. The British geographer H. R. Wilkinson, who deals with the Kosovo region, provides a detailed description and insight into how mountain-plain relationships work<sup>100</sup> and what is involved in these relationships, as a sample unit and as a microcosm of the Balkans. In general (or as a tendency) the Latin-Slav relationship equates *planina-zupa* (mountain-plain), *pecalbarabota* cultures (as work ethics and attitude), pastoralist-agriculturalist relationships and which, with the help from the concept of Zagoria (toponymy in general)<sup>101</sup> and language studies, gives us the answer to the initial question, who do the Vlachs meet at their "border" (cultural and geographical in the same time)? It is the Slavs who not only named the Vlachs but who are also their point of contact with the rest of the world, an idea dealt with in the chapter on identity.

## MYTHICAL SCENARIO

Returning to our ethno-symbolic approach, we shall introduce one of the most important ideas for our study and context, the mythical scenario, a concept coined by the historian of religions Mircea Eliade.<sup>102</sup> A great deal could be written on this topic but we have to resume ourselves to some explanations and general remarks. Mircea Eliade is probably one of the most prolific, profound, and influential scholars in the field of religious studies.<sup>103</sup> Before we explain the mythical scenario, a few words are needed on what we mean by myth and symbol. According to Mircea Eliade, a myth is an account of events which took place *in principio*, that is, "in the beginning," (as a first cause) in a primordial and non-temporal instant, a moment of sacred time.<sup>104</sup> A myth reveals a sacred reality. Myths and rites always disclose a boundary situation—not only a historical situation. A boundary situation is one which man discovers in becoming conscious of his place in the universe... The mythic or sacred time is qualitatively different from profane time, from the continuous and irreversible time of our everyday, de-sacralised existence. In narrating a myth, one reactualizes, in some sort, the sacred time in which the events narrated took place.<sup>105</sup>

For Mircea Eliade, "symbolic thinking is not the exclusive privilege of the child, of the poet or of the unbalanced mind: it is consubstantial with human existence, it comes before language and discursive reason. The symbol reveals certain aspects of reality—the deepest aspects—that defy any other means of knowledge. Images, symbols and myth are not irresponsible creations of the psyche: they respond to a need and fulfill a function, that of bringing to light the most hidden modalities of being." Their study, Mircea Eliade states, "enables us to reach a better understanding of man—of man 'as he is', before he has come to

terms with the conditions of History. Every historical man carries on, within himself, a great deal of prehistoric humanity." Besides symbols, "dreams, walking dreams, the images of his nostalgias and of his enthusiasms, etc., are so many forces that may project the historically-conditioned human being into a spiritual world that is infinitely richer than the closed world of his own 'historic moment'."<sup>106</sup> The myth precedes discursive reason but is not a stage of its development. It is a world of its own, with its own rules, and is here to stay. "The most terrible historical crisis of the modern world-the second world war and all that has followed from it-has effectually demonstrated that the extirpation of myth and symbols is illusory,"<sup>107</sup> adds Mircea Eliade.

There is no specific "formula" or standard definition for the "mythical scenario" concept but we can reconstruct it from Mircea Eliade's writings. In an effort to validate oral tradition, called "archaic culture" by Mircea Eliade (the traditional, small scale societies or ethnic groups of sociology and anthropology), he considered each cultural system as being complete (and epistemic) in itself, constituting the equivalent of a modern paradigm. In this sense a mythical scenario is one that follows a sacred pattern (hence, paradigmatic), being constituted of certain myths, images and symbols, a kind of cultural genetic code. If we consider Carl Jung's concept of archetype as a generic form and shared by all humans, the mythical scenario would be the culturally specific archetype(s) shared by the members of a particular culture or ethnic group; a sort of a cultural matrix and a cognitive map. It is complemented at least partially by a set of rituals and is celebrated through specific holidays. Edward Sapir observed prior to Mircea Eliade that "a culture can be looked at as having a psychological imprint,... that certain cultures have an ideal program that the participants tend to realize. They have a role, culturally imposed".<sup>108</sup> While Edward Sapir dealt with cultural

patterns embedded in attitudes, values and symbolic structures (as thought process) and their relationship to language (or expressed through language), Mircea Eliade (who approached the problem from a different angle) accentuated and elaborated on these relationships, identifying "the psychological imprint" with the mythical scenario, which is also responsible for holding these phenomena together. Mircea Eliade's "myth" (or the narration of it) would be the correspondent of Edward Sapir's notion of "language."

In a chapter dealing with "ethnic memory" (which the author applies to "people without writing"), the French medievalist Jacques Le Goff makes the distinction (via George H. Nadel's *Studies in the Philosophy of History*) between "objective history" (established by universal objective criteria, verifiable or "scientific") and "ideological history," which describes and organizes facts "in accord with certain established traditions." This second kind of history, Jacques Le Goff continues, is the collective memory that tends to confuse history with myth, turning its attention more readily towards the earliest beginnings. Thus, "the history of beginnings becomes, to adopt Bronislaw Malinowski's expression, a *mythical charter* of the tradition."<sup>109</sup> This description fits precisely with our concept of mythical scenario but falls short in explaining it, why is it mythical and what does it involve? "The fidelity<sup>110</sup> of a people to one or another mythical scenario, to one or another exemplary image, tells us far more about its deeper soul than many of its historical accomplishments."<sup>111</sup> For Mircea Eliade, writes Paul Simionescu, a Romanian scholar who studied Mircea Eliade's work thoroughly, the hermeneutics of traditional and spiritual universe reveal an unsuspected world of meanings for understanding the specific features of ethnic communities. Reconsidering the traditional world means a rediscovery—via different means—not only of a fantastic universe of images, thoughts, beliefs, symbols and rituals but,

especially, the rediscovery of that universe which would fill the emptiness of historical documents. The myth, symbols and beliefs, as fundamental aspects of traditional life, have their more hidden sides and senses, their expression being evidently closer to symbolic language; hence, the acute necessity of analyses of hermeneutic order.<sup>112</sup> We are going to apply this method in the chapter dealing with the military saints.

In a parallel mode, John Nandris affirms the necessity of taking "the long reflective look of an archaeologist back at layers of belief that make up the religious heritage of the Balkans," considering that culture and religion in this area are to some degree "mythological codifications of experience;" and that "all the major religions sought to incorporate into their practice these elements of earlier beliefs which could not be entirely eradicated." Out of antiquity came belief, writes John Nandris, followed by codifications of that belief and its full cultural expression, declining in our time into the attempts at its deconstruction which can be seen as a distractive codification of the insecurity of unbelief.<sup>113</sup> John Nandris notices the relationship between myth (or what is encoded in myth) and praxis (that which people do),<sup>114</sup> a development traceable (and mirrored) within a mythical scenario. This mythical scenario does not only provide an exemplary pattern (paradigm), as Mircea Eliade argued, but legitimizes and justifies action. A good example in mind is that of Christianity; how the life and deeds of Christ (the central figure or paradigm) as well as the spoken—and then the written word (the "Scripture")—are mirrored (or at least they should mirror...) in the life of an ordinary Christian. To this package we can add now the ethics and the morals as well, to fully understand the holistic character of the concept and all its implications and aspects, be it metaphysical, political, epistemological, moral, ethical, artistic, and so on.

Most of what we call history, at least until the Renaissance, has been written by court officials or members of the clergy, both classes representing the power of the day, as we already pointed out earlier, which narrates and emphasizes strongly the political aspect of history. It is the mythical scenario concept which comes here to the rescue, as Simionescu pointed out, through hermeneutics and painstaking work, to reveal these more hidden modalities of being of traditional life and cultural history. The best aid to this approach, and this brings us to our last methodological item, is the folklore and customs, known also as (or being considered part of) oral tradition.

## **ORAL TRADITION**

*"Only words that stride onward, passing from mouth to mouth, legends and songs, keep a people alive."<sup>15</sup>*

The world of oral tradition takes us into the world of mythical scenario again. This stands in contrast to the world of history and the written word and the two need a little comparing. As we pointed out already, in an oral tradition the history is encoded in stories, symbols and rituals. That history and the memory associated with it are sacred and collective; it is the history and the memory of the entire ethnic group, not the individual, profane history. It is about values and principles, not about historical truth or chronological accuracy. Due to its very conservative character, folklore<sup>16</sup> is a truthful account of ethnic history, a sort of unofficial history, bearing evidence of both, mythical scenario and the "objective history." When one component of the equation is missing, we can verify and complement it with the other, existing element. Since in folklore (oral tradition) we have the reflection of the mythical scenario ("the source" as well as the text, structure and plot which endure), we can consider it as the most faithful biography of an ethnic group (or a nation); it

is also collective and "anonymous," a veritable compendium. It is non-intentional, based on feelings and emotions, concerned with values and quality (what is dare, important enough to be remembered), traceable in all the cultural manifestations, from institutions to poetry. It synthesizes and preserves the organic unity of the system that provides meaning and is non-deceiving, because it expresses the truth of the heart, not that of the mind.

The writing of history is intentional, with certain implications and consequences, its main preoccupation is data (to inform), quantity (numbers), details and precision (the cool truth of reason which destroys rather than constructs), leading to a causal explanation, usually political or (and) economic. Each of our histories is in need of its other in order to offer a more complete and truthful, or at least a better picture of reality. If I may use a comparison, from the altars of the past the folklore keeps the flames of the fire going and the joy that results from it, while objective (scientific) history is preoccupied with analyzing the ashes and the altar. If folklore is poetry, history is prose and, strangely enough, that is also true, literally. The folkloric material is very often presented in versified form while history very rarely employs that style. Besides the meaning contained in the poetic form, there are formulaic stanzas used as memory devises.<sup>117</sup>

In spite of losing the poetry of the original text, I would like to present a folkloric sample, which, in itself, justifies its existence. It also displays some of the intrinsic folkloric qualities that I mentioned above:

I don't sing because I know how to sing /  
But because a certain thought is haunting me; /  
I don't sing to boast of it, /  
But my heart is bitter; /  
I don't sing because I know how to sing, /

I am singing to soothe my heart, /  
Mine and that of the one who is listening to me!<sup>118</sup>

## **FROM ORALITY TO MODERNITY**

One of the best accounts when it comes to analyzing writing and orality is found in the work of Michel de Certeau. Besides being a Jesuit (implying rigor, structure, seriousness and holism), de Certeau is also extremely critical and has a very fine mind, which accompanies his erudition. He reminds us that the two terms (writing—which stands for modernity—and orality) are the result of reciprocal distinctions within successive and interconnected historical configurations. One (writing) is productive, predominant, and articulated and puts the other in a position of inertia, subjection, and opaque resistance. "They are incommensurable; the difference between them is qualitative."<sup>119</sup> Michel de Certeau considers "writing" as a "modern" mythical practice.

While it is helpful to take note that even the Western modern culture retained mythical characteristics, as portrayed by Michel de Certeau, we are going to use his aid in one more instance. For most of their history, the Vlachs, who I consider people of the frontier, possessed an oral tradition. In our discussion on Fredrik Barth and boundaries we argued that no people and no culture can live in isolation. In other words, a space or a region, including (or especially) a "frontier region," is created by an interaction. In the Vlach case, on one hand that interaction was done with the Slavs, pertaining to the geographical, social, and economical aspects, on more or less continuous bases; on the other hand (and on a different level), there was an ambivalent relationship to the power of the day, mostly political and military, off and on and with much negotiation involved.

The operations of marking out boundaries, according to Michel de Certeau, shed light on the formation of myth, since they also have the function of founding and articulating spaces, concerned with actions organizing social cultural areas. "In this organization, the story plays a decisive role. It describes, to be sure. But every description is more than a fixation; it is a culturally creative act."<sup>120</sup> It founds spaces and, where stories are disappearing (or else reduced to museographical objects), there is a loss of space: deprived of narrations, the group or the individual regresses toward the disquieting, fatalistic experience of a formless, indistinct, and nocturnal totality, adds Michel de Certeau. By considering the role of stories in delimitation, one can see that the primary function is to authorize the establishment, displacement or transcendence of limits, making the story a sort of "crossword" whose essential narrative figures seem to be the frontier and the bridge.

"The story's first function is to authorize, or more exactly, to found." It is not juridical (related to laws of judgment) but "it depends rather on what Georges Dumézil analyses in connection with the Indo-European root *dhe*, "to set in place," and its derivatives in Sanskrit (*dhatu*) - (strangely enough also in Romanian, *datu*, as "established tradition" or "set in place"; my note) - and Latin (*fas*). The Latin noun *fas*, he writes, "is properly speaking the mystical foundation, which is in the invisible world," and without which all forms of human conduct "are doubtful, perilous, and even fatal. *Fas* cannot be subjected to analysis or casuistry... A foundation either exists or it doesn't... A time or a place are said to be *fasti* or *nefasti* (auspicious or inauspicious) depending on whether they provide or fail to provide human action with this necessary foundation."<sup>121</sup> It is also "a *repetitio rerum*: both a renewal and a repetition of the originary founding acts," continues Michel de Certeau, which brings us back to Mircea Eliade's concepts including the paradigmatic mythical scenario. I will

retain the idea that the primary role of story, of founding, "opens a legitimate theater for practical actions. It creates a field that authorizes dangerous and contingent social actions," as stated by Michel de Certeau.

## SUMMARY

What does the story of the Vlachs tell us? Michel de Certeau writes that "what the map cuts up, the story cuts across. In Greek, narration is called *diegesis*: it establishes an itinerary (it "guides") and it passes through (it "transgresses"). The space of operations it travels in is made of movements: it is topological, concerning the deformation of figures, rather than topical, defining places."<sup>122</sup> The Vlach story is a story of movements and a moving story. It transgresses through "history" and "historical deformations" and cuts across every possible border. "Boundaries are transportable limits and transportations of limits; they are also *metaphorai*."<sup>123</sup> In the narrations that organize spaces, boundaries seem to play the role of the Greek *xoana*, statuettes whose invention is attributed to the clever Daedalus: they are crafty like Daedalus and mark out limits only by moving themselves (and the limits)."<sup>124</sup> Our Vlachs resemble so much the Greek *xoana* that the majority of their observers describe them as ambiguous, and so they do to the places they inhabit. Other scholars, such as Irina Nicolau or Thede Kahl, call the Vlachs the Chameleons of the Balkans. The Vlachs, "people of the frontier," are the borders themselves, and by moving (themselves), erase the borders and (paradoxically) move (or create) "borders" in the same time?

The Vlachs qualify as "frontier people" or "marginal" from both perspectives, literally (historically) and figuratively (culturally and socially). A good deal of literature was written on the topic, as we reminded the reader already. What we can add here is the old (by

now) but still valid and relevant observation of the anthropologist Victor Turner, which fits the Vlach situation so well. The attributes of liminality (liminal *personae*, "threshold people"), writes Victor Turner, "are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial."<sup>125</sup> With this description of liminality I can proceed with the story of the Vlachs, how they did slip through the cracks, through "conventions" and through history, eluding it. By perpetually defending imperial borders set up in the southeastern Europe, the Vlachs built and refined their long military tradition, which will be the subject of the next chapter.



## THE LONG MILITARY TRADITION or DEFENDING IMPERIAL BORDERS

By making use of Anthony Smith's concepts of ethnic core and *ethnie* (which is just French for ethnic community) through his ethno-symbolic approach, dealt with in the introduction, the Vlachs can be used as a case study of a pre-modern identity formation. I hope to demonstrate in this chapter how an ethnic core likely came to be and the ways in which boundaries were maintained over the centuries. I will be arguing that the origin of the Vlachs, as part of the Latin speaking local Balkan populations left behind after Rome's collapse, is related to the Roman military frontier institution of *comitatenses* that persisted throughout the Middle Ages in various forms. The *comitatenses* served as a structure, a framework for "the socialization of successive generations"<sup>127</sup> for the Latin speaking Diaspora, which promoted the formation and maintenance of an ethnic core and a Roman identity. This ethnic core has been created roughly between the reigns of Diocletian (284-305) and that of Justinian (527-565) or definitely by the reign of Heraclius (610-641). Besides maintaining structure, the *comitatenses* also provided leadership (under foreign powers), cohesion and homogeneity for some other like groups or tribes, which joined in later (some Bessi, free Dacian tribes) or even "strangers" (Slavs or other identities).

Whenever the Vlachs are mentioned, the usual stereotype of transhumant pastoralism comes first to one's mind. Since, as we mentioned earlier, Vlach, shepherd, and mountain dweller are synonymous terms to an extent, it is easy to understand the popular opinion. The Vlach phenomenon is a little more complex than it seems and transhumant pastoralism is just one major component of it. Other Vlach occupations are acknowledged like

merchants,<sup>128</sup> craftsmen<sup>129</sup> or historical ones, like muleteering<sup>130</sup> (convey or caravan driver), while, with some exceptions,<sup>131</sup> there is almost no literature on their military tradition, either as a necessity or as a vocation, professionalism developed into an art.

Starting with Kekaumenos from early Byzantine times and all the way to a present author like Vatro Murvar, a tradition was built for the Vlachs as being rebellious and brigands, and accused of "double-dealing" or not keeping allegiances. We have to keep in mind that, with a few exceptions (especially of contemporary accounts), most of Vlach history was written by their enemies. There are some attempts to emphasize the Vlach fighting spirit and love of freedom (done indirectly) in some regional histories, Noel Malcolm for Bosnia (within a "Serbian" context) and John Koliopoulos for Greece (in a form of disguise) being the best examples. I could not find any works or even attempts that would look at this phenomenon within a larger framework in both, space and time or within various contexts.

To bring a fair understanding of the topic I have to put it into its historical perspective. As an ethnic group, the Vlachs and their ancestors will be examined from pre-Roman times, trying to discern some social, cultural (including religion, customs, and folklore), economic, and political structures and institutions. The ancient writers praise the martial qualities of the Vlachs' ancestors, the Thracians and the Geto-Dacians, their northern brothers,<sup>132</sup> affirming that Mars (the Roman Ares, the war god) was born amongst them.<sup>133</sup> After being subdued by the Romans, the native Balkan stock played a prominent role in resolving the later crises of the empire, from Diocletian to Justinian, providing vigorous soldiers and many able emperors and statesmen.<sup>134</sup> Justinian himself is quoted (in

*Justiniani Novellae XXVI*) as saying: "If someone says Thrace, we are to think about the idea of manhood, multitude of armies, wars and fight."<sup>135</sup> These characteristics of "manhood" and fight were to be inherited by the Vlachs. To the traditional martial qualities of the Thracians it was added the professionalism of the Roman soldiers.

There is a period of silence in the historical records and when the Vlachs enter it, they seem to match the characteristics of the old Thracians and Geto-Dacians<sup>136</sup> who inhabited mountainous regions of Southeastern Europe and renowned for their martial qualities were never fully conquered and subdued by the Romans, as the Romans were successfully driven from Dacia for good in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. A new element in the Vlach package is transhumance but there is a great possibility of being a former occupation, which now plays a more important role. It is also possible to be an adaptation to the new historical, economic, and political reality. If previously was a mode of subsistence, the pendulation summer-winter, mountain-plain change of residence now becomes a key surviving factor.

Transhumance is coupled and reinforced with the army institutions of former Roman frontier region, which also required a high degree of mobility. Besides the *limitanei*, strong points of fortifications maintained by land-holdings alongside the Danube frontier, there were the *comitatenses*, the mobile field armies, "a strategic reserve which could be moved from region to region as the situation demanded."<sup>137</sup> "Should the frontier troops (*limitanei*) be overwhelmed, elite, highly mobile, field armies, called *comitatenses*, stationed well behind the lines, could be dispatched to trouble spots."<sup>138</sup> The *comitatenses* also got to know the area better and identified the advantages it presented, to be used when necessary.

In the middle of the fourth century the garrison of the Danube frontier was about 145,000 strong according to Robert Browning,<sup>139</sup> who adds that the bulk of the army was probably recruited from the Balkan area. As a matter of fact, in the whole Eastern Roman Empire between 350 and 476, despite that Dacia and Thracia were just two out of the seven eastern dioceses, they provided about 54% of the total *comitatenses* troops.<sup>140</sup>

There is the language, the identity or the tradition argument, but it is in the institution of *comitatenses* that the link to the Vlachs holds the main key. Their extreme mobility,<sup>141</sup> the pattern of dispersal, their martial character where we have to include the *armatol*, *vojnik*, and *sipahi* institutions within the Byzantine (later Greek), Slavic (later Habsburg), and Ottoman context respectively, were all preserved. The pattern of dispersal reflects a set of relationships between a center (a core area, usually mountainous, a "Zagoria," a city, like Raguza or Moscopole, or a village) and a diaspora (usually a plain area which in its turn can become a "center"),<sup>142</sup> whether for military purposes, transhumance, or, in modern times, institutionalized in the *pecalba*.<sup>143</sup> All these metanastic movements reflect a definite life style pattern according to seasons, necessities and circumstances.

Either the emperor Diocletian, as most historians believe (and who used *comitatus*)<sup>144</sup> or Constantine, according to others, created the mobile army, governed by *comites*<sup>145</sup> (counts) who were soldiers and were not under the control of provincial governors. What we do know is that Diocletian put an end to the so called "military anarchy" which was a disastrous phase of the empire, the reforms making possible the empire's continuity. Let us not forget that both emperors were of Balkan stock, reflecting a Balkan reality and a Balkan solution.

In dealing with the *comitatenses* I will try to explain, alongside the name and its history, its functions and structure. As functions we can count survival, efficiency, cohesion, optimizing opportunities, etc. For structure I will consider the patterns (dispersal for example), the center- diaspora relationship, and view it as a center of networks (for news, employment, or safety), and so on.

## **THE DEVELOPMENTS OF THE COMITATENSES**

We are going to follow some developments of the *comitatenses*. In Romanian *comitat* means district, a county in English, which comes from the same root, as does the word count (*comite* or *conte* in Romanian). Eventually it comes from "go together" (herd,<sup>146</sup> troops), company on suite, originally a companion on the march. The *comitatenses* troops accompanied the emperor and commander in chief on campaigns, hence, the name.<sup>147</sup> We'll notice and retain the idea of mobility. In certain Byzantine sources we come across the term *comitopouloi* (this is how the tsar Samuel of Bulgaria is named,<sup>148</sup> and so are his brothers, originally from eastern Macedonia, of disputed origins), designating half-autonomous governors of certain provinces. Robert Browning narrates how the khan Omurtag (814-831) replaced the *duces* (called also *archontes*) of three Slavonic tribes by *Bulgarici rectores*. Omurtag replaced the half-autonomous Sclaviniae by provinces, here called *comitatus*.<sup>149</sup> Tom J. Winnifrith points to the fact that *comes* was not a regular Bulgarian title, as suggested by R. Browning. Prior to the Byzantine conquest of Bulgaria, the governors of districts in Bulgaria are often called *komes* in Greek texts, the same title appearing in Proto-Bulgarian inscriptions in Greek.<sup>150</sup> One of these inscriptions was at Nea Philadelpheia, north of

Thessalonica, marking the frontier between Bulgaria and Byzantium, and another one in eastern Macedonia; both places had an early medieval Vlach presence.<sup>151</sup>

In Bulgaria proper, especially in Zagoria, there was a massive free Vlach element, which, at times by themselves, occasionally together with the Bulgarians, as in the Second Vlach-Bulgarian uprising, revolted against the Byzantines (usually against heavy taxation). The Bulgarians must have adopted the term from the Vlachs who maintained the institution, because, as Tom J. Winnifrith argues, we cannot consider a return to Latin of Byzantine writers. Neither the Greeks, nor the Slavs or the Turanic Bulgarians spoke a Latin based language but the Vlachs. I sense a strong Vlach influence in the Bulgarian army even before the Asen brothers. According to Dimiter Anguelov, from Boris' reign (852-889) onwards the new military and administrative units "were called *komitati* and each one was headed by a *komes* who enjoyed great power as a direct organ of the central administration."<sup>152</sup> We can quite easily recognize in here the Vlach mark.<sup>153</sup> In a narration about a military confrontation between the Byzantines and the Bulgarians, which took place in 1017 in Macedonia, "there is perhaps a hint of Vlach troops among the Bulgarian forces." After a surprise attack occurred a shout (among "the Bulgarians") *Fugite o Caesar*. "It is difficult to explain the existence of any form of Latin or Romance speech among the Bulgarian troops except by the presence of Vlach allies."<sup>154</sup> Anna Comnena noted "some of the Bulgarians and those who are nomadic folk are commonly called Vlachs."<sup>155</sup> Judging from the names of two less known "Bulgarian" khans of the eighth century, Paganus and Sabinus, the Asens may not have been the first Vlachs who supplied the Bulgarian kingdom with army corps and rulers. In Bulgaria, parts of Serbia, in Montenegro and especially in Macedonia, the term *comitaggiu* (during the nineteenth and twentieth century at least) defined a paramilitary type

of fighter with the sense of an unruly freedom fighter; "a rebellious man of war."<sup>156</sup> The Bulgarians spell it *comitaji* and it translates as insurgent, an armed person who joins a band, usually for rebellious purposes.<sup>157</sup>

Summing up the concept of *comitatenses*, it appears that within Balkan history (after the fall of the Roman Empire) the term itself is associated with, or pertaining to Vlach issues, in one way or another. I explained its characteristic features, its role within Bulgarian history (and to which the medieval Vlachs added considerably), the case of the *comitopouloi* and of Paulus, the *Comes de Valache* who went to the court of Henry VI in London in 1427.<sup>158</sup> Last, but not least, there is the *kmetovi* institution amongst the Slavs, inherited from the Slavicised Vlachs. *Kmetovi*, or the Orthodox soldier-colonist, as they are called by Traian Stoianovich, were the border warriors, "most of them...Serbs or Vlachs, almost exclusively of the Eastern Orthodox faith." In return for their stipulated military service, the *kmetovi* "obtained family allotments of land, were allowed to choose their own magistrates, and were freed of feudal obligations to the Croatian and Hungarian nobility. Confirmed by the imperial *Statuta Valachorum* of 1630, their privileges were later restricted."<sup>159</sup> Most importantly, we have here preserved the functions as well as the institution's name, since *kmetovi*, according to the same Traian Stoianovich, comes from *comes* (pl. *comites*),<sup>160</sup> but there is no further explanation. From itinerant soldier we get later, as in the parallel case of *pecalba*, the itinerant worker, a testimony left in the transformation of the term *kmet* amongst the Slavs. In Bulgarian modern usage it became village elder or mayor; in Slovenia, peasant or farmer (for hire); in Serbia, farm hand (for hire) and in this sense it entered even into the Lithuanian language. We encounter the term in Bulgaria already present in "late ninth to early tenth century" but according to the Bulgarian historian Kiril Petkov, "the meaning is unclear." "If

there are some, be they *kmets*, be they regular folks, who were courageous and accomplished heroic feats"<sup>161</sup> runs the concept in its original context. Having been mentioned first and different than the "regular folks," as well as having courage and "heroic feats" as qualifiers, I think it becomes quite clear what the meaning of the term *kmet* is.

## THE ARMATOL

At some point, according to Irina Nicolau, the terms *armatol*, *klepht*, *palicar*, and *comitagi* were synonymous (and we can introduce *kmet* on the list), adding that how they all came to gather in the mountains, that's another good story to tell. I consider these linguistic fossils to be vestiges of a by gone era, all the way back to the old *comitatenses*. All terms after all mean armed men and men of arms but especially so *armatol*. The Greek *palicar* and *armatol* are also the equivalent of the Slavic (especially Serbian) *voinik* (*voinic* also in Romanian); a young, brave warrior. This *voiniks* fought on the Christian-Ottoman frontier, particularly in medieval Bosnia and Serbia. The *voiniks* are described as a socio-professional class in charge of maintaining road safety, had fiscal advantages (tax exemptions) and was inherited from Byzantine times.<sup>162</sup>

I presented the terms *comitatenses* and *comes* with their later versions and development, and now I will follow the characteristics of the institution after the collapse of the Roman Empire. We mentioned the Thracians and the Geto-Dacians, the ancestors of the Vlachs, who were brave warriors and loved their mountains and freedom. The mountain passes were the preferred places chosen for battling the invaders, a feature inherited and monopolized by the Vlachs.<sup>163</sup> "The Balkans is a region defined by mountains, both

etymologically and geographically."<sup>164</sup> We can add at this point that mountains in its cultural dimension also define it.

The frontier theme in the Balkans would deserve more attention and space, especially when we consider the time frame from the perspective of the original inhabitants. The entire middle ages in this area was a period of long, hard and continuous defense, starting with the Goths from the Roman times and ending with the Tartars (Mongols) and the Ottoman Turks, roughly over a millennium. In here we can only present certain features of this frontier theme in relationship to the Vlachs. Their ancestors defended themselves and then the borders of the Roman Empire, setting up the stage. Later on, the peoples who became the Vlachs were on guard and fought for the Byzantine, the Magyar, the Ottoman, the Venetian, the Habsburg, and even the Russian frontiers.<sup>165</sup> These frontiers were very fluid and, similar to the patron of the borders, Hermes, or Michel de Certeau's elusive *xoana*, mentioned earlier, so were the Vlachs of the records.<sup>166</sup>

We must note that the Vlachs preserved a frontier mentality and frontier habits well into the twentieth century."The existence of the *armatol* institution in its form of national popular army is identical to the existence of the Latinate element of the Balkan peninsula."<sup>167</sup> The Latin *arma* is easily recognized as arm, weapon, *armatol* being a man of arms. The Roman military frontier institution of *comitatenses* survived in the Vlach *armatol* institution.<sup>168</sup> The *limitanei* disintegrated with the collapse of the Roman Empire. For a certain period of time the *comitatenses* had a dual function; it served as the local police on one hand, and as auxiliary troops, helped the garrison of the *limes*. Their specialty though,

being a sort of shock, elite troops (special forces) and extremely mobile, a feature which contributed to save its existence, was to fight whenever necessary, wherever was danger.

When the Eastern Roman empire lost its Latin character, with the introduction of the Greek language officially in all its institutions (including the military and the ecclesiastical), estranging its Latin speakers, with the system of the *limes* collapsed, and with the great influx of barbarians, which transformed the ethnic composition of the empire, the *comitatenses* was the only institution left, due to our Vlachs, having to assume now the entire defense role, especially at the regional level. It is at this point where we can equate late *comitatenses* characteristics with the *armatole* institution. These people who later are called Vlachs, the local element that retreated into the natural fortresses, the mountains and densely forested areas, will emerge throughout the peninsula in their Vlachieas and Zagorias, powerful, proud, and free. "No king can rule over them" notes Benjamin of Tudela in 1160,<sup>169</sup> mentioning the Vlachs of Thessaly. Other contemporary sources call them (in Greek) *abasilevtoi*:<sup>170</sup> independent; without master. Their independence was kept even after the Turkish conquest of the area. As a matter of fact, after the Kosovo battle of 1389, the only organized military forces left in the Balkans were the ones of the Vlach *armatoles*.

Since we possess no written evidence, most scholars argue that the system of *armatoles* originated with Murad II. They are first mentioned as auxiliaries of the Turkish armies during the reign of Mohamed II, Murad's son. Claude Fauriel, back in 1824, thought that the institution of *armatoles* first appeared in Thessaly, amongst "the warlike and unsubdued people of the mountains...especially in the Vlach-speaking district of Agrafa."<sup>171</sup> When dealing with the *armatoles* and their history, Apostolos Vacalopoulos describes them

as members of a widespread institution of Christians under Turkish rule, a sort of militia entrusted with certain defensive and police duties, and raises the question if there are any connections between the *armatoles*, on one hand, and the system of Christian *spahis* (*sipahi*) or these other Christians exempt from taxes, on the other? His answer is negative but recognizes that, coincidentally enough, the other Christians exempt from taxes, fighting for the Turks in various parts of the peninsula, were serving under the name *armatoles*, and the duties of the Christian *spahis* were actually similar to those of the *armatoles*.<sup>172</sup> Entire villages or regions were tax exempt as they performed duties of military nature, involving "the guarding of fortresses, narrow passes, and the like, and exemptions were granted by extraordinary decree."<sup>173</sup> Stavro Skendi, an Albanian born scholar, sees the same things in the *armatoles* as Apostolos Vacalopoulos does, "men-at-arms who constituted the militia entrusted with the preservation of public order, the defense of mountain passes, and the repression of brigandage."<sup>174</sup> The *armatoles* were concentrated mostly in Thessaly, Macedonia, Epirus, Acarnania and Aetolia, areas, which coincide with the largest concentration of Vlachs in the central and southern part of the Balkan Peninsula, some areas being former Vlachiaes or Zagorias.

What interests us here is the similarity of descriptions and roles present in the *comitatenses* and *armatole* institutions, how they match each other. "In regards to the *Armatoles*, only one further consideration remains: that perhaps, after all, they did not appear for the first time during the reign of Murad II and that what seemed to be the institution of *Armatoles* in that period was merely a revival of the old system of frontier guards, which stretches back beyond the Byzantine era to Roman times."<sup>175</sup> This is one of the best (Greek and scholarly) references on this issue. Rennell Rodd states that the *Armatols* were "perhaps

already existing under the Byzantine emperors, recognized and developed by the Turkish invaders,"<sup>176</sup> expressing the same opinion about their ancient origin.

Writing about the same issue but mostly within the Slavic context is Vatro Murvar, an American (Croatian born) sociologist turned historian. "Branislav Djurdjev believes that the origin of the whole institution of the frontier soldiers, called *vojnuci* (Turkish version of the Slavic term *vojnici*=brave soldiers), goes back exclusively to the Vlachs, and is older than the Turkish military administration. He claims that the Balkan states employed Vlachs with similar qualifications long before the Turkish conquest. The Turks merely developed the older type of Vlach social organization known in Byzantium as *martolosi*, mercenary frontier soldiers."<sup>177</sup> The entire set of privileges and duties were codified in the special Vlach laws and legally institutionalized in several *kanun-namas* (Turkish special laws), such as the *kanun-nama* of Smederevo, Branicevo, and Vidin.<sup>178</sup> I wanted here to present the parallels of *armatole* and *vojnuc* system not just in function, but in their origin as well. Several things require farther elaboration. It seems that the institution of *armatoles* existed exclusively amongst the Vlachs. They fought either as auxiliary (under the command of their own leaders) with the imperial troops, or on their own, with the central authority against invaders or other parties. Other times they fought against that same authority to defend their rights, property, or their very existence, reasons for which the Vlachs were accused of "double-dealing."<sup>179</sup> There is a resemblance of the Vlach roles in this respect with the *Bagaudae* of Gaul in late antiquity.<sup>180</sup>

Some of the *armatoles* kept their legal and official independence and status until the eighteenth century but in fact, many of them were still operating during the Greek war of

independence, where they played the main role of resistance. Their fighting style was considered unconventional, a type of guerrilla warfare, taking advantage of the territory, favoring the surprise element. These guerilla soldiers relied on the ambushing of enemy forces, generally attacking during the night, and historical documents note how they were extremely resilient to hunger, thirst, the elements, pain and fatigue, and would train daily. Irina Nicolau narrates how they would hide behind trees, rocks or corpses, used hand-to-hand combat to get out of a blockade, would rather die than be caught and "they knew of no bigger shame than seeing their captain captured."<sup>181</sup>

## **THE OTTOMAN MILIEU**

The usual Turkish Christian subject, be it Slav or Greek, could neither be on horseback in a Turkish presence, nor ever carry arms. The Albanians carried arms and fought sporadically, after all, many of them turned Muslim, but the Vlachs were the only armed (organized) groups and with military experience. These privileges they preserved for a long time. Around 1720s many *armatole* groups in eastern Macedonia and Thrace were abolished.<sup>182</sup> This period coincides with the rise of Austria and Russia as Christian powers and the decline of the Ottoman power, as well as with the increase of a certain awareness of national consciousness. The Ottomans started taking measures to limit the power of the Christians. It is only now that the Vlachs start adopting a Greek identity (beginning with the merchant class) and in the same time, the Albanians, being mostly of Muslim faith and (because of that) preferred by the Ottomans, are helped by the central power to replace or diminish the Vlach power and influence, when it comes to military matters and tax exemption. For the Greeks and the other Christians of Greece, traditional families of

*armatoles* such as Nicotzara, Vlachovaioi or Lazaioi were symbols of self-determination and resistance.

Some of the Vlachs crossed the border on the Austrian side from early times, enrolling in Venetian armies and especially in the Austrian frontier troops. Wendy Bracewell presents an interesting account of their identity: "The precise significance of the various appellations contemporaries used for these groups constitutes something of a problem for the historian trying to analyze their sense of identity. Although border authorities might refer to them as immigrants (*uskok, pribeg, transfugus*) or as former Ottoman subjects, most often they are identified by some variant of the term Vlach or Morlach."<sup>183</sup> The Venetians seem to prefer the term Morlach. On the Ottoman border and the Habsburg military frontier, continues W. Bracewell, the term "Vlach usually denoted a specific social role that of a stock herder-colonist with military obligations executed in exchange for tax concessions... There are glimpses of a common social identity among some of these 'Vlach sons,' as they call themselves, an identity based on the military privileges they enjoyed under the Ottomans. These distinguished them from the ordinary subjects, and the Vlachs were determined to preserve these privileges when they emigrated to Christian territory."<sup>184</sup> We are presented with a Habsburg record from 1538 with a reference to "the Vlachs, whom we call old Romans," an idea expressed by Byzantine scholars like Kinnamos already in 1167<sup>185</sup> and, earlier yet, in the eleventh century, by Kekaumenos, paralleling the Vlachs' own tradition.<sup>186</sup>

Wendy Bracewell notices, as Noel Malcolm does, that some historians identified the Vlach colonist as Serbs, and that nearly all the colonists identified as Serbs come from a section of the Ottoman population, which enjoyed Vlach privileges, in return for military

obligations, but "not all Vlach colonists can be called Serbs."<sup>187</sup> We can detect the confusion and the various stages of Vlach acculturation, becoming Slavs (Serbians in this case). An important thing to consider from the "Serbian" Vlachs, as it was for the *armatoles*, is their identity based on the military privileges. Further on Wendy Bracewell explains how some of the colonists clearly retained a separate Roman identity and some were also Catholic, "particularly these Vlach groups who had lived on the border since medieval times." All the sources, including the Ottoman ones, seem to agree and corroborate on this matters.

When travelling through Bosnia in 1530 as an ambassador, Benedict Kuripescic writes about the three nationalities and religions found there, noting that "the second are the *Surffen* (Serbs) who call themselves Vlachs while we (the Turks) call them *Cincari* and *Martoloz*."<sup>188</sup> *Martoloz* here is a Turkish version of the term *armatole* while *Cincari* is the Serbian appellation for Vlachs, especially the urbanized strata. Many *martolosi* were still employed by the Turks, on their border area, and to the north of the Danube alone, in the middle of the sixteenth century there were some 60 of their colonies. Besides maintaining order and peace and defending the frontier, as the *armatoles* did, the *martolosi* under the Turks served also as crewmen in the fleet.<sup>189</sup> This accounts for a little expansion from the original traditional duties.

After the slight change of Ottoman policy towards the Vlachs, mentioned earlier, in the Greek sources (or rather sources coming from Greece by outsiders) at one point the distinction between *armatole* and *klepht* (social rebel) becomes blurry. The proximity of Greece to Turkey and the Vlach aversion to things Greek, inherited from much earlier time,<sup>190</sup> are also factors to consider, because they disparaged the Vlachs. When there was an

independent Bulgarian church, many Vlachs became Bulgarians, as it was in the case during the Asens. The same thing happened under the strong Serbian ruler Stefan Dusan, especially with the Vlachs from Kosovo and Stari Vlah (Old Vlahia in Serbian), and again, after the reestablishment of the Serbian church in 1557, giving to many Vlach refugees an official identity, Serbian in this case. According to the long established pattern between the Latins and Slavs<sup>191</sup> the Latins would become Slavs before anything else.

So long as the Ottomans were organized in such a manner as "to allow Christian groups at the empire's European peripheries to exercise some power at a low local level - namely, at a county and captaincy level - while continuing to be subject to an effective imperial administration" <sup>192</sup> writes Traian Stoianovich, "popular rebellion did not have much chance of success in the Balkans." He mentions further as an example "the Christian *armatole* institution." According to our author, the authority of provincial notability (*ayan*) grew in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, and that of the central government and of the *armatoles* diminished. This new strong provincial notability, exercising their power, deprived factious *armatoles* of their functions, goading many *armatoles* into becoming *klephts*, until some other *ayan* authority (or even the same at times) rewarded them by restoring their functions. The *armatole/klepht* thus became an ambiguous man-by-turns, defender and interpreter of authority and a social rebel.<sup>193</sup>

With the decline of the Ottoman power, the Turks became increasingly suspicious and less trusting of their Christian allies. When the central authority gets weaker, the power of the provinces increases, as mentioned above. At this moment, being mostly of Muslim faith, the Albanians took advantage of the situation and rose to prominence. They also started

plundering the rich Vlach settlements like Moskopole. Left unemployed and feeling betrayed, some *armatoles* turned *klephts*; hence, the ambiguity from this time on of either the term *klepht* or *armatole* and a change of heart towards things Greek.

Faced with this situation, which also included a weaker employer and less demand for an army carrier, the Vlachs start increasingly being more militant for the Christian cause. Since in this area only the Greeks had an independent religious institution, the Christian cause equated the Greek cause. Even the *megaloidea*, the idea of a larger Hellas as a return to greatness and freedom originated with a Vlach, Rigas Velestinos. In his formulated Hellenic (not Greek) commonwealth he found room even for the Turk, not just for the Greek, Vlach, Slav or Albanian but for them all. It is the period when many Vlachs start accepting finally a Greek identity and use their energy for "the Greek cause." Traian Stoianovich presents us with some extra reasons for the Vlach conversion, which I see as rather effects than causes. Why did this not happen earlier? In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, Greek became the principal Balkan language of commerce and culture. By becoming "Greek" one acquired a higher social status. Wealthy people took pride in being called Greek and most of the Orthodox merchants identified themselves as such.<sup>194</sup>

The Macedo-Vlach merchants achieved distinction, according to Traian Stoianovich, after the peace of Passarovitz (1740) and, along with other Greeks, became forwarders in the trading towns situated on the new frontier between the Habsburgs and the Ottoman Empire. As usual the Greek Vlachs entered in these new territories under disguise, as "Greeks." All this, as I already mentioned, is due to the rise of the Christian powers, the West as well as Russia, but also as a result of the diversification of economy, the rise of the middle class (in

the Balkans the Vlachs were the pioneers), the change on the political map and the new demands that followed, a nascent sense of nationalism and other factors. The West itself was building on its own identity and it needed a beginning, an origin and a glorious past to build upon. The places to start with, as it happened already during the Renaissance, were the ancient Greece and Rome. Or Rome was free but Greece was not; the Turk resided and ruled in there. Only in this perspective we can understand the help and the support from the western powers given to Greece and the philhellenic movement (Lord Byron included), and the status of Greece (and things Greek) rising to prominence. The Vlach were relegated to the historical shadows, though they were active participants in the war that would eventually liberate Greece, with Vlach fighting on the Austrian and Ottoman frontiers, fighting Ali Pasha of Ioannina. The Vlachs were clearly versed in warfare and active participants in the events that would shape the history of Greece and neighboring countries, and these facts are only now finally being partially recognized or acknowledged.<sup>195</sup> A small passage from Henry N. Brailsford sums it all up. "Sixty young men from a group of Vlach villages near Monastir actually joined the bands. Others from Florina and Monastir swelled their ranks, and while the Greek officers in Athens were offering their swords to the Sultan, these lads were marching against the Turks to the rhythm of a Greek war-song."<sup>196</sup>

### **KLEISOURAI: GUARDING THE MOUNTAIN PASSES**

Besides the *armatol* institution there are some other military traces, which relate to the Vlachs. *Kleisurai* were key frontier districts covering principal invasion routes, being located alongside the Byzantine frontier and commanded by *kleisuriarchs*, which were not included in the theme-system. They literally mean mountain passes and refer to particular

frontier districts where the roads by which the invaders might advance had to be protected and barred.<sup>197</sup> This institution—as well as the *akritai*, "frontier defenders" (the equivalent of Roman *limitanei*) or margraves, which were subordinated to the *kleisurai*—was created in order to limit the damage caused by Slavic and Arabic raiders.<sup>198</sup> The *akritai* were characterized by their love of freedom and independence, we are told. They carried on perpetual petty warfare on the frontier.<sup>199</sup>

The control and defense of the mountain passes seem to be something of a Vlach specialty. Anna Comnena tells us about her father's orders that the Haemus passes should be tightly guarded, being known by the local inhabitants as *kleisourai*.<sup>200</sup> Another incident in which Anna Comnena mentions the Vlachs is when a certain Pudilus informed the emperor Alexius in 1094 that the Cumans were about to cross the Danube but, though the passes across the Balkan mountains were guarded, the Cumans were shown across them by Vlachs. "We seem to see the Vlachs here in their role of mountain guides and keepers of passes"<sup>201</sup> adds Tom J. Winnifrith. In some cases whole villages guarding narrow passes were granted additional immunities, besides total or partial exemption from taxation, at least under the Turkish occupation.<sup>202</sup>

Some very good work has been done recently within the framework of the role of political barriers in the construction of ethnic identities, overlapping with a revision of the concept of linear frontier. Florin Curta, the editor of one such study, suggests that more attention to non-military aspects is clearly required to understand the symbolic aspects of early medieval frontier. "One important factor in the rise of early Byzantine *kleisourai*...was the seasonal and localized character of military confrontations, which shifted the emphases

from large fortifications to small, key regions, such as mountain passes, with only a limited degree of fortifications."<sup>203</sup> We learn, from the Chronicle of Michael the Syrian, that "Heraclius ordered one of his generals to defend a place in Cilicia called Calisura against any Arab attempts to move beyond that point. Calisura is not the name of any particular town or fortress, for in Greek *kleisoura* describes in fact a small, sometimes fortified boundary district. In Byzantium, a *kleisoura* was nothing new. *Kleisourai* had been in existence long before the 600s."<sup>204</sup> Calisura was identified with the Cilician Gates and in this case the application of Vlach technique is extended (via Byzantine army) all the way to the Taurus Mountains.

#### **TOPONOMY: VLACH TRACES**

So important for Vlach survival and defense, the *kleisoura* left quite a mark in toponymy. The term was given by the Vlachs to the rest of the Balkan peoples and in the southern Slavic languages it means now gorge or canyon (from closing, narrowing, like a mountain pass). Klisura is a small town in central Bulgaria near Plovdiv. There is another town Klisura in western Bulgaria near Samokov. Also in Western Bulgaria, in Stara Planina, there is a Klisura monastery built during the reign of the Vlach Assens in 1240. In the Pirin Mountains we have a Vlahinska river (tributary to Struma) and a Momina Klisura pass. In Bosnia there is a mountain named Klisura, a Mala (Little) Klisura and a Veliki (High or Large) Klisura. In Serbia there are many klisuras like Grdelicka Klisura, Rugovska Klisura (near Pech), Jelasnicka Klisura (near Nish), Sicevacka Klisura (with a monastery), Kacanicka Klisura, guarding the pass through Macedonia. Another Klisura exists in Epirus and several others in Macedonia and Greece. Klisura was the oldest village in the municipality of *Demir*

Kapija in Macedonia, almost totally abandoned today, and there is a Klisura in the vicinity of Monastir. Near Koritza in Greece there is Klisura pass, a Klisura on mount Zygos and there is even a village Vlacho-Klisura.

There is a great (but sad) example of the relationships between the mountain pass, fighting, and the Vlachs in the story of the Uskoks of the sixteenth century. The Uskoks were originally mostly Vlachs (later on, in Senj joined by Slavs and other, including even Englishmen) who "jumped"<sup>205</sup> from Ottoman dominated territories into Venetian and Austrian lands. They were refugees who fled before the Turks and "formed a strange domestic army, consisting of men, women, and children, that fought many effective rearguard actions over a period of many years. Finally they halted at the pass over the Dalmatian mountains, behind the great port of Split, and for five years from 1532 they held back the Turks single-handed. Then suddenly they were told by their Christian neighbors to abandon the position. Venice, which had just signed a pact with Turkey... convinced Austria that it would be wise to let Turkey have the pass as a measure of appeasement."<sup>206</sup>

The Uskoks came down to the coast, settling in a little town called Senj, "and performed a remarkable feat. Up till then they had displayed courage and resolution of an unusual order. But now they showed signs of genius," continues Rebecca West. In a very short time, the inland Vlachs, hardly two thousand souls, joined now by some outsiders, became a naval power. They developed a naval strategy of using the weather as a shield against their enemies, and using their much smaller vessels to pursue and sink larger enemy ships with remarkable success. Given the weakness of Venice who stopped attacking the Turks, the Uskoks saw themselves as betrayed. Harassing the Turks, who initially drove

these Uskoks away, for nearly thirty years they attacked not only Turkish ships but in these circumstances the Uskoks had to defy all powers. Seeing no solution and not being able to return inland, they became pirates.<sup>207</sup>

Frontier fighting and the defense of mountain passes are common traditions even for "the northern Vlachs." The Galician Vlachs (or the Vlachs of old Rus) include the Brodnici<sup>208</sup> and the Bolohoveni.<sup>209</sup> The *Blakuman* murdered a young Viking traveler Rothfos on the border between Galicia and Moldavia.<sup>210</sup> The Brodnici or "the Valach shepherds"<sup>211</sup> are situated at the frontier with Galicia. They are mentioned again by Nicetas Choniates in 1164 when they took Andronic Comnenus as hostage. Andronic, the nephew of the emperor Manuel Comnenus, escaped from prison but running towards Galicia (western Ukraine), "was caught at the borders of this country by the Vlachs."<sup>212</sup>

## **TRANSYLVANIA AND HUNGARY**

In Transylvania, the Romanians preserved the memory of older native institutions, notably their military institution and the political rights these enjoyed, that were later curbed by the Hungarian crown as the indigenous army class was replaced by hereditary nobles. The abolition of the legions, which fought under Mathias Corvinus, however, eventually brought about the disintegration of the Hungarian power after his death with the military disaster of the Battle of Mohach in 1526 resulted in these territories being conquered by the Ottomans and the region being integrated into the empire as provinces in 1541.<sup>213</sup>

To maintain their independence and sometimes their very existence from the established central powers dominant at the time (Byzantium or Hungary for example), the

Vlachs often shared spaces and experiences with newcomers in the area, as potential partners and allies in the balance of power. The symbiosis with the Slavs is treated in the last chapter. The Brodnici fought with the Tartars (as allies) at Kalka. Vlachs fought with the Ottomans in the Balkans, as well as with the Bulgarians, Cumans and Pechenegs on both sides of the Danube. In southern Transylvania for example there are areas where the Pechenegs were mentioned as cohabiting with the Vlachs, as in a document from 1224, where we find "silva Blacorum et Bissenorum" (the "forest" of Vlachs and Pechenegs). Both populations were involved in the border defense on the southern Carpathian Mountains.<sup>214</sup> First documented military function of these two people dates from 1250, when the *comite* Joachim of Sibiu had an army structured on distinct criteria, composed of Transylvanian Saxons, Siculi, Vlachs, and Pechenegs. What researchers fail to articulate is that almost all the areas mentioned early with a Vlach presence are situated around mountain passes. Alexandru Madgearu and other writers follow the Transylvanian "defense line" as a continuum (straight line), noticing islands of vestiges in toponymy, islands which actually, at a closer examination, coincide with the area of mountain passes. This does not necessarily mean that the Vlachs inhabited only these areas. There was always some action and other parties were involved but the Vlachs kept no historical records. When they appear in the historical records they are usually situated in the background, rarely the direct subject of attention, save when criticized.

After the invaders were "tamed," like the Pechenegs, most of them were settled (from Poland to Austria) and some of them were employed to defend the borders, the job traditionally performed by the Vlachs. The doubling up could very much be a Hungarian royal technique of better control with competition over the quite unruly Vlach subjects, an understandable policy when considering the multiethnic character of their kingdom. The case

with the Siculi,<sup>215</sup> on the southeastern Carpathian slopes in Transylvania, is very similar. As Pal Hunfalvy posed the issue a while back, the origin of the Siculi should be seen in relationship to the defense of the Hungarian kingdom. The Siculi are not found first in Transylvania, but throughout the country, wherever there were cities or fortifications to be protected or employed by the king. It looks more like a specialized profession rather than a tribe apart.<sup>216</sup> Later on the Siculi are established amongst the Vlachs in the mountains to protect part of the eastern Transylvanian frontier. The sources are unanimous in recognizing the fact that with the Tatar invasion for example, the Vlachs were the people who blocked the access through the mountain passes, together with the Siculi and (or) the Transylvanian Saxons. Simon Kezai, around 1283 mentions that the Siculi were "*cum Blackis in montibus confine sortem habuerunt*" or "with the Vlachs in the mountains, where they live amongst them"<sup>217</sup> and, with the Saxons, together they manned the fortifications at the passes (here *indaginibus*). In Chronicon Bertini of 1285 the Vlachs and the Siculi, who inhabited the "Zipheos" mountains and even "the Hungarian forests" (*silvas*), closed the passes so the Tatars could not get through.<sup>218</sup> Martino Sanudo at the beginning of the fourteenth century mentions again that the inhabitants of forested areas (*sylvas*), the Vlachs and the Siculi, closed the passes ("*passus clauserunt*," similar to *clausura*, *clisura* of the southern Vlachs and derived from the same root). In this particular case of closing the passes, it is done of their own initiative (the Vlachs and the Siculi) since the (Hungarian) king, fearing for his life, fled the country.<sup>219</sup> In a letter of a certain Benedek (of Esztergom) from 1285, we are told about a great Tatar invasion which reached Pest(a) but, when challenged, the Tatars took on flight until they got to Transylvania. There the Siculi, the Vlachs and the Saxons closed all the through roads, all the passes.<sup>220</sup>

Various terms designate or refer to the frontier system as well as the mountain passes: *passus* and *indaginibus* in Latin documents, *gyepu* in Hungarian and even the Slavonic *prisaca*. The *gyepu* system is similar in some ways to the Byzantine *kleisoura* (the Vlach *clisura*)<sup>221</sup> and *akritai*, and some of its features remind one of the *armatols*. Like the Byzantine institutions, the Hungarians employed the local Vlachs who knew the area well and were trusted with securing the mountain passes. The Hungarian view on this matter is that the Vlachs combined soldiering and sheepherding, and in time became a closed caste of professional soldiers. This constituted an elite from which the Vlach border guard units were "settled" on the frontier, somewhere between 1150 and 1200, or so the official Hungarian version tells us.

In a recent book, the Hungarian historian Ambrus Miskolczy narrates about the early Romanian privileges of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as being part of the so called "king's people." Though not enjoying an abundance of privileges, at least their rights were recognized. "Their major task was the defense of the state's borders," adding that in various regions (Fagaras, Hateg, southern Hungary and lower Danube, upper reaches of Tisa River, in Maramures) "and around the borders of the country, sources show the existence of Romanian territorial-administrative autonomy."<sup>222</sup> Ambrus Miskolczy actually reaffirms Nicolae Densusianu's older thesis, stating that "Up to the mid-sixteenth century (actually by 1526, with the defeat at Mohach inflicted by the Turks), we know of two dozen Romanian-populated districts that took on important roles in the military defense of the country."

The British historian Carlile A. Macartney states: "the Magyars did not attempt to occupy the mountains, which were not adapted to their economy. These, and certain marshes,

were deliberately left as uncultivated and impenetrable belt, known as *gyepu*, the passages across which were watched by permanent guards."<sup>223</sup> Steppe people and newcomers in the area, the mountains were not a Magyar specialty, so they had to learn about their defense from others who knew more and had the experience, the knowledge and skills to do it. We might just have an idea who these people were. No one mentions how these shepherds became professional fighters<sup>224</sup> and frontier specialists and questions remained as to who taught them, where, why and when? As for the Vlach settlement of the mountains, there are no clear historical documents indicate that either, unlike the clear history of the settling of the Siculi, the Teutonic Knights or the Saxons. The Vlach presence is simply mentioned, being already there as part of the landscape, usually when other parties are involved, and not granting them privileges but having them taken away. Their lands are given to the Saxons, to the monasteries, to the knight orders, etc. Obviously a policy of diversification and weakening of a military monopoly, which makes sense from a central authority perspective, making things and subjects much easier to govern. As a consequence of this policy many Vlachs crossed the mountains into the future Moldavian and Wallachian principalities, phenomenon, which in the oral tradition is referred to as "dismounting," but from this point on the topics belong to Romanian history.

On the data we have on the early Transylvanian Vlachs and the *Brodnici*, we can definitely affirm that their dispersal patterns, the shepherding-professional fighting combination, and the border specialty, match identically to the ones of their southern brothers, the Byzantine Vlachs, providing an explanation for their professionalism and the long military tradition. In the long tension between continuity and change, it seems that the only changes were the masters (central powers) and the circumstances in which the power

was achieved. Besides accounting for some local colour and flavour according to specific regions, the pattern of Vlach lifestyle and adaptation remained fairly constant. Besides the *armatols* and official and semi-official fighters, which could be understood as employed by the imperial powers or by various states, making them "legitimate," there has also been a tradition of guerilla fighting in southeastern Europe, known under various terms, from bandits, robbers, brigands and outlaws, to *hajduks* the specific historical term for the area.<sup>225</sup>

It seems that after the fall out of favor experienced by the old men of arms, the *armatols*, they kept doing what they were doing before (fighting to keep their freedom and for justice) but without the official blessing or approval, of course, becoming "outlaws." Brigandage is a universal phenomenon but under this umbrella in the Balkans, since the masters were either foreign or did not represent and respect the rights of their subjects, the ones that loved justice and put a high price on freedom had to handle this matters on their own. This trend is parallel to Vlach history, perpetuating, mostly by themselves, an ideal and an ancient tradition of fighting and living without a master.

The other nations of the area had their "golden age" of expansion and sovereignty, the Bulgarians and the Serbs being the most notorious examples, but fell again into servitude after the Turkish conquest. It is exactly this period, which coincides with the development and history of the *hajduks*. To a certain extent the Albanians present certain similarities with the Vlachs as in sharing the same type of habitat (mountains) or some cultural traits (love of freedom, fighting spirit, etc.), but the Albanian case is quite restricted, not only in geography, but also in intensity, level of organization, or across history. Even in Albania though, the Arianiti clan of "obscure" or "dubious origin," possible Vlach,<sup>226</sup> especially through George

Arianites (whose daughter Donica married Skanderbeg), rose in rebellion against the Turks before Skanderbeg did and who at this time, in 1431, was still serving in the Turkish army.<sup>227</sup>

## **HAJDUKS**

The term *hajduk* is supposed to be of either Hungarian or Turkish origin, meaning cattle driver, if Hungarian (from *hajto*), or irregular soldier, if Turkish (from *hajdud*). Both characteristics point to the main Vlach occupations, which, according to the circumstances, could easily swing from one polarity to another. It is quite possible that, with the disturbance created by the Turkish invasion, more pastoralists turned into irregular soldiers, the event being trapped in the coinage of the term and the rise of its role and importance. Gaining momentum, it developed into a common Balkan feature, as when the soldiers were in less demand, the *pecalba* institution achieved a universal status, from originally a Vlach custom. Eric Hobsbawm was so impressed by the *hajduks* that, in his book, *Bandits*, he describes them as representing "the most institutionalized and conscious form of social banditry."<sup>228</sup>

## **CULTURE AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION**

When describing the Morlacchi (Black Vlachs or *NigriLatini*) and their customs, more than two centuries ago, the Italian abbot-naturalist Alberto Fortis includes an account of these *hajduks*. In an excellent and objective survey, Wendy Bracewell summarizes the "ambiguous and contradictory" interpretation of the *hajduk*, from a romantic hero to a common outlaw.<sup>229</sup> The emphasis is on the political implications and consequences, the manipulation of myth and symbols which express "something of shared culture or tradition while being at the same time constantly reinvented for individual purposes." Bracewell

concludes that neither the popular tradition nor the political discourse (drown upon it) are single, coherent, and (or) unambiguous. But this statement tells us plenty.

In the explanation of the concept W. C. Bracewell shows that besides all sorts of people outside the law, banditry included institutionalized practices of livestock raiding in pastoral societies, the irregular warfare of imperial frontier, the depredations of private retainers of local strongmen, or the actions of nationalist militias supported, openly or not, by states. These aspects encapsulate the *hajduk* definition in general and, indirectly, point again to the Vlachs. Whether in Greece, Macedonia, Bosnia, Serbia, Romania or Bulgaria, the *hajduk* legacy became part of the narrative representing the national historiography, it had the role of raising the consciousness, it was the keeper of "the true, unspoiled identity," set the stage for "national liberation" or was even state-builder (Bulgarian and Serbian case). If there was a negative aspect, it was blamed on foreign nationals, of course (Vlachs or Albanians usually)<sup>230</sup> or on the decadent legacy of Ottoman misrule.

The shared heritage of the *hajduk* history led to controversies, since they became "national heroes" or were subjects of epic songs, over which the peoples and nations of southeastern Europe competed to claim as "their" hero. Was Baba or Starina ("the Old") Novak a Serb, a Bulgarian, an Albanian or a Vlach hero? Serbs, Bulgarians and Macedonians all claim Krali Marko (not just a *hajduk*) as their own. The geographical scene of the legendary cycle of Novak is laid in the mountains of Romanja Planina in Bosnia, an old Vlach stronghold with a strong toponymic remainder.<sup>231</sup> The case of Marko Bozzaris is another (and more recent) example. He was an important leader in the Greek struggle for

freedom, is a national hero of the Greeks, claimed also by the Bulgarians and Albanians, though it is known that his parents spoke the Vlach language.<sup>232</sup>

In Wendy C. Bracewell's summary, which deals only with authors touching on "Yugoslavian" topics, we trace the building up of our Vlach case. Jovan Cvijic is mentioned with his theory of "Dinaric patriarchal culture" (read mountains and *hajduks*), the *hajduks* being "the quintessential representatives of the Serb state -building tradition, with their military virtues, their heroism, and their ardent sense of national mission."<sup>233</sup> Jovan Cvijic associated the *hajduks* with the Serbian culture in a very subtle way, without really equating the two, but leaving the impression that they coincide. We owe to Jovan Cvijic another concept, that of metanastic movement (not mentioned by Wendy C. Bracewell) which helps to understand better Vlach mobility.

Vladimir Dvornikovic uses the *hajduk* as a symbol of Yugoslav integration but "he stresses the role of Vlachs and Albanians in *hajduk* bands," balancing their influence with the Kosovo Serbian tradition and the example of the medieval Croatian bans. Other ideologists like Ivo Pilar accepted the Dinaric theory but saw nothing positive in it. For him, the Serbian national character, which "derived from Vlach pastoralism," preserved "the nomadic and bandit-like character of mountain pastoralists," a trait foreign to the Croats, the ethnic group to which Ivo Pilar (conveniently) belonged.

Dinko Tomasic, another Croatian theorist, in dealing with the character of Serbian and Croatian cultures contrasts the peasant Zadruga culture of the valleys and the plains (encompassing mostly Croatia...) characterized as peaceful and idyllic, "spread by soil cultivators throughout Eastern Europe"<sup>234</sup> and the Dinaric culture, "fundamentally identical

with the culture and social organization of the Ural-Altai sheep raisers and horse breeders," as the two main types of people that "invaded" Eastern Europe (in former times). Lowlanders are peaceful agriculturalists as opposed to martial highlanders typified by a pastoral and inherently violent way of life celebrating the *hajduk*. More than two thirds of Dinko Tomasic's book deals with the Dinaric society and he considers "power seeking" as the main characteristic of that type of society. The Dinaric temper, according to our author, made professional banditry and guerilla activities flourish until the present time. Dinko Tomasic quotes Antun Radic, "a well known Croatian ethnologist," telling us that there was a characteristic restlessness among the Orthodox people of Herzegovina (known for its old Vlach presence), which made most men eager to fight whenever the occasion arose. Local informants claimed that, if they were to have a choice, would prefer going to battle than to a wedding.<sup>235</sup> Dinko Tomasic also quotes Jovan Cvijic who asserts that the Dinaric people make war "simply for the joy of fighting," while the shepherd in Montenegro does not care to raise sheep, but would rather wait for a border war.

With or without knowledge of other writers (besides the Balkan historians) who speculate on this topic,<sup>236</sup> Tomasic suggests an Asiatic origin to the Dinaric type, explicitly foreign and barbarian, within his political discourse. There are other specialists who tackle this problem from other angles and disciplines. Tom J. Winniffrith argues for the Pecheneg origins of the Meglen branch of Vlachs (a partial mixture is probable and possible, with a parallel in the Transylvanian case, already dealt with). Another important theorist on this topic is Albert B. Lord, though indirectly, since his work deals with oral tradition and folkloric motifs,<sup>237</sup> comparing central and western Asiatic epic with the Balkan epic, the horse theme, etc., with no direct mentioning of the Vlachs. It is the Dinaric culture mostly

that carries the *hajduk* folklore or the warlike tradition, as in the Kosovo cycle, as well as the heroic epic, of which the theme of Marko is the most elaborate and famous. They are all dealt with under the heading of south Slavic epic, considered by Albert B. Lord of being Slavic, obviously. If Dinaric features equate non-Slavic, as the Croatian school of thought and other individuals argue, the only Slavic component there being the language they are now being rendered into, we have some serious problems, which are not just of the classificatory order. It is in the same time a remainder of what happens when disciplines do not work together and in the Balkan context there is yet much to be desired.<sup>238</sup> The Dinaric features are, on one hand, non-Slavic; on the other hand they are not Ural- Altaic either.

The so-called Dinaric folkloric motifs, along with the symbols and values, which accompany them, predate the Asiatic presence in the Balkans and have a unique local flavor. On the martial qualities<sup>239</sup> of the substratum (Geto-Dacians and Thracians in general) we have the testimony of the ancient writers, a topic we already touched upon. There is also a possibility of two different traditions, with different origins, the result of similar habitat and lifestyle. In that case we could have reinforcement or refreshing of an already present theme, or simply another parallel tradition, with the coming in the area of these Turk (Ural- Altaic) people and their customs. The Bulgarians, as the first Ural- Altaic people which had a real impact in the area, together with the Slavs, whose masters they were, as a rule preferred the plains. Of course, there is no inherent reason why pastoralist cultures or traditions have to be of Asiatic and I argue that rather than looking for an imported culture, it is best to examine the populations that inhabited an area prior to the "new" (and the "newer") arrival(s).<sup>240</sup> It is customary that not much credit has been given to local things in the Balkans. Though defining the area in more positive terms than usually, even the most recent book on the

Balkans, published by Oxford University Press sees it as "a borderland," which it is, where great civilizations overlapped, with Balkan history being "a history of creative borrowing by local people of the various civilizations that have nominally conquered the region."<sup>241</sup> "Creative borrowing" and nothing original...

Within the Croatian (sociological) school and its take on our topic, there is one more author that has to be dealt with, especially since his doctoral thesis was specifically on Vlachs, as "A Submerged Nation Throughout the Millennia."<sup>242</sup> Immense material and sources not available in English or other "major" languages, added to a great effort to construct a typology, which, by the way, it could stand for "the (traditional) mountain type." In spite of its conclusion, not specifically stated, that the Vlachs are power seekers and treacherous (note "the Croatian twist"), responsible for most of the Balkan evil, especially within the former Yugoslavia (his area of study), the book has many merits and is quite unique in the Vlach literature. It deals with the strategies of survival, emphasizes the martial tradition and spirit and, though "submerged," continued through "millennia." Vatro Murvar points out that they are a remnant of a large Balkan Vlach population in the previous centuries and, more importantly, "their historical heritage in the Balkans is much more significant than their numerical strength,"<sup>243</sup> a statement which not many researchers verified or followed up, in spite of the random quotes found here and there from his work. The idea of submergence is intriguing. Murvar, trying to reconstruct a "typology," recognizes in the Vlachs permanence, a survival and a continuity of some definite traits throughout the history of the Balkans.

The Vlachs remind one of these ingenious pictures in which an animal or a human face is concealed so as not to be obvious on first inspection, though when once seen it appears to be the principal feature of the drawing, states Charles Eliot. "In the same way, one may live and travel in the Balkan lands without seeing or hearing anything of the Vlachs, until one's eyes are opened. Then one runs the risk of going to the opposite extreme."<sup>244</sup> The original idea of Irina Nicolau, calling the Vlachs "the Chameleons of the Balkans," was already mentioned. Other writers also admit of it.<sup>245</sup> The historical sources were either totally silent at times or erupted with information (mostly tangential) at other times. This submergence or slipping through (official) history, through the cracks, is one of the most fascinating features of Vlach history.

There is another feature attributed to the Vlachs by some historians, old and new, from Byzantine authorities (see Kekaumenos for example) to representatives of the present Croatian political discourse against the Serbs: treachery. I have to remind the reader again to consider the political, religious and ideological factors and circumstances and put them in historical perspective. The Croatian political discourse (Croatia belonged formerly to the Hungarian crown) is similar in principle with (or could even be considered an extension of) the Hungarian discourse on Vlach matters (the Hungarians being especially concerned with the Transylvanian issue). Here we actually have the two major medieval power centers in the area, Byzantium and Hungary, replaced latter by the Ottomans and the Habsburgs, which, on these buffers or frontier territories, used the Vlachs in the most dangerous locales as a human shield. "Apart from the big set-piece campaigns, the military struggle between Ottoman and Habsburg on this border consisted mainly, year in, year out, of Vlachs fighting Vlachs," writes Noel Malcolm.<sup>246</sup> Every time a certain Vlach group attempted to negotiate a deal or a

damaging situation for itself, it was "treacherous" in the employer's perspective. For several centuries, until religion and especially nationalism became prominent, the Ottomans, who had neither territorial, nor ideological issues with the Vlachs, could put them to the service of their imperial aims.

The Serbians for the most part adopted the Vlach history as their own, the job being done more or less explicitly, and are quite proud of it. Dusan Popovic, a Serbian academician, considers them sober and thrifty, to the level of religiosity, very tenacious and conservative, "almost genial, not only when it comes to commerce but in other areas as well."<sup>247</sup> Dusan Popovic emphasizes the role of the Vlachs as Balkan merchants, disguised as Greeks, in the formation of Balkan middle class, and their great philanthropic contribution.<sup>248</sup> Traian Stoianovich, in a very scholarly essay, when dealing with the "Greekness" of the Vlachs, traces this development from their commercial carriers as muleteers.<sup>249</sup> Here is another trade, which the Vlachs monopolized and, actually, the very first mention on record of their language, whether a command or an advice (the issue is not settled yet), is about the service done by muleteers in the Byzantine army.<sup>250</sup>

Muleteering and later commerce are other good examples of successful application of Vlach style transhumance pattern (including the spatial distribution), and when people are in movement, so do ideas. The role of the Vlachs in this respect has not even been acknowledged, either for the Balkans as a cultural area, or for the survival and homogeneity of Vlach culture. There was no modern Vlach consciousness to be awakened. They already had a very old identity.<sup>251</sup>

The current freedom and independence of every Balkan nation owes a great deal to the Vlachs. In Greece, Serbia and Macedonia (as in Bosnia earlier or in Bulgaria earlier yet), the Vlachs carried the brunt of fighting and losses in human life. It was done openly or more often disguised, usually identifying with the local cause. They were the backbone of "national" resistance and, when convenient, of national identity. The Serbs appropriated the Vlach culture and tradition so much that, in one of the most recent books on this topic, the Habsburg document from 1630 entitled *Statuta Valachorum* is presented as Serbian.<sup>252</sup>

### **WILDERNESS, ANTIQUITY AND THE NATION**

To conclude the discussion about the *hajduks* (as well as the topic of the military tradition), I will be using another recent work, a very good and critical account of the topic, the essay "Bold and Pure Highlanders. Mountains and National Imagination in the Balkans,"<sup>253</sup> written by Ulf Brunnbauer. There is a great body of literature on the *hajduks* in Bulgaria (where they are called *haiduti*), but this is the most recent and probably one of the best of its kind. It could also help smooth the transition and change of focus from the military tradition to the mountains and their role. The author acknowledges that we encounter a Balkan phenomenon but he is only dealing with the Bulgarian case. The Balkan Mountains were rather inaccessible, he explains, providing obvious hideout and retreat for "people loath to have contact with representatives of the state." Ulf Brunnbauer's original interest was in the role the mountains play as a site of memory in the national ideologies. He focuses on the metaphorical significance of mountains as a cultural landscape that came to represent specific features of the nation, supplying national ideology with these features and a primordial nature. Nations, by association, became represented by the "unspoiled

wilderness” of the idealized and ahistorical mountains. In the Bulgarian case, Ulf Brunnbauer explains, the mountains as symbols of the nation play a particular role in national mythology as sanctuaries for liberation fighters and as the environment that formed them and safeguarded ethnic identity.

It is not only the unspoiled wilderness (the “inaccessible mountains”) that was appropriated by the Balkan nations but also the unspoiled antiquity. For the Western Europeans during Enlightenment, the Morlaks, a Vlach branch that was introduced already, were the “noble savages” (Dalmatia lies in proximity of Venice, where Alberto Fortis and others published materials on Vlachs) and the unspoiled, original “Slavs.”<sup>254</sup> Fortunately in this case we know that these Morlaks, by the time when Alberto Fortis did “fieldwork” amongst them, still preserved their Vlach identity and habits, in spite of adopting the Slavic tongue.<sup>255</sup> Even the scholar like Larry Wolff, nonetheless studies them as Slavs.

With the exception of the Morlak case, we are not that lucky when it comes to written evidence. The Sarakatsans (or Karakatchans, as they are called in Bulgaria) are another population possibly descended from the Vlachs, having assimilated to the Greek language, settling in the summer pastures in Zagori, more fertile and accessible than these in Pindus, and occupying more favorable winter pastures, being able to compete successfully for winter grazing from the Orthodox monasteries simply because they were “Greek.”<sup>256</sup> There is a principle, which I would argue reveals a comparable desire of the Sarakatsans to claim a unique origin, which is an old Vlach trait: boasting of famous origins and considering themselves superior to the people of the plains. “They (the Vlachs) live apart,” wrote Henry Brailsford, “upheld by some tradition of an ancient superiority which

teaches them to despise the newer races.”<sup>257</sup> If the Vlachs consider themselves classical Romans, the Sarakatsans reply that they are Homeric Greeks. In response to this, the Greek officials are happy to assert that the Sarakatsans probably inhabited Zagori since classical times.<sup>258</sup> The Sarakatsans nonetheless share many other characteristics with the Vlachs, including dress, and there is no Sarakatsan tradition that can be pushed farther than mid 1700s. The eighteenth century coincides with the decline of *armatolism* (a period of crisis for the Vlach) and this would have been a propitious time for the Vlach to claim a Greek identity as the Vlach merchant class did elsewhere.

Stephanie Schwandner-Sieversexplores the act of shifting identity, similar to the postulated Sarakatsan example, as a means of gaining access to scarce social, political, cultural and economic resources among contemporary Albanian Vlachs.<sup>259</sup> The flexibility of identities makes people stronger, the author suggests, as an efficient and profitable strategy of adjustment to different circumstances. Some “Albanian Aromanians” (the Farsherot Vlachs referred to earlier in the thesis) renounced a local identification in favor of one associated with more powerful states like Romania and Greece; states associated with ideas distant in space and time and therefore mystical and unchallengeable, to benefit from new opportunities.<sup>260</sup> We are given the example of the former Greek conservative party leader Averoff, and “the famous Frasheri brothers, considered to be the most important figures of the Albanian national movement;” they all originate from the same Albanian Vlach village of Frasheri (hence, Farsherot). Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers concludes that spatial mobility turned into social mobility.

Bulgarians and Serbs were shaped by the Vlachs from the early medieval period, but no Balkan nation owes more to them in the modern period than the Greek nation.<sup>261</sup> Official Greek political discourse has nonetheless systematically denied or downplayed anything that would sustain the idea of the Vlachs being anything but Greeks that speak Latin. Asterios Koukoudis however has provided new academic research focusing on the center-diaspora relationship, movement patterns and life style for the early modern period at least, as pertaining to the Vlachs in Greece.<sup>262</sup> Greek national discourse seeks to demonstrate that the Greeks were the first of the Balkan peoples to develop a fully articulated national movement and achieve complete independence from the Ottomans. What this discourse fails to acknowledge, as discussed, is the role the Vlachs especially played in it. The Vlachs become “brigands with a cause” as is evident in the writings of historian John Koliopoulos.

Since these “brigands” are used as veritable national heroes, a historical explanation had to be presented for justification. A “typical bandit” is described by John Koliopoulos as “a young mountaineer... more often than not, a migratory shepherd.”<sup>263</sup> The best known were those that tried to conduct themselves according to established customs and the rules and regulations of traditional local outlawry, and were often conscious of their special identity. Banditry, like the stealing of sheep, he continues, was not even an extraordinary venture but almost an unavoidable practice: “they took to robbery as they did to sheep-herding—they were born into it.” According to John Koliopoulos, continental Greece is an arbitrary regional term (neither political nor an administrative delimitation) for a piece of land to the north of the Gulf of Corinth and to the south of a linguistic and cultural frontier, which run through southern Albania in the west and southern Macedonia in the east. The author is not stating it but this area is Vlach traditional territory.<sup>264</sup> What he is constrained to admit is that

this strip of land (his “continental Greece”) produced “a class of men of arms, a fairly distinct military class, which was destined to play a very important role in the war of the 1820s, as well as in subsequent military events and political developments.”<sup>265</sup> I propose that this “class of men of arms,” the “fairly distinct military class” was made up almost exclusively by the Vlachs. The old *armatol* system is treated by the author quite casually as an institution.<sup>266</sup> When it comes to history it is not a surprise that the Vlachs rarely get any credit at all. Even a great historian of the Balkans like Robert W. Seton-Watson, when he deals with the creation of the Austrian Military Frontier against Turkey, a "territory organized on a special military tenure," there is no mention of the Vlachs but we find out instead that it "gave rise to a race of hereditary fighters of Serb and Croat race."<sup>267</sup>

In 1903, in Macedonia (the area where the Vlachs are first mentioned in history), in a town with a considerable Vlach population, there was an insurrection and a republic was declared, the so-called Republic of Krusevo. It only lasted twelve days and it is known as the Ilinden Uprising, aiming for a Macedonian commonwealth free from the Ottoman Empire. There is a monument called the Bear's Stone which commemorates the place where the leader, Pitu Guli (a Vlach) and his brave band fell, defending the new republic. It is an epilogue of some sort of the Vlach long military tradition.

When it comes to cultural fossils I think it would be important to stress that in Romanian language (as a vestige from the formative period) for example, the term *batran* (elder, old; both as noun and adjective) is derived from the Latin *veteranus* (military veteran), becoming *beteranus*, *batran*. This linguistic document is another piece of evidence,

which corroborates with the data presented and further affirms the military history and identity of the Vlachs.

## **UMMARY**

Using the theoretical framework of Anthony Smith in regards to the creation and maintenance of an *ethnie*, I explained in this chapter the circumstances in which the Vlach ethnic core likely came into being, together with the origin and perpetuation (under several diverse forms) of the institution of *comitatenses*. I consider this Roman military frontier institution to be the main framework on which Vlach society and culture was built, structure that was also responsible for the maintenance of Vlach ethnic boundaries. In the following chapter I will be presenting another major Vlach ethnic marker and a vital element of their ethnic core, namely the cult of the two saints which developed from the traditional local cults' hero, Saint George and Saint Demetrius. The two saints frame the Vlach calendar and represent, through their double function (as patrons of the flocks and military patrons), the fundamental twin traditional occupations: the transhumant pastoralism and the military career. This undertaking is aided by Mircea Eliade's concept of mythical scenario applied to the Vlach ethnic core, where the cult of the saints is regarded as complementary to the *comitatenses*, supporting it ideologically and reflecting it in practice.

## THE MILITARY SAINTS

Another venue of boundary maintenance for the Vlachs, as Anthony Smith would argue, is through the military saints, the topic of this chapter. I will consider the saints' association to the Vlach calendar, the festivals and celebrations as well as their iconic representation. Certain "recorded" historical events (where the saints' presence or interference is of special importance) and some folkloric aspects of the saints (including beliefs and customs) will also be considered. Even though Saint George is known and celebrated throughout the entire Christendom and Saint Demetrius is common to all the Eastern Orthodox (Christian) nations, I will explain how they are specifically Vlach (as compared and contrasted with the Greek and Slavic counterparts) and, at least in Saint Demetrius' case, how his cult originated amongst the Vlachs, being the symbol and embodiment of their most specific ethnic markers.<sup>268</sup>

In a short article entitled "*The Icoana: Holy of Holies in the Vlach Home*" written by Steven Tegu,<sup>269</sup> there is a story pertaining to a Vlach family and of a particular symbol which, considering its importance, could very well stand for (or define) the Vlach culture in general. Steven Tegu, living in U.S.A., brought with him from his native Balkan village a triptych, a triple panel icon, foldable, designed to be carried. In itself the triptych is suggestive of mobility but our major concern here is its most important feature, the iconic representation. The centerpiece has Virgin Mary holding baby Jesus, flanked on the right and left panels by "youthful St. George and St. Demetrius riding ponies and each carrying a lance." In this icon is captured the quintessence of Vlach traditional life style: St George's

day, April 23, marked the date on which, year after year, the Vlachs left the lowlands for their summer villages; St. Demetrius' Day, October 26, is the date marking the return to the lowland. In between these two great feasts which mark the Vlach cycle of life and regulate their activity (as opening and concluding, beginning and ending) and just like in our triptych, there was another important feast, the Assumption of the Virgin Mary ("Greater Marry"), on August 15, when the whole village (or even an entire Vlach area) was gathered, weddings took place and most of the betrothals made. Traditionally this Vlach vacation lasted for about three weeks, until the lesser festival of St. Marry ("Lesser Marry") on September 8.

I would like to make the remark that Steven Tegu's case is not an isolated one or an exception but rather a pattern. St. George is often paired with St. Demetrius on the wings of a triptych or on the outer panels of an iconostasis in churches and monasteries, throughout the Christian Orthodox world in general, but particularly in South Eastern Europe.<sup>270</sup> This custom, art motif and the beliefs associated with it are part of a mentality which characterizes the Balkan cultural area and which needs to be put in its proper context and seen in perspective. Many archaic, religious and cultural motifs were preserved in here and even Christianity did not escape unaltered, developing into a sort of pantheism called by Mircea Eliade "cosmic Christianity."<sup>271</sup> The dualism of the Cathars (Albigenses) that created havoc in Western Europe is a version of Bogumilism that spread from the Balkans. The folklore and the oral tradition definitely helped the preservation of such archaic beliefs, as being closer to or even inheritors of mythic thought, to which they are associated.<sup>272</sup>

In a study entitled *Order and Chaos: Myth and Magic in Traditional Romanian Culture*,<sup>273</sup> the cultural anthropologist Andrei Oisteanu tries to delimit the coordinates of an

archetypal mode of thought and which is very much standard for the entire Balkan cultural area. In this study it is explained how for the mythic mentality the chaos does not disappear during the act of cosmic creation (cosmogeneses), but survives within the cosmic structure itself: disease, death, storm, drought, eclipse, earthquakes, enemy invasions are hypostases of chaos which disturb the cosmic order, claiming its right and primacy. These aspects of chaos are trying to bring the world to the chaotic initial conditions, which existed before creation and the universe (or any micro universe such as the body, the house, and the village) is seen as being in a labile equilibrium, constantly oscillating between the state of chaos and cosmos (order). The human being is not just a passive spectator of this "cosmic spectacle." He/she is a very active participant through mythic-ritualistic means in the regeneration of the used (or tired) cosmos, to reestablish the order, which temporarily, sometimes cyclically, was disturbed.

Octavian Buhociu, an exiled Romanian folklorist, states that Romanian folklore, and in general southeastern European folklore, possesses a type of popular culture of its own, with singular categories and a special content of popular original creation. It is not part of its western European analogue notion of folklore, which had a massive impute from the literate (upper, learned) class. In this respect, the class of *cantece* (*cantul*: the chant; the song) continues an early medieval tradition which Western Europe has not witnessed since the times of the troubadours (minstrels). The ballad for example belongs to the literate class but *cantul* belongs to oral poetry. The oral epic poetry for example has more than 300 different types and together with their variants well exceeds 5000 *cantece*.<sup>274</sup> Octavian Buhociu notices and stresses the pastoral spiritual culture, considering it richer (in content, quality, and themes) and more archaic than its agrarian counterpart.

According to the same Octavian Buhociu, the rites and beliefs of a popular culture are expressed through their calendar and vice versa. "In the orientation of a people in the world, the calendar shows up in the same time with the people itself, without being able to abandon it, developing it constantly... The detachment of the calendar from the popular culture and the societal behavior would lead to an abstract notion, without formative power, leading in the end to a loss of the specific ethnic character (or national), leaving behind its disappearing a desert in the soul."<sup>275</sup> We have to keep in mind, within this context, of the importance of the saints in the Vlach calendar.

I will reiterate here John Nandris and his take on the Balkan cultural heritage, who thinks that "Balkan religion and culture were in part mythological codifications of experience which, without being wholly systematic, were endowed with important non-utilitarian social functions,"<sup>276</sup> and Mircea Eliade's mythical scenario, here applied to the military saints, which conveys a type of ethnic originality, of cultural environment, of history and of social milieu of a particular people, concept I dealt with in the introduction. There is also, on a more abstract level, the correlation between value and sign, and sign and habitus (a particular way of being and/or of "behaving" in the world), where, "reciprocally and simultaneously, the values became embodied through signs, the signs justifying their existence as values."<sup>277</sup> The reciprocity between the Vlach saints and calendar and their history, values, and beliefs becomes now more evident.

Writing on hagiography as a system of meaning, Michel de Certeau quotes Jaques Fontaine as stating "the Life of a Saint is the literary crystallization of the perceptions of a collective conscience."<sup>278</sup> The *Acta* or *Actasanctorum*, as a hagiographical document,

explains Michel de Certeau, and as a "combination of acts, places, and themes indicates a particular structure that refers not just primarily to *whattookplace*, as does history, but to *whatisexemplary*. The *resgestae* provide only its lexicon. Every Life of a Saint must indeed be approached as a system which organizes a manifestation, thanks to a topological combination of *virtues* and *miracles*." <sup>279</sup> On the other hand hagiolatry, or the cult and worship of the saints, is the most important of all the aspects of popular religious life of the Balkan peoples, according to Speros Vryonis Jr. "One should note the following important characteristics of hagiolatry: the worship of the saint is localized and personalized; the local patron saint is the single most important religious figure in the life of the inhabitants of the Balkan village and town during the Ottoman period, as also (of) the Byzantine period. For he, or she, is the most efficacious supernatural force in the life cycle of the Balkan Christians, more powerful than Christ, the Virgin, and God. He is the most important because he is present (*pars pro toto*) in the village or town."<sup>280</sup> "Drastically reduced (in numbers)," the saints also show up in the Vlach tent, as Patrick Leigh Fermor observes.<sup>281</sup>

At this point, some elaboration on the saints is necessary. As I already mentioned, the mounted saints in principle encompass the whole Vlach worldview, serving in the same time as markers of the cosmic and life cycle (beginning and end, life and death, growth and decay), of the seasons, of the calendar (including the liturgical year which unites the cosmic with the human dimension), of economy and business, and of identity. They work as a polarity, complementary rather than opposite. As a matter of fact they are perceived as brothers, twins in some traditions, St. Demetrius being the older brother in other versions. Eternally young, St. George is associated with greenness and fertility,<sup>282</sup> while St. Demetrius,

an old man, sprinkles snow from his beard. A Bulgarian proverb says that St. George brings the summer in and St. Demetrius the winter.

St. George "is celebrated... with many similarities by Greek, Bulgarians and Serbians (as well as by Vlachs and Romanians, not mentioned by the author ), in conjunction with the cycle of pastoralism in a process involving sacrifice and rites that have nothing to do with Christianity but which are the ancient heritage of livestock raising in the Balkans."<sup>283</sup> St. George day in Bulgarian tradition is considered as originating from an ancient pagan holiday connected with the breeding of sheep and goats and their first milking.<sup>284</sup> We find similar beliefs accompanied by still ongoing rituals (including the "first milking") in Romania and amongst the Vlachs. The feast of St. George is the day when most flocks are first driven out to pasture. In a particular sense it is the feast of all shepherds and cowherds, and it is on this day only that the shepherd is allowed to count his flock and assure himself of the exact number of sheep. Emily Gerard holds that it is perhaps the most important day in the Romanian's year. That night is "the great one to beware of witches" who could still the animals' milk or make them foul (sterile), as well as the best one for seeking treasures, for only in this night (according to the legends) all the buried treasures begin to burn or glow, the light they give forth guiding the seeker to their place of concealment.<sup>285</sup>

The day of St. George was the principal festival of the Morlaks who celebrated it with immense bonfires and dancing all night to the sound of the bagpipe.<sup>286</sup> Back to Patrick Leigh Fermor's description of the few saints that made it "into the nomads' huts," he starts with St. George who is "the greatest, as horseman, protector of the flocks and folds and slayer of dragons and other predators." The prominence of horses in the life of the nomads, Patrick L.

Fermor continues, also hoists St. Demetrius and St. Theodore, equestrian both, to a height to which only St. George overtops. "St. George's day is more important even than Easter, the crux of the Orthodox year;... the finest black lamb of the flock—black animals are more highly prized than white—is ritually sacrificed (Easter is only marked by a white). Oaths taken in the name of St. George are the most binding. St. George and St. Demetrius has another claim to fame: their feasts... mark the start of the pastoral summer and winter when the leases for grazing begin and end and the *tsellingas* (chieftain) makes a new pact with his clan. They are days of decision."<sup>287</sup> This is the best description of the saints which would fit the Vlach context that I could find.

There is another feature that I would like to add, in relationship to the saints, besides the pastoral background, which left a mark in folklore, as this Serbian proverb attests: "On St. Demetrius (day) *hajduks* disband, On St. George's (day) *hajduks* together band."<sup>288</sup> Who really are these saints that "the nomads" of the Balkans prefer and put them on horseback? So far there have been several attempts to link St. George to the Thracian Rider's ancient cult. Besides some similarities, both being equestrian saints and both represented in an identical iconographic style, not much else has been elaborated upon. Our two saints on the other hand are considered brothers and are almost identical in very many respects. Besides their functions already described, both are patrons of the army and share the nickname of Victory Bringer, a very important feature for our study. A certain amount of syncretism is possible in order to account for various attributes but there are some definite and strong traits of the Thracian substratum preserved in both saints. In spite of all his popularity, St. George prefers to keep silent about his debt to the Thracian Knight or the Danubian Riders. St. Demetrius on the other hand has quite a story to tell.

A parallel study of the saints with a fresh interpretation might be helpful to a degree but not very feasible here. There are different ways of looking even at our data. One possible explanation for the existence of more background information (historical or otherwise) on St. Demetrius could result from the fact that this particular saint, ending the pastoral summer, accompanies the Vlachs in their "exile," in the plains or on the seashore for the winter, where they live amongst "the other." It is from that "other" (therefore indirectly and distorted) that we get to know anything at all.

### **THE CULT OF THE DANUBIAN RIDERS**

Let us take a quick look now at what we know, when it comes to religious matters in the ancient Balkans that could provide some background to our saints. The cult of the Danubian Knights (or Riders) presents a triad (as in our triptych) with a female divinity (considered the Great Goddess) in the center, flanked by two male figures on horseback (winners always), trampling over the enemy. We also encounter another familiar feature associated with the cult, the ram, which is being sacrificed and consumed. According to the sculptural content we distinguish three types of variations of representation: one knight and the great goddess, the goddess associated with two knights (which is the one I described) and the scene of the sacred banquet offered to the three divinities. The first version seems to be the oldest.

There are about 226 known representations of the Danubian Riders, most of them found in Dacia, Pannonia and the two Moesias, the majority of them being stone tablets or metal (lead) but no text. Teohari Antonescu identifies the cult with that of the Cabiri, J. Hampel with the Dioscuri, Michael Rostovtzeff considers it a syncretism between the cult of

Mithras and the Thracian Rider.<sup>289</sup> In principle it is possible that we can have similar traits shared by various divinities mentioned above. The Dioscuri for example<sup>290</sup> are divine warriors who appear in the midst of battle, bringing miraculous aid, something that both our saints, George and Demetrius do also. On the other hand this feature could be the cultural specific variation (here Dacian or/and Thracian) of the Indo-European theme related to the Divine Twins, present amongst ancient Germans, Greeks, and others.<sup>291</sup>

There is the Thracian Rider, also called the Thracian Knight or the Thracian Horseman, often identified with Asklepios, Apollo, Silvanus, Dionysos or other deities. He bore the epithets of *soter* (savior), *iatros* (healer) or even *megastheos* (great god), the first two being part of St. Demetrius's repertoire as well. The Thracian Rider was modeled on votive relief tablets in shrines and for burial, some 4.000 such tablets being found so far.<sup>292</sup> The horseman-hunter, according to Alexander Fol, is the personified reliance on the omnipotence of the old principal Orphic god, the Son of the Great Mother Goddess. The horse, associated with the life giving sun and its movement across the sky, is a great symbol, a bridge between worlds, and has an old and rich tradition in the Balkan folklore.

Saint Demetrius is a syncretism of not only the warrior on horseback, but unexpectedly even has attributes associated with a mother goddess. Certain attributes of the Great Mother Goddess are preserved in the name and functions of St. Demetrius. Demeter taught humans how to till the ground, is the goddess of fertility, of the harvest, of Mother Earth (Ge Meter: Demeter), not identical to Gaia (also Ge: the Earth), the cosmic earth; she is the nourishing earth.<sup>293</sup> In that last role the nature and the culture cycle started by "green George" closes through "harvest Demeter." In some recent studies strong similarities are

drawn between the Homeric Hymn to Demeter and certain Romanian folk traditions about the Lord's mother found in some legends and ballads.<sup>294</sup> Andrei Timotin considers the motive as belonging to the ancient Balkan strata, definitely pre-Christian. According to Francois Lenormant, Demeter and her daughter, Proserpine, originated in Thrace.<sup>295</sup> Since we still have great feasts (holidays) within the Christian year (feasts which are not that "Christian") and important icons associated with these major festivals, we can safely assume that there is a continuity of some sort.<sup>296</sup> The trio of the Danubian Riders as a parallel to the triptych is one of the most striking features of continuity, a feature not reduced to iconography alone. Some major attributes of the riders now have to be considered.

James River provides one of the best accounts of the Thracian. He considers the Thracian Rider the most famous Thracian deity of the Roman period, depicted on horseback and wearing a short cloak, often facing a tree around which a serpent is coiled (probably a connection to the underworld or afterlife). His Thracian name is unknown and is usually called Heros (in Greek), at times accompanied by a local epithet. Despite the scanty evidence for indigenous traditions we can deduce some regional tendencies even from the relative popularity of various Greco-Roman gods, articulates James River. Particularly striking is the tremendous popularity of the rustic god Silvanus, who is attested in some 450 inscriptions from this region, more than twice the number from the rest of the empire, excluding Italy, put together. James Rives considers Silvanus as the Roman name given to an indigenous deity, the rustic woodland character being an indication of local concern. Diana, another Roman deity with strong connection to woodlands, is widely attested in dedications in the Balkans and constitutes a substantial chapter in the Romanian folk tradition.

In supplying a background for the Balkan rider gods, James Rives points out to the fact that along the Danube, just like along the Rhine and the eastern parts of Syria, the region had one of the largest concentrations of soldiers in the empire. Certain religious tendencies characteristic of the Roman army (initiatory cults) are attested, to which the so-called Danubian Rider Gods cult was similar, and that some system of beliefs presumably underlay this imagery. "Yet the fact that it [a Danubian Rider Gods cult] apparently originated in southern Dacia shortly after the Roman conquest and was almost entirely restricted to the lands around the Danube suggests that in some way reflected regional traditions and concerns."<sup>297</sup> The imagery of this cult typically presents a goddess flanked by two gods on horseback.

The fact that our rider cults came into existence right after the Roman conquest is not arbitrary. The need for hero symbols (and especially within a "heroic" culture) arises when the ego needs strengthening, when the conscious mind needs assistance in some task that it cannot accomplish unaided or without drawing on the sources of strength that lie in the unconscious mind.<sup>298</sup> The Roman conquest must have left a deep scar on the Thracian and Dacian pride (and mind) but they responded quickly. Their (newly embodied) divine aid, the Danubian and Thracian Riders, were always victorious; through them they never really lost.<sup>299</sup>

Antiquity was stirred and altered by another soldier of the Balkans, Alexander the Macedonian. As a result, late antiquity is a period of syncretism and transformations. A similar phenomenon to the Balkan scenario, as a response to the Roman conquest, happened to the Jews, developing rabbinical Judaism and a strand of messianism, first developed

amongst them during the Babylonian exile (as a result of their country being occupied by a foreign power). The conquered downtrodden mixture of peoples of the Roman empire, which at the time seemed doomed and hopeless, welcomed and developed further this idea of salvation, embodied in a variety of forms, from gnosis (for intellectuals) to Jesus, the Messiah whom his own people rejected. In a current study Lee Levine argues that despite the success of Hellenization in Jewish society, the traditional values of Judaism not only survived, but were developed and enhanced, exploring (and focusing on) the impact of architecture and artistic representation.<sup>300</sup> Something very similar must have happened in the Balkans where we actually possess very strong trace of continuity.

### **PAGAN RIDER DEITY TO CHRISTIAN WARRIOR SAINT**

Christopher Walter remarks that St. Demetrius was presented in a fashion to appeal to the populace as the saint appealed to people, "subtly but eloquently, for protection against the conquerors."<sup>301</sup> He is referring here to the attitude of the Slavs towards St. Demetrius, who, they hoped, would bestow on them the same favors as he did on the citizens of Thessalonica. One has to consider here the subjugation of the Balkan peoples by the Ottomans as a background to which Christopher Walter makes his reference. In principle though it catches the quintessence of the cult: protection against conquerors. Christopher Walter quotes an instance (as an anecdote) of a pagan chieftain who was unsuccessful in besieging Thessalonica, but demanded from two maiden captives an embroidered likeness of the saint's image (called in the text "god"), so that "he may venerate him and defeat his enemy."

Archbishop John of Thessalonica who wrote in the seventh century, in his introduction to Miracle no.3 of the collection of *Miracula* (of St. Demetrius) gives the

following account of his attributes: release of prisoners, healing of the sick, help in wars, guiding sailors...healing illness or demoniac possession. The archbishop stresses the saint's role as "an invisible alliance in wars."<sup>302</sup> We have in England an instance of a carving representing St. George trampling an enemy under the hooves of his horse, at Damerham in Hampshire from 1100. From this same period, in England, close to the Welsh border, in the town Clun in the county of Shropshire, there was a church dedicated to St. George; a heavily fortified building that equally served as a defense against marauding Welsh. In this context "the saint emerges as a strongly militaristic saint, invoked in defense of the *English* against a foreign enemy."<sup>303</sup> The attributes of the warrior saints are taken to England via the Venetians and the crusaders (from the Byzantines) and became also quite popular in Russia (from the same source) and remains the patron saint of Moscow.

## **SYNCRETISM AND THE ORIGINS OF ST. DEMETRIUS**

Back within the Byzantine Empire we find the trio of our triptych established already in the epic of Digenis Akritas, roughly translated as the Two-Blood Border Lord, a legendary figure of folklore, developed, as suggested even in the title, in the warlike culture of the military frontier. With the term *akritai* we dealt in the previous chapter. The action in the poem takes place during the second half of the ninth century and the first half of the tenth, in the vicinity of the Taurus Mountains. As expected, the hero was not a normal, regimental officer. He was an unruly and independent border fighter: "a lone wolf, a man who walked by himself."<sup>304</sup> In a poem of over 3700 lines (Digenis Akritas, the Grottaferrata version), our familiar figures are introduced and invoked starting with the 18th line:

Having as help the grace of God,  
God's mother, the indomitable,  
The angels and the archangels, too,  
And the victorious great martyrs,  
Both the all-glorious Theodores,  
The army leader and recruit,  
And noble George of many labours,  
The miracle-working martyr's martyr,  
Sublime Demetrius...<sup>305</sup>

This is the official Byzantine version. Syncretism is still at work, the Byzantine commonwealth being a multiethnic entity it had to satisfy a variety of tastes. St. Theodore is later fused with St. George as in the Venetian case.<sup>306</sup> The "martyr" motif offers another interesting entrance into the Balkan folklore.<sup>307</sup>

On the Balkan scenario, the soldier and martyr St. Demetrius was a never-failing help for all kinds of need. He is the patron of Belgrade and Thessalonica and St. Demetrius (the New) is also the patron of Bucharest. More than 200 churches in the Balkans are dedicated to him. Scholars are divided over many ambiguous aspects of his cult and his life. The first serious attempts on the history of the saint looked at the influence and probable continuation of an earlier stratum of beliefs, where the Cabiri<sup>308</sup> seem to have the preferential treatment, most likely because the saint was considered Greek. One of the most important issues for our analyses is the real origin. It is not about the historical person behind the cult, whether it was a deacon in Sirmium or a consul in Thessalonica, as usually the main argument goes, but where did the cult originate after all, since both cities claim him? If in some sense the saints were the successors of local gods and heroes, as Cyril Mango maintains,<sup>309</sup> then that knowledge becomes of great value.

James Skedros in his doctoral dissertation on the origin and development of the cult of St. Demetrius proposes two saints and deals with a great confusion, as a result of the rivalry and tension between these two cities, but chooses on the end Thessalonica.<sup>310</sup> One could not err if he/she would farther speculate whether the tension is an expression of the Latin-Greek rivalry but that would be a difficult task. Miranda Vickers, following a host of specialists such as Hippolyte Delehaye, Charles Diehl, J. Zeiller, R. Egger, Andras Mocsy, David Woods and others, argue for Sirmium.<sup>311</sup> Andras Mocsy points out that the Sirmium Demetrius was one of the most important saints of the Greek Orthodox and Slav churches, whose relics and cult were transferred to Thessalonica, the new home of both, the cult and the refugees that brought it along. During the fourth century we have evidence of this cult of the deacon Demetrius in Sirmium, which, it seems, must have been popular enough because it had been included in the earliest martyrologies. Christopher Walter leaves the rivalry unsettled but mentions that no Demetrius was commemorated in Thessalonica in the early calendars, but in Srem, the former Sirmium, existed a church dedicated to St. Demetrius as late as the eleventh century. This evidence implies the existence of the cult well into the Middle Ages. The perpetuation of his memory is sensed even in the modern name of the city, Sremska Mitrovica (where Sremska is the Slavic form of the Latin Sirmium and Mitrovica the Slavic equivalent of Demetrius).

Sirmium was one of the most important frontier towns and the most important military base in the area, which just happened to be situated in the midst of Thracian territory. It is no coincidence that the cult of St. Demetrius started there. The emperor Diocletian made it one of the four capital cities of the Roman Empire. Six Roman emperors were born there, including Decius and Licinius, Constantine resided in Sirmium and

ecclesiastical councils were held there. Considering the initial main features of St. Demetrius, help against the conqueror and his miraculous military intervention, I present these characteristics in relationship to the Thracians' martial qualities and their rider gods, which were continued and reflected in the military saints. All that background fits within the context of the great military base which Sirmium was.

James Skedros struggles to make us believe how "it is likely" that Justinian's refortification of the Danube region, with Sirmium being part of it, included the transfer of relics "to bring divine assistance to the defense of the frontier,"<sup>312</sup> an achievement attributed to the victorious saints by Justinian himself. David Woods, as a response to James Skedros's theses, summarizes: "The problem, briefly put it, is the lack of evidence for the cult of St. Demetrius at Thessalonica."<sup>313</sup> Even the archaeological evidence favors Sirmium, where we find "large and important group of relics of the Danubian Horsemen Cult;"<sup>314</sup> no such traces are found in Thessalonica.

Sirmium was captured by the Huns in 441 and remained for a century under barbarian rule. It changed hands a couple of times but is lost again to the Avars in 582. From a *Novellae* of Justinian (*Novellae* XI of April 14, 535) we learn that in the ancient times Sirmium held the administrative post of the province, where all civic and religious cases were dealt with. However, during Attila's time (after 441), due to the devastation, the seat of prefecture was moved to Thessalonica.<sup>315</sup> Some people remained behind in Sirmium but others fled from the invaders to Thessalonica, including Apraemius, the prefect of Sirmium.<sup>316</sup> We have here official documents attesting a movement of population (refugees) from Sirmium to Thessalonica, of unknown proportions. I assume that if people came to a

new home, they also brought their god(s) or cult(s) along with them. Noel Malcolm writes about a folk tradition set down by Kekaumenos, an eleventh century Byzantine writer, which refers to a large movement of native people southwards and eastwards away from the area of Danube and the Sava<sup>317</sup> and where Sirmium is located. In this tradition we have to consider later movements also, especially the ones caused by the Avars and the Slavs, or others, but in principle the argument stands.

The arguments presented so far deal mostly with the Latin urban element as expressed in whatever documents are existing. The majority of the Latin population was of rural character, concentrated mostly in the mountains and wooded areas, following a traditional way of life, chiefly amongst them being, besides soldiering, transhumant pastoralism (stock breeding). No document can be more faithful and better descriptive of the traditional lifestyle than a piece of Vlach folklore such as this:

Throughout the joyous summer, around the sheepfolds,  
Like the larks in the thickets, sung Dzega's shepherders,  
And they pastured the sheep, till the rainy season started,  
In the fall, when all the leaves are shedding,  
And when the dense, old forest darkens  
And St. Demetrius (feast) is approaching  
Dzega's flocks, hundreds and thousands of tracks,  
Are heading towards the sea.<sup>318</sup>

Pastoralism needed the plain areas in the winter (the Pannonian pusta, the Thessalian plane, the Muzakia plane in Albania, the Banat of Serbia and Romania), the river valleys (the Danube and all other major rivers) and the seashores, from the Black Sea to the Aegean (including southern Thrace) and the Adriatic Sea. With the flocks came also the tradition, maintained and constantly rejuvenated by these metanastic movements. Christopher Walter

considers "the filiation" between the heroes of antiquity and the Christian saints as missing. No one looked at the Vlach case, which I consider the center piece in solving "the filiation."

On a mosaic dated from the seventh century is also included a prayer, inscribed by a distinguished cleric of Thessalonica which, among other things, reads: "Most happy martyr of Christ, you who love the city, take care of both, citizens and strangers." I cannot help but wonder who "the strangers" might have been...? Were they the Sirmians (or their descendants) who fled to Thessalonica, the Sirmians who still went there in pilgrimage, the rural (future) Vlachs from the peninsula? Which one of these groups, all of them or just anybody else? I do suspect in this statement traces of Vlach involvement.

The Greeks, defined more as sailors and traders (by sea again, not by land), appropriated the saint and included in the package the specific corresponding attribute; protector of sailors, function held previously by the Cabiri. Greek being also the official voice of the church and the literate classes, they made him "the martyrs' martyr." The Slavs, mostly agriculturalists, were quite happy with the saint's corresponding (to their needs) prerogatives. Here we have to consider the "thanksgiving" kind of attributes of the demetrian package; St. Demetrius is also patron of the growing crops, the office hold by the goddess Demeter in antiquity. Another function of the saint was curing illnesses, a demand that kept the saint seriously busy, since almost everybody was in need of one cure or another. The saint achieves universality within the Christian Orthodox world through working miracles. It represented the strongest appeal and formed the epithet which qualifies St. Demetrius in the Slavic world: "the Miracle Worker."

Christopher Walter is critical of Ralph Hoddinott who wrote a book on the Thracians, quoting him as mentioning that "in Greek iconography St. Demetrius remained unmounted, but the Slavs with their ancient Scythian traditions were quick to picture him on horseback."<sup>319</sup> I do not think at this point I have to explain too much about the horse tradition in the Balkans and to which tradition or "filiation" it belongs. If anything, the Scythians exhibited the pastoral-warrior polarity, which we find amongst the Vlachs, shared some art motifs, the horse culture and some language affinities with the Thracians. And not only once did the Byzantine writers (and crusaders) classify the Vlachs as "Scythians."<sup>320</sup> All these peoples are related at the Indo-European level (belonging to the same branch), but to claim a direct relationship between the Scythians and the Balkan Slavs is a little farfetched.

### **THE RELOCATION OF ST. DEMETRIUS**

The problem, I argue, is that researchers are looking at St. Demetrius from a wholly modern perspective and quite often through a political and ideological lens. We have to look at St. Demetrius as a fresh arrival from the north (based on the relics from Sirmium, which falls into oblivion in 582 after the invasion of the Avars and Slavs, and carried by his worshipers, a soldier class with their flocks on the move), representing his newly acquired role as "defender of Thessalonica" in 586. The description of St. Demetrius found in the Miracle no.1 of the anonymous *Miracula* is identical to that of the Thracian Rider; mounted, cloaked with the *chlamys*<sup>321</sup> and the leader of a hidden army. In Archbishop John's collection of *Miracula* (Miracle no. 14) of the seventh century, he is described in the same manner: wearing a cloak or a mantle and mounted leading the defense of the city. The only difference or new element is the color white attributed to the cloak and the stallion. For the Greeks, as

Christopher Walter remarked, he will not be mounted again until a later event occurs in which the Vlachs will play a major role, and when he was venerated as a martyr. We do not know much besides the official version but even during this period, and this fact is of extreme importance, the saint did not limit his protection to only the Thessalonian citizens, but also to pilgrims from afar. They came to obtain the *myron* as an apotropaic unction before going into battle.<sup>322</sup> This last detail gives us a very strong clue as to the nature of these "strangers."

Somehow, if the saint can be used as an indicator, the Vlachs must have played a more important role than admitted in the Byzantine armies, since St. Demetrius (along with St. George) is the patron of the army. That was mentioned briefly when we dealt with the Byzantine epic and which precedes with at least two centuries the event, which will be our next topic. We do not really know the Vlach side of the story, since their adversaries narrated the event, but we still have some conjectural evidence to consider. The year is 1207 and eventually St. Demetrius kills Ioannitsa Asen (Kaloian), the youngest of the Vlach Asen brothers, the leaders of the combined Vlach-Bulgarian uprising, which ushered in the Second "Bulgarian" Empire.

## **VLACH REAPPROPRIATION OF ST. DEMETRIUS**

In the year 1185 the Byzantine emperor Isaac Angelus found himself short of ready cash, celebrating his expensive wedding, and proceeded to levy a tax on flocks and herds.<sup>323</sup> This fell heavily, of course, upon the Vlachs of Zagoria (northern Bulgaria) who sent two messengers, the brothers Peter and Asen, petitioning, among some other things, to be enlisted in the emperor's army and be given, by imperial decree, some small property in the

mountains. The emperor refused and the brothers, loudly and rudely insistent, threatened to revolt if their wishes were not granted. Asen got struck in the face (by an imperial dignitary) and the two brothers left in a fury. Back at their homes in the mountains the Vlachs refused at first to rebel against the Empire; but Peter and Asen built a church, into which they gathered many people who were told that God had decided to free the Bulgarians and of the Vlach people and remove from their necks the yoke they have borne so long. Prophets were brought forward to incite the population and they told the populace that St. Demetrius had left Thessalonica and its temples and had come over to them to preside over the rebellion. This convinced the rank and file of the Vlachs who swept down from the hills and opened a bloody campaign.<sup>324</sup> This is the most famous and enduring military Vlach achievement, on record, anyways, of medieval times.

A few additional points have to be considered. In the same year, in August of 1185, the Normans conquer the city of Thessalonica. Not only is the saint exiled to maintain his "freedom," but also he is portrayed as presiding over the rebellion, giving divine assistance and protection from the conquerors. This raises a number of questions. Why and how does St. Demetrius end up amongst the Vlachs? Why is the saint now performing again his initial functions of former times? Apparently the Byzantines later captured an icon of St. Demetrius in Peter's house, which seems to be a different icon than the one housed and honored in the new church from Tarnovo, an icon specially commissioned for the occasion. What kind of magic hold and spell did St. Demetrius exhibit for the Vlachs? That there is a large consensus amongst them about the saint's role we can deduce from the response to the call. It was not only Peter's family or even his clan, but all the Vlachs rose up against Byzantium. "So, the brothers, having won over the entire people with the help of such prophets, everyone

took up arms" writes Nicetas Choniates.<sup>325</sup> As a matter of fact the formation of the Second Bulgarian Empire owes its success precisely because of the actions of the brothers. The start of the revolt also "coincides" with the celebration of the saint's feast.

The Vlach-Greek dichotomy is reflected in a poem written by Theodore Balsamon, a Byzantine author contemporary with these events, with the occasion of recuperating the precious icon from Tarnovo. According to him, the icon was found "hidden in the darkness of the stonehearted rebels' destiny like a rose flowering amidst thorns." The invisible saints were constant companions and made their presence visible through the icons but also (and especially) through dreams and visions. The custom is quite popular in an oral tradition and the prophets mentioned by Nicetas Choniates were not an exception. It is of great importance to know that close to a century later (in 1277) in the same region of Zagoria, "the holy saints of the country" had appeared in dreams to a local leader responsible for the defense of the border and Tatar raiding routes, a certain Ivajlo (Lahana for the Greeks) considered "Bulgarian" and a "brigand." His success against the Tatars confirmed these predictions. Ivajlo claimed to be in contact with the saints who prepared him for the great mission. "The people flocked to his standard."<sup>326</sup> It would be interesting to know who "the holy saints of their country" might have been but given the location, the circumstances and the familiar motifs, I highly suspect the military saints George and Demetrius.

Robert Lee Wolff, studying the Byzantine sources, relates how by the third quarter of the eleventh century we find the Vlachs in large numbers wintering on the eastern slopes of the Pindus Mountains and the Thessalian plain, and summering in the high mountains, to the north, living in close communion with the Bulgarians. These Vlachs revolted against the high

taxes imposed upon their herds by the emperor Constantine X Ducas (1059-1067).<sup>327</sup> So here we have more than a century before the Asen brothers and two centuries before Ivajlo's "mission" the same scenario unfolding. And very probably, at the head of the army, giving divine assistance was the same patron saint.

A pattern is developing for "the victory bringer" which runs in parallel to the Vlach history. After the Roman conquest the cult develops in Sirmium. When barbarians conquer Sirmium, the home of the original god, the people who will become Vlachs relocate (by now Christian) the saint, the relics and the official cult to Thessalonica. There is enough evidence, some of which I have presented already, that pilgrims, soldiers and other "strangers" came from afar to pay homage to the saint in his new home. These facts tell us that he had many adherents in places other than Thessalonica. There were many concentrations of future Vlachs (with preference for mountain dwellings) throughout the Balkan Peninsula. In his new home at Thessalonica, the saint saves the city from the Avars and the Slavs. Thus, the Byzantine commonwealth appropriates the saint and the Greek language has become the lingua franca. The Vlachs hold on to their Latin speech and their customs, including the saint with his functions, as identity markers. There are certain suggestions that some Vlachs may have not even been Christian as late as the thirteenth century.

In the Greek world, the saint undergoes some transformations, but remains as an honored saint in eastern Orthodoxy. The Vlachs, I argue, are emerging as a distinct people and are fraternizing with the Slavs, who share the same fate with them and who have established themselves in the plains. The Vlachs have an unsettled relationship with the Byzantine Empire, at times allies and at other times rising up against Constantinople.

Nevertheless, they come to share the common Orthodox Christian faith. When the Normans conquered Thessalonica, the enemy was definitely foreign and the Vlachs relocated the icon of St. Demetrius to the "free city" of Tarnovo. This was to be expected as he had become their military protector and the symbol of their freedom.

Several interpretations are possible, all interrelated, having the role of the saint as the common denominator. One of them is the use of the saint as a political discourse for the Asens, without accounting fully for the overwhelming reception of the message. Another possibility is the saint's role in the authority struggle and the forming of the new city of Tarnovo as the new capital. In this case it can be interpreted as a foundation rite (an act of "creation") and legitimacy, the saint's investiture of power and protection. This idea is appealing but has the same problem as the first interpretation, to explain the unanimous Vlach reception. For that explanation we need something, which runs a little deeper in the Vlach hearts.

To recapitulate, we had the cult and the relics moved from Sirmium to Thessalonica when the former city fell, following the road to freedom. A special church was built there to house the relics. When Thessalonica fell under the Normans, it can be argued that the Vlachs safeguarded the precious icon (as the physical embodiment of the saint's investiture) and built not just a church, but also a whole city to house it. With the saint safe, so would be their freedom and this fact alone "convinced the rank and file of the Vlachs." In this way, St. Demetrius' destiny came to be shared (if not similar) with the Vlachs' destiny. Coincidence or not, the Asen chapter represents the most valiant effort of the Vlachs for total freedom (that we know of), with St. Demetrius as the identity factor and reason for action. It seems

that the Vlachs on both sides of the Danube shared many of these identity factors including political ones. One of them may be a trace of this glorious era of the Asens.<sup>328</sup>

## THE SLAVS

It may be surprising, even paradoxical, writes Christopher Walter, that Slavs, particularly the Bulgarians, should have adopted and rendered an increasingly fervent cult to the saint who was reputed to have killed their *voivod*.<sup>329</sup> Ioannitsa Kaloian (Skaloian—"Dog John"—to the Greeks), the younger brother of Peter and Asen, allied with the Greeks defeated the Normans; then he set out to revenge "the crimes of the Greeks against the peoples of Bulgaria." He campaigned through Thrace and Macedonia and died (assassinated by Manastras) while trying to capture Thessalonica. From this event on the iconography of St. Demetrius acquires a different formula, which was to become a typical scene: "the saint on horseback, in military dress, spearing or unhorsing Kaloian."<sup>330</sup> Concomitantly he also starts accompanying St. George in both, Greek and Slavic cases. This transformation speaks for a deeper change at a higher (including political and ecclesiastical) level.

The surprise and the paradox expressed by Christopher Walter disappear if we interpret things properly. Spearing Kaloian, the new formulae of the saint, represents the winner in the struggle for authority and power within the Balkan context. It is the Greek answer and interpretation of events and of reality, the official and final story. This tradition will be followed religiously, the Slavs "readily accepted" this way of presenting the saint. Churches and monasteries dedicated to him carry on the pattern: Moraca (1251), Davidovica (1281), Prilep (1283) and many others, throughout the Serbian and Bulgarian lands. Kaloian was the enemy. His fate reflects a kind of history inside out. The devils were the pre-

Christian (good) gods. The pre-Christian serpents which were venerated and brought forth sacrifices, with Christianity triumphant they became in turn sacrificed and received a spear. In principle, Kaloian belongs to the same category; an ideology which lost the official bid.

An interesting and somewhat parallel case to ours we discover in the saints' cults in Gaul of late antiquity, as a vital force in its political and social life. Viewed within the context of ongoing tensions between paganism and Christianity or between Frankish kings and bishops, these cults (St. Martin, St. Julian or St. Hilary) tell much about the struggle for authority or the forming of communities,<sup>331</sup> according to Raymond Van Dam. The acceptance of the saint by the Slavs is explained historically. The Slavs, sharing their fate and political life (against the same power centers) with the Vlachs, received St. Demetrius from them prior to the event of 1207. Dimitri Obolensky (quoted in Christopher Walter) presents two cases of the saint within the Slavic cultural tradition which predates the Kaloian sequence by at least a century, and for which "no Greek model has been found." By accepting the Vlach scenario, we solve "the Slavic paradox" (defined earlier) and indirectly infer the existence and continuation of this tradition amongst the Vlachs, without written evidence. The Greek version is an offshoot of the Vlach original concept, tailored and adapted to the Greek needs. The Slavic version is closer to the Vlach original since it was from them that the Slavs first adopted it, with no canons or official requirements (as the Greek version tended to develop), being also traceable in the comparative Balkan folklore of the saint. The Greek layer (spearing Kaloian) was the last addition through the official church and iconography. In regards to St. Demetrius, in conclusion I can state that the Vlachs developed, possessed and maintained the original tradition, by definition older, independent and slightly different from both, the Greek and the Slavic versions.

The importance of the mounted saint among the Vlachs (who left no written records) and the later Wallachians (who possess a "historical tradition" at least from medieval times) can be sensed also from a record of Paul of Aleppo, a Syrian clergyman who visited Russia and the Danubian principalities (Wallachia and Moldavia). Paul mentions that during his visit in the Moldavia of Basil the Wolf (Vasile Lupu who ruled between 1634 and 1653)<sup>332</sup> he witnessed the receiving of certain "gifts" from Constantinople (paid by its equivalent weight in gold) "of an immense value." Amongst some other items is mentioned "a piece (of a relic) from St. Demetrius' horse."<sup>333</sup> We are not concerned here with the authenticity of the horse, but with the importance of the folk tradition pertaining St. Demetrius. The two mounted saints appear on the iconostasis' doors of Snagov monastery, built by the Wallachian warrior Vlad Tepes (nicknamed the "son of the Devil" or Dracula),<sup>334</sup> where his earthly remains were put to rest. He also moved the capital of Wallachia to Bucharest; the city's patron saint was St. Demetrius (the New). Tradition has it that the founder of Bucharest was a shepherd named Bucur and St. Demetrius (the New) was a contemporary of the Asen brothers, born in Zagoria, in a place called Basarabov.

The Asens built a church dedicated to St. Demetrius but so did the most famous Moldavian ruler, Stephen the Great. The classic account of St. Demetrius' traditional function amongst the Vlachs has its parallel amongst the Wallachians, luckily recorded in a story by Grigore Ureche (1590-1647) in his "Chronicle of the Land of Moldavia." At the battle of Codrul Cosminului in 1497, Stephen ambushed the Polish forces, which greatly outnumbered his Moldavian troops in a thickly wooded area, winning the battle. Our chronicler, Grigore Ureche, adds a little detail: "Some people say that in this battle St. Demetrius (*Dimitrie*), mounted and armed like a brave warrior, presented himself to the leader Stephen, being of

help and boosting his army, and this is to be believed since (in recognition) a church (dedicated to him) was built."<sup>335</sup> Simple and concise; and yet, so evocative!

The examples used are from the medieval times but eventually the saint's presence has been felt well into the modern and even into the contemporary era, amongst the Slavicised Vlachs. Dinko Tomasic (who quotes Jovan Cvijic) mentions that in wars "many Dinaric Serbs see a shining warrior on a horse that leads them to victory and then vanishes suddenly."<sup>336</sup> In the "Serbian Republic" as part of Bosnia and Herzegovina (of the former "frontier fighters"), Saint Demetrius Day is a public holiday. The concept of the cult of St. Demetrius overall is a complex one but we can distinguish at least the main tendencies of representation for each culture in their mature stages. Cult (Latin *cultus*) is simply worship, reverence, and veneration. With some slight overlapping admitted, the saint was mainly venerated as a war leader ("victory bringer") and protector for the Vlachs, as a martyr saint for the Greeks, and as a miracle worker for the Slavs. Within the modern Balkan culture, the saint closes the vegetation and animal cycle (of crops, of herds, of pastoral summer) started by his "younger brother" George in the spring.

## **SUMMARY**

Besides the various forms taken by the military frontier institutions, which were responsible for ethnic boundary maintenance (as discussed in the previous chapter), and the military saints dealt with in the present chapter, other Vlach institutions and cultural features played the same role. One of these institutions was the Vlach law, *jus (ius) Valachicum*, found everywhere we encountered the Vlachs, from Dalmatia and Serbia to Moravia, Poland and Galicia. Even after the loss of their Latin language, as we saw in the case of the "Bosnian

Serbs," the set of ancient rights and privileges contained within the *jusValachicum* was still a matter of pride, justification, and identity. "A law somehow emerges from the society to which it applies, helping not just to resolve its tensions but also to demarcate it as a community."<sup>337</sup> This is an excellent example of a socio-cultural component and device of boundary maintenance. "As a possession of a distinctive body of law has rightly been seen as a possible focus around which a sense of ethnic identity, however formed, can maintain itself, the codes (here Frankish and Burgundian laws) have a potentially central role in the study of the formation and preservation of ethnicity in the immediate post-imperial centuries in the West."<sup>338</sup> Roger Collins adds farther that "it is the allegiance to it as the special property of a *gens* or people that gives it its significance," and that especially after the Carolingian period the law codes "became totems of ethnic distinctiveness."<sup>339</sup> The principles contained in Roger Collins' western examples are just as valid in the eastern part of the post-Roman world, in the Vlach case.

I discussed already certain ways in which the Vlachs ensured the maintenance of their ethnic boundaries, but I would like to add, in concert with that, another special feature. That feature represents the relationships between the Vlachs and the mountains, as a component part of their identity on one hand, and between the Vlachs (as highlanders) and Slavs (as lowlanders), or what I call the Latin-Slavic symbioses, on the other. As I will be explaining in the next chapter, it is through the Slavs that we have an early record for the Vlachs. In a generic way, the Slavs were the Vlachs' immediate neighbors, whether in the river valleys, at the mountain's edge, or co-habiting in the plains during winter. The two peoples met and their early encounters left a mark in toponymy. And yet, despite roughly a millennium and a half of interaction and coexistence, the two groups managed to maintain their distinct ethnic

boundaries. In the Vlach case, against all odds, that is quite a performance but this issue will be part of a topic included in the next chapter.

**"THE LAND BEYOND THE FOREST": THE LATIN-SLAV  
RELATIONSHIPS OF THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES IN  
THE LIGHT OF TOPONYMY**

In light of Vlach ethnohistory, we can definitely trace certain cultural marks left by the Slavic impact. In this chapter I will try to present the very special kind of relationships, which developed between these two peoples, right from the incipient phases of their contact. The record of these peoples, which the Slavs found on their arrival in southeastern Europe, is kept in the name Vlach (the original meaning being probably that of "foreigner,"<sup>340</sup> as Isaac Taylor suggested), and of the areas or the territories they inhabited, enclosed in the concept and toponym of Zagoria.<sup>341</sup> Vlachia and Wallachia as toponyms are later developments and as such have a later representation.<sup>342</sup> It is within this cultural and geographical dichotomy, we/other and plain/mountain, obviously very sharp border maintenance devices, that we also gain access to totally new and unexpected perspectives, enabling us to fill in information where (and when) the historical records are silent.

The period called "dark ages" of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, especially in Eastern Europe, by definition does not provide much information. With regards to the Vlachs, the situation is even worse. They left no written records but possess an extremely rich body of folklore and traditions. Whatever little we know is based on guesses and inferences, punctuated by occasional external and mostly indirect or biased references. As historical landmarks we have the late Roman world (up to Justinian who died in 565, considered either "the last Roman"<sup>343</sup> or "the first Vlach,"<sup>344</sup>), the barbarian invasions

(starting with the Goths in 238 and gaining momentum; ending in the fourteenth century with the Mongols) which brought about great changes and the formation of new identities, the coming of the Slavs (it started after 500 and took proportions under the emperor Phocas (602-610) and Heraclius (610-641), the coming of the Bulgarians (after 632) and their Christianization (863 under Boris), the arrival of the Hungarians (after 896), and the Crusades (starting in 1096). The last events mentioned here increased the contact with—and the interest in—the southeast of Europe. As a result, the Vlachs finally appear in the records but who the Vlachs really are and where did they originally come from has been a source of controversy ever since.

It is with the arrival of the Slavs in the Balkans that the native inhabitants' old order of things changed dramatically. One major cultural ingredient, which was challenged was identity. The new "other," the Slav, helped the native Balkan stock strengthen its Roman identity which now stood for seniority and superiority. If the earlier migratory peoples came, plundered and, after a shorter or longer sojourn left, the Slavs came to stay. They were numerous and beside plunder, practiced agriculture. Plundering was the major activity of peoples like the Avars and the Bulgarians, so it was in fashion, but their masters, who were extremely efficient in herding cattle or humans, might have imposed it on them initially.

What I am attempting to do here is to reconstruct in principle the type, the pattern of relationships that developed between the previous inhabitants, the Latin speakers of the area who could be named the Latin block or the Oriental Latinity, who later will reappear in history as Vlachs, and the new arrivals, the Slavic block or simply the Slavs. There reigns for several centuries total darkness and silence so, in order to obtain any results at all, I have to

employ different criteria of analysis. Habitat, institutions, language, customs, historical records, folklore, specific traits and traditions, both ancient and modern will be compared and used as auxiliary tools.

## **ORIENTAL LATINITY**

The origin of the Oriental Latinity, as I just mentioned, is a controversial subject. The Romanian theses, which states that the Vlachs originated (together with the Romanians) to the north of the Danube river, migrating after the Slavic invasion south of the Danube, is not easily or always accepted by every foreign specialist, especially Hungarian or, to a lesser degree, German or others. The contending view is known as the immigrationist theory and states exactly the opposite; that the Romanians originated amongst the Vlachs, to the south of the Danube River, later on crossing the Danube into present day Romania. Each theory serves the purpose to claim historical right over Transylvania and in its turn misses the large picture. Thus the Danube River becomes the hinge of Oriental Latinity and of the ideological debate. On this issue of Vlach origin, historians quarrel amongst themselves and then their linguist colleagues have their own different opinions. Next to many Hungarian scholars we encounter some recent Romanian writers<sup>345</sup> expressing their doubts about the "national mythology," the Romanian and Vlach history being reduced to, more or less, a fictitious discourse.<sup>346</sup>

The main problem of the controversy I consider as being mistaken in principle. The majority of researchers are looking for just one single place of origin, place from where the rest of the population, according to these theories, migrated or spread out to the other areas in which we still encounter them today. Georg Stadtmuller for example argues for Kosovo as

being the original home of the Vlachs. The linguist Victor Friedman proposes Macedonia and Ernest Gamillscheg, another linguist, proposes more core regions but only within Romania. Gottfried Schramm developed a theory called "mobile continuity," in time (rather than fixed in a particular territory) and basically south of the Danube and so on. Partially they all hold to some truth in what they claim, everyone dealing with a particular aspect of the problem. What most of them fail to see is the whole phenomenon in its complexity.<sup>347</sup>

To simplify the situation, we can consider the south east European area, from cultural and linguistic criteria at least, as being represented by two main blocks: the Slavic block and the Latin block. Of course we also have the Greeks, the Albanians and the Hungarians. The Greeks traditionally inhabited mostly the coastal areas and the islands, and the growth and dispersion of the olive tree also marks the limits of the Greek expansion into the interior of the peninsula. They did not venture inland too far, neither in antiquity, nor later on.<sup>348</sup> The Greek colonies were never much more than trading centers along the coast and there is no evidence that a rural Greek population ever settled the interior.<sup>349</sup> Their roads and highways were more on the water than on dry land. The notion of road, expressed in the Indo-European languages through the consonants *pnt*, in Greek language (and only in Greek) *pont* became sea (*PontusEuxinos*- Black Sea); basically we are dealing with seafarers and merchants.

"The Greek tends, as we have seen, to follow the coast where the Mediterranean mode of life is possible, and can extend a certain distance inland into the continental area, especially where his own plants thrive. But there comes a time when, as Greek, he cannot compete with the Slav cultivator, and he must either become Slavized or return to the land which is climatically and agriculturally his."<sup>350</sup> The Albanians, just like the Latins and related

to them through common ancestry, occupy a special niche to which I will return. The Hungarians settled amongst "the Slavic mass," we are told, separating them like a wedge, in this respect resembling the Latins, braking their territorial continuity. The Latin-Slav relationships were quite different and more cordial than the Slav-Hungarian or Latin-Hungarian relationships. The intensity and extent of mutual borrowing is felt in language and especially in customs and folklore.

As a general tendency in late antiquity it has been assumed that many of the ancient local inhabitants were pushed or coerced to take refuge on the edges of the peninsula, on the coast and the islands and in the walled cities, because of the great invasion of migratory peoples. Some of them of course did just that (we dealt with the Sirmium case) but for the majority, after the fortified cities also fell, the only refuge or escape was in the mountains. In principle, though on a different scale, the Latins and the Albanians shared a similar fate, habitat and life style, along with many customs. The Farsherot Vlachs are different from the Albanians mostly in language to this day, and even at that they have some shared vocabulary. "The Slavs drove the survivors of the old Thracian and Illyrian population before them to the mountains and occupied their lands in the plains."<sup>351</sup> Driven by their Turanian masters (Avars, Bulgarians) with similar preferences for flatland (steppe people) and being agriculturalists, it comes as no surprise that the Slavs occupied the plains and the river valleys.

## **SLAVS AND LATINS**

North of the Danube River we encounter a similar phenomenon. The population of the Romanian territories "was made up of two elements: one Slavic, which generally

occupied the plain; the other, *Latin* ("Romanian" in the text), which preferred to live in the mountains from where they gradually spread towards the plains."<sup>352</sup> Corroborating with this statement is the fact that the capitals of the Romanian principalities were first in the mountains, then on lower river valleys, and in the end established themselves in the plains. There is also to the north of Bucharest a very large and relatively flat area which is still called *Muntenia* ("the mountainous land" or rather "the land of the mountain people") and the inhabitants, *Munteni* ("the folk of the mountains"), *munte* in Romanian being mountain, as a testimony to these events.

Of the old Slavs, their contemporary Byzantine historian Procopius tells us that "living apart, one man from another, they inhabit their country in a sporadic fashion."<sup>353</sup> "Groups of Romance-speaking pastoralists had survived in the Balkan peninsula since Roman times. In origin they were probably Romanized Thracians who has sought refuge from invaders in the mountains while invading peoples swirled around them. These were the Maurovlachs or Vlachs. They were a scattered but numerous people and were politically powerful"<sup>354</sup> adds Norman J. G. Pounds. We observe here that after the Slavic invasion both, Slavs and Latins, our two main entities of southeastern Europe, dwelt in a "scattered" and "sporadic" fashion. The geography (terrain) is an element which in this context has to be considered as a rule, the pattern established overall being Slavs in the plains, Latins in the mountains. Latin is spoken not just where there were former Roman territories but even farther afield, like in the republic of Moldova or Galicia, where the Romans never set foot. Latin (and Albanian) is spoken where the former Thraco-Illyrian tribes lived. The dispersal of Latin coincides (and overlaps) with the former Thraco-Illyrian territories. Here we have an ancient indicator of identity through certain customs and preferences, a strong

persistence, which points to the relationship between the Oriental Latinity and the mountains, a topic, which requires some attention.

We find the Balkan states small and scattered and there might be a reason for that other than political: "centralization is prohibited by nature."<sup>355</sup> The example of former Yugoslavia is the most recent and the pattern can be traced back to Herodotus. Geography may play a more important role in cultural matters than we usually allow for. The Latin speakers (together with the Albanians) occupied, for the most part, the mountainous and thickly wooded areas, while the Slavs, together with the other "newcomers," the Bulgarians and later yet, the Hungarians, occupied the plains. One great problem within the entire area is the presumed Slavic toponymy, which vexes the Romanians, the Albanians, and even to the Greeks; in short, to the autochthonous or the older Balkan populations. Since the toponymy is overwhelmingly Slavic, there is not much room left to place the early Vlachs spatially. The same problem is faced in Greece but the argument that the Slavs were there first (to name the places) cannot stand, since we know that the Greeks preceded the Slavs in the peninsula by over a millennium.

To recapitulate, we have in the southeastern Europe mostly Slavs and Latins, inhabiting the plains and the mountains, respectively. When the Ottomans reunified the area after their arrival on the scene, they called it Balkan, which simply means "forested mountains;" first, a part of Bulgaria, then, since the whole region presents so many similarities, the name gradually was applied to the entire peninsula. A "Balkan" then becomes a kind of measuring unit, a *pars pro toto*.

## PLAINS AND MOUNTAINS

Let us take now a "Balkan" unit and analyze it a little; Kosovo for example. "It comprises an alternation of fertile hill-girdled valleys and high mountains;...a typical frontier zone."<sup>356</sup> It has been the frontier successively between the East and the West Roman Empires, between Serbian, Bulgarian, and Byzantine Empires, between Christianity and Islam, between Albania and Yugoslavia. As a British geographer notes: "A most striking and significant feature of Kosovo-Metohija is the contrast between the *planina*, the high mountain region on its confines, and the *zupe* or *pays* which are found at lower altitudes in the plains and on their fringes. The *planina* has a pastoral economy and only in the *zupe* can crops be cultivated. *Planina* and *zupe* are economically interdependent and this supreme fact is fundamental to an understanding of the problem of Kosmet, both economical and political."<sup>357</sup>

All the *planinas* are covered with rich summer pastures, which can be grazed for about four and a half months of the year, and constitute the greatest single natural asset of the peninsula. The pastures are large enough to support vast flocks of sheep as well as cattle. The animals provide milk for great quantities of white cheese, which is made in the *catuns* (described as "summer huts;" they are traditional small Vlach villages). So great was the quantity and fame of this cheese that during the medieval times this *caseumvalahicum* was used as a currency in the market of Ragusa (Dubrovnic). Next to milk and cheese there were also hides, meat and wool for clothing. In *Descriptio Europae Orientalis*<sup>358</sup> the author states that considering all the nations, the Vlachs have the best meat and cheese produced in the region.

Descending from the pastures we come across the forests, which provide invaluable wood as a primary source. "The surrounding mountains not only provide the settlements below with water for irrigation, with charcoal for fuel and with animal food products but also with the raw materials necessary for their domestic woolen and woodwork industries and tanneries. The lowland provides hay and winter quarters, maize, paprika and fruit, and it is in the lowland settlements that the mountaineers must seek their places of worship, schools for their children and all their contacts with the outside world. Physical geography thus involves interdependence between upland and plain, and prosperity always depends on free movement of people and animals, on harmonious human relationships and good will."<sup>359</sup> The "upland" (mountain) and plain relationships presented by H. R. Wilkinson and his insightful observations can be applied in principle to any similar case, becoming a standard scenario in the Balkans. It also facilitates a better understanding of our Latin-Slavic relationships and symbioses.

The mixing of populations in Kosovo has a long history. For the last three centuries the Albanians dominated the area and, according to H. R. Wilkinson, they differed from the Vlachs only in that they did not speak Latin. "The Vlachs, too, appear to have sought refuge in the uplands surrounding Kosovo and even the plain itself. Some historians go as far as to make the Kosovo area the main homeland of the Vlachs after the Slav invasions, from which centre they dispersed in four or five main directions during the eleventh century... Kosovo-Metohija, therefore, from the ethnic point of view must have had a mixed population as far back as the sixth century with Vlach, Serb-Slav or Albanian predominating according to time and circumstances."<sup>360</sup> The first mention of the Vlachs in the Serbian medieval documents, as a matter of fact, is precisely about the Vlachs of Kosovo. It is a donation act of great *jupan*(

orzhupan, leader of a *zupa*) Stephan Nemanja, in 1198-1199, for Halindar monastery from Mount Athos, which mentions the Vlachs in the Prizren area, led by two *juzi*, Radu and Gheorghe.<sup>361</sup> In other documents are mentioned various Vlach villages in the area, and even four centuries later, in the Turkish documents, the Vlachs are still a massive presence in Kosovo. At this time the Serbs seem to dominate the area, their leaders took advantage of the weakened Byzantine Empire (the former masters) and occupied Kosovo.

The Slavs occupied and settled the *zupe*: plains, flatlands, low valleys. The Croatians for example controlled eleven *zupe* around the years 950, during the reign of the Byzantine emperor Constantin Porfirogenitus, who mentions them in his writings (*De Administrando Imperio*). "Large parts of what was to become Yugoslavia remained outside the rule of these two dominant tribes (Serbs and Croats)...; these areas included Bosnia and Duklja (Montenegro),"<sup>362</sup> notorious for their mountainous terrain, giving us another important clue about the nature of their inhabitants.

## **DUALISM AND SYMBIOSIS: AGRICULTURE AND PASTORALISM**

In the medieval law code of the Serbian ruler Stephen Dusan (1349), a firm distinction and separation is made between "Serb agriculturalists from the Vlach pastoralists, since their differing lifestyles required very different tax policies."<sup>363</sup> Eugene A. Hammel, an anthropologist, includes also the Albanians in the Serbian scene, mentioning that the Vlachs were "a distinctive social and economic class."<sup>364</sup> If most of the times the distinction between Serb and Vlach is very obvious, at times John Fine is not that sure if the distinction is "ethnic or occupational." Since the Vlachs monopolized pastoralism, the term Vlach did become later synonymous to shepherd, as I presented this issue in the introduction, due to their

massive presence, of course. Many Vlachs also became gradually slavicized, creating more confusion (as in the case of the Morlaks), but the main distinction still holds, in spite of all the attempts to minimize the Vlach presence, an inconvenience for all the Balkan states. The "large areas unoccupied by the dominant tribes" of south-eastern Europe, be they Serbs, Croats, Bulgarians or Hungarians, are basically the mountainous ones, occupied by the Oriental Latins as a rule and as I tried to explain. In time, they melted into these "dominant tribes," especially in the Slavic mass and particularly when they settled into the plains.

During the eighteenth century the Vlachs started adopting a Greek identity as well, contributing to the formation of the Balkan middle class, amongst other routes through the expansion of commerce. In the north and east, in the same time, Russia grows in importance. Many western Europeans are invited in (see the policy started by Peter the Great) but so are Oriental Latins, some of them (*Mocani* from Transylvania), large flocks of sheep and all, got all the way to Kazakhstan. The same Latin presence is felt early even in the German world. "A western branch of this population is noticed starting from the year 800 and sporadically even before that in *vicromanisci* from Austria... (Later on we encounter) *Walchhofen* in Bavaria (1104), *deWalhe* in Pinzgan (1176), *Walehen* (1151-1167), etc."<sup>365</sup> In Pannonia there is a neo Latin toponymy of pastoral character and is attested between 850 and 1055, contemporary with the arrival of the Hungarians in the area. We come across names like *Chula*, *Stirka*, *Bacs*, *Csut*, *Kapusa*, *Kopacs*, *Kelba*, *Furko*, *Murga*, *Kas*, *Feora*, *Kald*, *Mura*, etc., the majority of these places being around Lake Balaton, which probably provided at least winter residence for peoples and flocks. "*AzOlahok* " (as *Blachs/Vlachs*), which by the time of their mentioning by the Anonymous Notary (of the twelfth century Hungarian court) became Hungarians, were also living around Lake Balaton. In *Descriptio Europae Orientalis*

of 1308 as well as in the Anonymous Notary we find mentioned the *Pastores Romanorum* (Roman shepherds) and *Pascua Romanorum* (grazing fields of the Romans) in Pannonia.<sup>366</sup> Farther north, in the area of Nitra, there is the *villa Staul* in 1113, a name place which becomes more and more frequent; there are also places called *Magura* or *terra barbata*,<sup>367</sup> easily recognizable as Vlach.

In western Romania we find in the earliest Hungarian records of three duchies. The one of Gelu is explicitly Vlach, named so in the document,<sup>368</sup> but the other two duchies, of Glad and Menumorut are considered "controversial" since, besides the Vlachs, Slavs and Bulgarians are also mentioned. I think we can definitely interpret this fact as a sure sign of the Latin-Slavic symbioses at work, including evidence of Latin presence in the plains as well. The local Bulgarians mentioned in the source were, until the Hungarian arrival, one of these "dominant tribes." On the other hand, the Vlachs fought alongside the Bulgarians not just against the Hungarians but also against other common foes: in Bulgaria proper against the Byzantines, against the Mongols, against the western crusaders and against the Ottomans.

The Romanians have been considering the Slavic problem for a while and several attempts were made to solve it. Bogdan P. Hasdeu, an extremely learned polyglot scholar, a linguist, philologist, historian, essayist and writer, besides other major contributions, established the linguistic connection between the Latins and the Albanians, via the common substratum, and worked with folkloric motifs inherited by the Balkan peoples. Nicolae Iorga, a prolific historian, is the first to come up with a more concrete thesis about the Latin-Slavic relationships, the so-called *oriental Romanias*, which existed in parallel with the *Sclavinias* (*Slavinias*), the lands of the Slavs or our *zupe*, without any specific criterion or explanation

of how that occurred. We simply find them mentioned in the sources. Petre Panaitescu, another Romanian (cultural) historian, advanced a concept which could roughly be translated as "layers of populations," in his attempt to explain away the territorial continuity of the Latins in between the Slavic mass, but again, the concept cannot be concretely applied to any particular case.

Nicolae Iorga's concept of *Romanias* was similar in content, structure, and function to other historians' concept of *tara* (from *terra*; land, *pays*, territory, county); small Latin political formations, usually in river valleys surrounded by mountains and found especially within Transylvania and, to a lesser degree, in Moldavia. The term *tara* for Gheorghe Bratianu (a historian who died in prison under the communist regime) had a very significant meaning because "the equivalent of *terra* from the medieval documents (*diploma*), has the implication of a judicial community, of a region in which a certain local custom influences and determines the administration of justice... and which - as *consensus* - the leader of the country has to consider. It is therefore, above the leaders (*princeps*) and the top leaders of a *tara*, a superior entity of right, which comprises the leaders and all: the "law of the country" (of the *tara*) or "the custom of the land."<sup>369</sup> Before there was a Wallachia (*TaraRomaneasca*) as a principality and a state, or a Moldavia, there was a *terra Blachorum* mentioned in 1222 and, of course, writes Gheorghe Bratianu, these closed little regions which to this day are still called *Tara Hategului*, *Tara Barsei*, *Tara Oltului*, *Tara Oasului*, *Tara Vrancei*... *Tara Sopenitului*.

The Vlach right (as law) is found in the documents as *jus Valachicum* and as such was studied by Karel Kadlek,<sup>370</sup> a Czech scholar specialized in law history and Slavonic law,

who wrote (in Czech) "Wallachs and Wallachian Law in the Slavic Countries." Various writers noticed that *jusvalachicum* was existent wherever Vlachs were present. In many areas of the Balkans "the Vlachs had their own institutions of self-government and thus were separate legal communities"<sup>371</sup> confirms John Fine.

This is what the British scholar Henry N. Brailsford, who wrote his account in 1906, had to say:

"No other Balkan race has quite so wide a distribution. They are Russian subjects in Bessarabia, Austro-Hungarians in Transylvania and Ruthenia. They form an independent kingdom under the national name of Roumania in the two Danubian provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia. They are a sensible fraction of the population of Servia and Bulgaria. In Macedonia they are the backbone of the Hellenic party. In Greece itself, and particularly in Thessaly, they are numerous and influential. They are to be found also in Dalmatia and Bosnia, and under the name of Morlaks they served in the armies of the Venetian Republic."<sup>372</sup>

Henry N. Brailsford notices that their language, despite dialectic variation, "betrays a substantial identity;" that their habits and customs are also similar, and "even the Austrian Romanians (from Transylvania and Bucovina) were, like their Southern brethren, a pastoral people with the same shy preference for mountain dwellings."<sup>373</sup> Here we have one of the best and shortest overall descriptions of the Oriental Latinity.

Next to the ethnic and political maps exposed by Henry N. Brailsford, we presented the concepts of *Romanias*, of "layers of populations" and that of *tara*. We have then the obvious Vlachias and Wallachias, as the other peoples saw and called the places inhabited by these Oriental Latins: Wallachia and Moldo-Wallachia in Romania, Vlasca (a region in southern Romania), Upper Wallachia (Epirus), Megalo- Wallachia (Great Wallachia in Thessaly), Little Wallachia (Acarnania, Etolia, Dorida, Locrida), Stara Vlaska (Old

Vlachia/Wallachia, Bosnia), Palaiovlachoï (Old Vlachia; Zagori, Greece), White Wallachia (Bulgaria), Black Wallachia (Dalmatia; Croatia), Little Wallachia (Posega, Croatia), Sirmium Wallachia (on the Sava river; Serbia), Valassko (Beskidi mountains; Czech republic).

In a recent article entitled "Palaiovlachoï-Stari Vlah. Medieval Balkan History and Toponymy," Stelian Brezeanu tries to establish a relationship between the two names and centers of medieval Vlachs of Thessaly and Bosnia, respectively. I will consider two elements from the article: one is the adjective "old" in both, Serbian and Greek, which qualifies the Vlach geographic and ethnic entity; the other refers to the village Voivonda (today Basilike, simply the translation in Greek of the Slav toponym) in Epirus, found in a Greek document from 1393. The place name Voivonda, according to Max Vasmer, is connected with "the Slavs' presence in the region and their *voyvodai* institution."<sup>374</sup> Other specialists (Johannes Koder, F. Hild, Petre Nasturel) were inclined to connect it to the Vlachs, who had the same institution. Stelian Brezeanu demonstrates that the reference is about the Vlachs and their *voyevods* (military leaders), giving another example of a Vlach *voyevod* from Ioannina, in the same region of Epirus, two decades later (in 1412). A similar argument can be used in principle in the case of the specific Vlach term *celnic* (clan or occasionally tribe leader), also a term of Slavic origin.

### **TOPONOMY: MORE TRACES OF THE VLACHS**

On closer examination we can observe that the region of Palaiovlachoï coincides mostly with the region of Zagori (Zagorion), one of the Slavic place names in Greece. Studying the villages of Zagori, Thede Kahl underlines the fact that "paradoxically, the

Aromanian (language) gradually lost its importance throughout a territory populated in majority by Aromanians, being replaced with Greek, but Aromanian identity survived partially into the present time."<sup>375</sup> "The population of the secluded mountain valleys of Zagori is, in considerable part, Vlach,"<sup>376</sup> was an affirmation made a century ago.<sup>377</sup> Even in the present there exist villages in this area where the Vlach language is still spoken, such as *Greveniti, Flambourari, Elatochori, Makrina*, and others. Chances are that the Slavic place name Stari-Vlah designates a center, a kernel with an "old population" which dwelt in the area prior to the arrival of the Slavs in Bosnia, and happened to be called Vlachs. This area was famous for the *hajduk* activity (including the Novac tradition) and one of the mountains (*planina*) is still called *Romanja*. Palaiovlachoi, its Greek correspondent (*palaios*; old, ancient), marks the same idea, naming a state of affairs. The Old Vlachia from Zagori and the Old Vlachia from Bosnia are actually cases which are historically verified by an early Vlach presence.

Besides the arguments presented previously on the Vlachs of Epirus, I would like to consider two more possible Vlach involvements. One, found in the *Alexiad* of Anna Comnena, mentions a certain "Comiscortes from Albania"<sup>378</sup> in the eleventh century. The other case is the existence of a church in Katsoura (near Arta) which was consecrated to St. Demetrius and was dated to c. 800.<sup>379</sup>

Let us consider now the situation of the Vlachs from medieval Bulgaria who revolted under the Asen brothers and who had a numerous presence there. Where did these Vlachs live? Their contemporary sources tell us the same story, familiar by now: in the mountains, as did the Vlachs in Greece, or Bosnia, or Kosovo... The adjective "old" will be considered in

this case again. In the areas where the Vlachs had been the former inhabitants we have the massif Stara Planina and the region Zagora. One name reminds us of the "planina" of Kosovo, and is qualified by the adjective "old" (*stara*), as in Bosnia and Greece. The other toponym, Zagora, is an area with a Slavic name, as it also exists in Greece, but is inhabited by Vlachs, the mountain people. This comes actually as no surprise. Then we have the place Stara Zagora, formerly called Beroia and Ulpia Traiana, a symbol for the Latin speakers (easily identifiable) and a reference to Vlach seniority in the area, stretching back to the Roman times.

On the medieval maps there is a separate geographical entity Zagora<sup>380</sup> next to Bulgaria and "Romania" (the future Rumelia). The district was called Zagora already in the twelfth century and the Turks called it Eski Hisar, which translates as "old fortress." It seems that the meaning of the Turkish equivalent of "old" in this context, as in the Bosnian and Greek case, designates a Vlach territory, as it did for the case of Stara Zagora, just dealt with. It is a reference to the people inhabiting the mountains rather than the mountains themselves, which would make no sense. "In Byzantine documents from this epoch (twelfth century), Bulgaria is called Moesia or Sagori (Zagori) and the Bulgarians are named Moesians or Vlachs. This indicates that there must have been a considerable number of Vlachs living among the Bulgarians."<sup>381</sup> The Bulgarian Zagoria was an old Latin (Vlach) center or kernel which fits into the pattern established. Furthermore, Zagoria (in the Byzantine records) was first mentioned during the rule of Bulgarian khan Tervel (in 705)<sup>382</sup> and resurfaced later, dominating the scene again under the tsar Ivan Asen II (1218-1241).

In Croatia exists a Zagoria in which is mentioned - surprise - the Vlach presence. "In the course of my voyages in the Dalmatian Zagora, people have often remarked to me upon the difference between the Dinaric immigrants and ancient Slavic population on the one hand, and the Slavicized Vlachs or Morlachs on the other. These latter, according to my informers, constituted the most primitive (old) population, moreover very rare."<sup>383</sup> There are actually two Zagorias in Croatia: "the Croatian Zagorie (the country beyond Mount Medvednica), looking from Zagreb," and "the region of Zagora in southern Croatia situated beyond Mount Kozjak, looking from Split."<sup>384</sup> In Slovenia there was a Zagoria with a population of orthodox as well as Catholic Vlachs called Bunievici (described by Eugene A. Hammel),<sup>385</sup> used by the Austrians in the frontier regiments (Romanians from Transylvania and Banat were also serving in these regiments).

There is a "Zagorje" in southern Serbia, actually in the eastern part of Herzegovina between Gacko and Foca, another area known by its early Vlach population. At least partially this "Zagorje" seems to belong to the area of Stari Vlach, strengthening the Vlach argument. It also parallels the Paleovlachoi-Zagori (in Greece) and Stara Planina-Zagoria (in Bulgaria) cases. There is a canton Zagorie in the Vijose River Valley in Albania, the town of Zagora in Thessaly beyond Mount Pelion, and Zagoritikos River. The central area of Epirote Zagoria is known "suggestively" as "Vlachohoria." Even much farther to the north, in Poland, we meet the mountaineers "Zagorze," on the border between the districts Limanowa and Nowy Sacz.<sup>386</sup> There are historical reports of "great migrations of Wallachian shepherd groups," who settled in Poland in medieval times and simply came to be called "mountaineers." We also come across a "Zahoria" in the west of Slovakia, close to the Czech Valasska.

As far as I know, I could not find any studies or even attempts to interpret the data, or anyone to consider at least these indicators. Victor Friedman and Jacque Bacic agree in admitting that Zagorie is a common Slavic toponym, without any farther elaboration. From Galicia (Poland and Ukraine) and the Czech republic to Pindus (Greece), from the Dalmatian coast of Croatia to the other side of the Balkan Peninsula, in Bulgaria, we find these Zagorias where territories were likely inhabited Latin populations who had melted into the surrounding, mostly Slavic, peoples.

The Zagorias as a category come and fill in the post Roman Latin picture from totally unexpected ground, through the "other's" perspective, situation, and understanding. It is in the same time a great verification of the relationship between Latin (Vlach) and mountain, "via Zagoria" (culture, physical geography, toponymy) on one hand, and throwing a better light on the mountain-plain, Latin-Slavic symbioses, on the other.

The Slavic toponymy left deep marks within the entire mountainous Latin world as a result of these two cultures' contact. Many of the Vlach or Romanian place names have a Slavonic etymology, starting with their own abode (Zagoria). Bucovina is the Beech wood country; Gorj (upper, mountainous Jiu river area; *Gor Jiu*) and Dolj (the Jiu river in the plain; *Dol Jiu*); Bistrita river ("the quick one" in Slavic) is called Repedea (the Rapid) at its upper course in the mountains (the Romanian equivalent of the "quick one"); *podgorie* (downhill, under the mountain, hillside - in Slavic) became in Romanian vineyard, where one grows grapes, and so on.

Let us take a closer look at a Balkan unit, a "Zagoria." Etymologically it means (the area, the region, and the territory) "beyond the mountain(s)." This implies that the people

doing the naming (labeling) were situated "over here," on the outside, on this side of the mountains. The Zagorias being mountainous by definition, the peoples that named them were situated in the plains; since the names also happen to be Slavic, by following simple syllogism, the people doing the naming must have been the Slavs. *Gor* (*a*) is the Slavic root for mountain; *za* is translated as beyond, on the back of, on the other side. In this concept is accepted the existence or presence of another entity next to the one doing the mentioning, together with the region inhabited by that "other." On the other hand, the Slavic and Greek toponymy preserved the Vlach *vrh* (mountain top; summit) and *clisura* (pass, canyon, gorge).

The mountain and the Vlachs are two inseparable entities. There is enough material to write several volumes, just from folkloric sources, about this unique relationship. Next to the geographical component I have to mention a few cultural aspects of this interconnection. The mountain presents itself through the forested area (*codru*) as one hypostasis, while through the alpine pasture ("*planina*" which becomes *plai*) as another. The first aspect (the forest) is temple and refuge (for the fighter and the *haiduk*), the *plai* (*plaiu* in Aromanian) is the (grazing) resource for his flocks and where one has to be in order to enjoy the spring season and life itself. This is probably another reason why the *plai* is the equivalent to "the entrance to Paradise."<sup>387</sup> "*Casa noastra-i muntili*" (our house is the mountain) and "*munte, munte frate*" (o mountain, brother mountain)<sup>388</sup> are two old Vlach sayings, "*codru-i frate cu Romanu*" (the old, dark, deep forest is the Romanian's brother) and "*La ai mei parinti / La muntii carunti*" (to my parents / the gray mountains) being their Romanian equivalent. The statement is "not just an empty saying or a stylistic devise, but the expression of a historical reality."<sup>389</sup> In Montenegro there is an interesting mountainous toponymy, in Latin this time, with names like *Durmitor* (the sleeper, one that sleeps or the place where one sleeps:

"bedroom" for a whole mountain... a large "dormitory;" from *adurmi* / to sleep), *Tipitor* (one who dozes off or where one dozes off), *Visator* (dreamer or where one dreams probably)<sup>390</sup> and so on.

In former times dense forests covered immense tracts of land, which usually horrified the invaders. Virgil Candea remarked the fact that the Turkish chronicles were unanimous in deciding the three most difficult factors in waging war on these south east European regions: the solid and near impenetrable mountains (in Idrisi Bitlisi), the thick forests, and the cold winters. *Teleorman* (Deliorman, "crazy forest") is a Turkish name given to some regions where the abundance and thickness of the forests were unimaginable, crazy. Other appellatives of Turkish origin were *Agac denizi* ("the sea of trees"), found in Mehmet Nesri, or *Cenglistan* (forested hideout) in Kodja Husein, who also emphasized the role of the strong Vlach ally, the retreat to the forested heights; the run to the hills.<sup>391</sup>

An important cultural fossil I found in folklore and language, through a pair of binary opposites, as in this fragment of a funeral oration: "*Codru este mare / Si lumina n-are / codru este des / Intri, nu mai iesi...*" This folkloric fragment translates as "The thick, dark forest is large / And has no light (no visibility) / The *codru* is thick / You enter but do not exit it..."<sup>392</sup> To exit the *codru* is to enter into light, literally; to get into the world. The Aromanian term for world is *lume*, as it is in Romanian, coming from the Latin *lumen*, light. *A da drumul* is an expression synonymous to escape or gain freedom; this is its modern usage. Originally and literally means "to give someone the road," the freedom of light (*drum*, from Byzantine Greek *dromos*; road). A stranger who did not know the area and the roads in there felt

imprisoned. This peculiarity, at least when it comes to language, is also found in the Slavonic languages; the term for world comes from light (*sveta*), as in the Oriental Latin case.

## LATIN-SLAV SYMBIOSIS

There are plenty of shared particularities by the two cultures, which are the results of the long Latin-Slavic symbioses and would make an interesting study. The only other shared concept I would like to mention, being relevant for our topic, is the term that stands for the "other," briefly introduced at the beginning of this chapter. In the Slavonic languages the "other," *nemetz*, meant originally dumb, mute,<sup>393</sup> one who does not speak (a Slavic language, of course; which was like not speaking). In the first stage, as a generic term, it stood for the "other." Gradually it developed into meaning a particular type of other, namely the German.

The Romanian case is quite similar; *nemetz* became *Neamtz*, and as an adverb (*neam*), the word has in Romanian the meaning of mute, or silence.<sup>394</sup> The term *nemes* still has, at least partially, some meaning of an outsider. *Neam*, on the other hand means kin, relationship, clan, nation, including the application to one's own identity; it could be applied either to "us" or to "them." However, in this respect *neam* parallels the Roman term of *natio/nationis*, originally a concept for the non-Romans. It is through the form of the adverb (simply "*neam*:" total silence) that our small detail betrays its real origin.<sup>395</sup>

Together with the language I consider the folklore as the richest, the oldest, the longest, and the most faithful cultural document that there is. The most common motif we come across in folklore is the world of the forest (*codru*), the tree (the fir tree being dominant; *bradul*) and the leaf (*frunza*). They are all in a way micro worlds or hypostases of

the mountain. The Vlach is longing in the winter for the "green leaf" brought by the spring for tending his flocks, joining his fighting comrades, or just enjoying freedom and nature. In Romanian culture "green leaf" of whatever flower or plant is the magic opening formula of every single rhymed folkloric piece, epic or lyric; that in it is quite a unique phenomenon. "To be green" means to be strong, enduring; "to say green" means to be sincere, straight forward and courageous. Until recently the leaf was a common "musical instrument."

The fir tree (*bradul*) holds a central place in the mythology of the Oriental Latins, being their primordial tree. Since it only grows at high altitudes, it reflects the specific Vlach identity; it is also a valuable historical indicator. It is the symbol of life and vitality, being part of all major Vlach rites of passage. It is present in both of his worlds, at birth, at wedding, and at his funeral ceremony,<sup>396</sup> guiding him in the underworld. The fir tree in this respect serves as the bridge between the two worlds.<sup>397</sup>

In Albanian *kodra* means hill, forested heights. The same meaning is found in Istro-Romanian, which points to the substratum. Titus Livius mentions in Dasaretia a place called Kodrioni; in Slovenia there is a hidronym Kodrjana, considered Thracian and explained through the Indo-European root *kadh-* to cover, to protect, to house.<sup>398</sup> Some linguists to the Albanian city of Skodra attribute the same etymology: *su'kodru*, at the foothill; Latin *sub* (under) and the Thracian *codru*.

The term *deal* (hill or forested hill) has been considered of Slavic origin. Re-examining closer some historical documents we find that a delegation from a Slavic community, which lived in a place called *Subdelitia* from the region of Thessalonica, presented itself to the Byzantine emperor Michael III (842-867). According to Phaedon

Malingoudis the toponym is formed by the Latin *sub* (under) and *del* (*deal*), considered Thracian,<sup>399</sup> as in the case of Skodra (*sub codru*; *su'codru*), both expressions found also in Romanian. We have therefore an area situated close to a mountain and bearing the Latin name *Sub deal*. It is considered a Slavic borrowing from Romanized Thracians. This interpretation pushes the Vlach documented presence in Greece by more than a century from the previous oldest record.

## **TRANSYLVANIA**

Back to our Latin-Slav relationship as seen through the toponymy of Zagoria we have one more item to deal with. We noticed that the Oriental Latins live or had lived in Vlachias or Zagorias, the last term being a concept that the ancient Slavs came up with, forced by the circumstances and the reality they encountered. The geographical pattern and location, the historical circumstances within our context, as well as the toponymy, make us consider another area. To the Magyars, writes Robert W. Setton-Watson, Transylvania was "the Land beyond the Forest, a plateau surrounded by mountains which shut it off from the great plains of central Hungary."<sup>400</sup> A classic description of what I previously called a Zagoria."The plain-loving Magyars of Hungary have pushed up the rim of mountainous Siebenburgen or Transylvania... while the highland region has a predominant Roumanian population."<sup>401</sup> "The Transylvanian basin is surrounded by mountains... and the flora of the upper Marosh (Muresh) basin resembles that of the steppes. The Magyars in these areas have occupied the broad valleys with their loamy terraces... but the Romanians have greater power of expansion."<sup>402</sup> "The Magyars, speaking generally, are a people of the plain: where the mountains begin, their predominance ends."<sup>403</sup> The Magyars weakened the Slavic element

because they both competed for the same lowlands<sup>404</sup> and both stand in total contrast (in that respect) to the Oriental Latins.

"Transylvania lives up to its name, and is a pastoral land. The wide valleys are fertile and the mountain slopes offer grazing for millions of sheep."<sup>405</sup> Though it may live up to its name, that name presents plenty of controversies. Many, if not the majority of specialists, agree that the original form of the name is the Hungarian *Erdely* (*Ardo/Erdo*; forest), which suffered some transformations, was translated into Latin, and we got Transylvania. Other Hungarian sources consider the root *ered* (comes from; originates from) which gave *Erdely*. A consensus has not been reached yet either among the Hungarians or the Romanians, within their particular frameworks. The Hungarian form *Erdely*<sup>406</sup> appears in the records for the first time in 1390; the Romanian *Ardeal* (as *Ardeliu*) in 1432.

The main concern seems to be explaining the name but what is lost from sight is the socio-cultural and historical setting. To the forefront I bring again the fundamental relationships which were analyzed in principle: Latin-Slav, mountain-plain (*planina-zupa*).<sup>407</sup> In this initial symbioses, which in time and in various places became murky or merged into each other, and in some places it survived unaltered, arriving to the present configuration, we can at least distinguish an ethnic structure, geographical and linguistic, and a pattern, a rule of this relationship. We observed that the Slavs, who preferred the plains, called a region inhabited by the Latins (and which happens to be mountainous) either *Zagoria*, or *Vlahia*, basically when it controlled the adjacent plains, as in the case of Thessaly, Epirus, Wallachia proper (the Danubian Wallachia). The *Zagorias* in turn could be best translated as "the region beyond the forested heights," with its variations: "the land beyond the forest" or "the land

beyond the mountains." We come across this Vlachias and Zagorias throughout the entire southeastern European area represented by our Latin and Slavic masses.

Transylvania expresses exactly the same Slav concept of relationship established already with the Latins in the term Zagoria, borrowed by the Hungarians and rendered now into Latin, the official language of their chancellery after adopting Christianity. The first written evidence is from 1075; "*Ultrasilvam ad castrum quod vocatur Turda*." *Ultra* is the Latin over, beyond, on the other side. The same meaning carries *trans* from *Partes Transylvanae*; *silva* is Latin for forest or a forested area. We discover various combinations as in *princeps Ultrasilvanus*, *Provincia Transilvana*, *Ultrasilvam regnum*,<sup>408</sup> *Terra Transylvania* and so on.<sup>409</sup> It is quite noticeable that there is no uniformity, which would imply familiarity with the concept, hence the transparent problems because various attempts are made to express the same reality.

Before the form *Siebenburgen* (Transylvania's German name) established itself, in the rhymed chronicle of Ottokar of Styria it appears as *Uberwald* (or *uber Walt*), "beyond the forest" or "beyond the forested area," revealing the same conceptual world. In this case the concept behind the term Transylvania owns nothing to either the Hungarian or Romanian language, but to the Slavic language<sup>410</sup> and its pre-established pattern.

Not only the Hungarians took the name of the region peopled by the Oriental Latins from the Slavs (Transylvania, via Zagoria), but also the term which designates the inhabitants of that territory. The northwestern Slavs, whom the Hungarians first encountered on their arrival before crossing the mountains, have the habit of changing in certain words the first vowel *a* in *o* or adding an extra *o* even in their own Slavic terms: the Russian

Vladimir, for example, becomes Volodimir. Our Latins, called by the other Slavs Vlachs, in Galicia (or the Galician Vlachs) are called *Volohi*, *Volohoveni* (*Bolohoveni*), following the same phonetic rules as in the Vladimir case. The Hungarians call a Vlach *Olah*, which suggests that they owe to the northwestern Slavs the first information about the neighboring places and peoples. This hypothesis corroborates also with the Hungarian historical tradition.<sup>411</sup>

As mentioned earlier, through the Slavs, with their life style and toponymy patterns, we have a record for the Vlachs. The Slavs named them and their territories, giving us an indication of the Vlach pattern in contrast to their own. The Latin-Slavic symbiosis was developed to the extent in which they got to share certain intimacies, exchanging concepts and customs. From the Slavic world, two of the best cultural and linguistic documents left, as far as this perspective is concerned, are the concepts of *planina*<sup>412</sup> and *Zagoria*. A *planina* is roughly the correspondent of a *terra* (*tara*), becoming *plai* in Romanian and *plaiu* in Aromanian. In Transylvania, in the language of church administration, the term *plai* was preserved and used to this day as the equivalent of a mountain district, the original designation. One strong *planina* or more formed or constituted a *Zagoria*, which became a political entity. A *zupa* (in the plains) is usually a *Sclavinia* (*Slavinia*); a territory (county or even "country") of the Slavs. A *Vlachia* (*Wallachia*) is a *zupa* with a Vlach majority (an exception rather to the rule), a plain controlled by the Vlachs and situated in the vicinity of a *Zagoria*, necessary for winterizing flocks and peoples, maintaining open options and mobility. Historically we encountered one in the plains of Thessaly, in the Danubian plains,<sup>413</sup> in the plains of Muzekia (Albania), on the Dalmatian coast, etc. One such *Vlachia* (not named so in the documents since it carries its probable Latin equivalent) must have been

in the Pannonian plains: *Pascua Romanorum* (the grazing field, the pasture of the Romans). From the original "traditional pastures," it was the only one given up (but partially retained), due to the coming of the Hungarians in the area.

The Byzantine historian Theophylact Simocatta narrates that in the years 592-3 a Byzantine army under Priscus undertook an expedition north of the Danube, against the Slavs... in Sclavinia, of course, which was situated in present day Romanian Wallachia.<sup>414</sup> The answer is found in the Chronicle of Nestor (Old Rus, compiled in Kiev in 1113), which kept the tradition of the Slavs being chased away by the Vlachs from the Danube, in their contemporary places. Nestor's account may refer to a similar incident but in principle we distinguish the problem, its origin and its tradition. The Danubian plains were invaded many times by various peoples and bore temporarily the name of the invaders, "officially" becoming Sclavinia, Cumania or even Scythia, when the real new name or identity of the invaders was not properly known. A certain principle seems to be here at work. As a large, fertile plain (*zupa*), it is a great attraction for plain loving people, especially for agriculturalists like the Slavs. We can detect in here the "natural" Slavic tendency of occupying the plains, which they invaded prior to 592. The Danubian plains must have also been a vital place for winterizing (numbers and strength are also factors to be considered), a historically proved fact, so the Vlachs had to maintain the plains for their use, whether by themselves or occasionally sharing them with others, as they did with the Thessalian and Muzekian plains, to this day still retaining fairly large concentrations of Vlachs.

## SUMMARY

I tried in this chapter to extract as much information as possible from a rather new and quite unorthodox perspective, in order to draw some conclusions consistent with the rest of the material presented and to Vlach ethnohistory. I have built on the premises that no culture can live in isolation and that a space or a region is created by an interaction, as I was arguing in the introduction. That is why I approached culture as a verb rather than a noun, and to account for its dynamics, which include a sort of reciprocity and symmetry, interconnectedness without which there is no understanding. Based on the idea of both, interaction and border maintenance of two different entities with their specific Latin and Slavic characteristics, I enlarged the principle of their relationships. By doing that and treating relationship as a key concept, I was able to infer from the known side of the equation, part of the unknown contained on the other side. The results from the methodology and the interpretations fit well with my larger picture of Vlach ethnohistory, the toponymy being a great reminder (and recorder) of identity building and boundary maintenance. In spite of the modernist theorists and their insistence on the modern origin of nations (as a modern invention), the depth and complexity of Vlach identity building and boundary enforcement prove quite the contrary. If Anthony Smith theorizes about the ethnic mythomoteur and its formation, through the Vlachs I have an empirical case of a much older, longer historical identity, definitely “pre-modern,” emerged from a Roman *populus*, a Roman diaspora, as part of a larger and deeper process. This is the importance of my original contribution: adding to the theory proposed by Anthony Smith a real empirical case, using the Vlachs to see how an identity, an ethnic group, actually emerges.

## CONCLUSION

It would be relevant, I thought, to conclude with using the language as a "document," another cultural factor, which deserves to be considered. After all, language is a cultural memory. I presented as a case the implications of a toponym like Zagoria, of a concept like *neam*, and of the history (of the name, as well as of the institution and its functions) of other important terms like *comitatenses* and *armatol*. The Thracians and Romans left alone and isolated in the eastern European area as a Roman Diaspora, simply but proudly preserved their Roman identity and the Romans' language. In principle, certain historical and socio-cultural processes are recorded in the language. The "dark ages" of Vlach history, the retreat to the mountain and the forest, is reflected in "the green leaf" motif of folklore and in language, as an involution, a history in reverse, a gradual disappearing of the screen.

The Latin *mergere* (to plunge, to submerge -in water; *mergo* also meant to hide) became to walk, to go; to walk to the forest or mountain (*a merge*) was literally to become "immersed" in it, and that is precisely what happened.<sup>415</sup> The Vlachs "walked" through history in a "submerged" fashion, as Vatro Murvar suggested; they did not "merge" with the flow of (regular) history but "walked" individually, on their own. The Latin *pavimentum* (a "paved" surface; cobblestone) lost not just its luster, but the whole content; it became dirt, earth, ground. *Civitas* (city) became *cetate* (stronghold), showing that it was under siege. Not only the city was under siege but, according to the etymology of the word, even the village (*sat*), which is the Latin *fossatum* (ditch; trench). According to Eugen Lozovan the terms *cetate* (stronghold) and *sat* (village) are key toponyms for Romanian language and history.

Their fate clearly shows the military origin and the defensive organization of the inhabited areas. "The ditch which had to surround the village it is still visible on an engraving from 1718, representing a Morlak village."<sup>416</sup> *Veteranus* (army veteran) indicates the most popular occupation before retirement; *batran* (mentioned previously) means an elder or old (as an adjective) and *batranete*, old age. *Cararia*, the highway (where the "wagons" travelled), became *carare*, the narrowest pathway, and so on. Though it is an echo of Roman greatness shrunk to its smallest possible size, it survived nonetheless. In the same way *armotolism* is *comitatenses* reduced and transformed by historical circumstances.

This is where the Vlachs are now, still hanging on, scattered amongst "others" but still speaking their language, living on boundaries, maintaining boundaries and being boundaries. Because of the many competing national historical agendas, there was not possible to get a full picture of the Vlachs, who were not the main focus of any national core, and as a periphery, ignored; hence, the Vlachs have always been in the shadows. I set my goal in the introduction to reconstruct their ethnohistory. This work is the result of the largest syntheses that I could manage. I presented various perspectives and hypotheses and verified them for corroboration with each other, with the available data, and with the historical records. When it comes to methodology and the theoretical backbone, several things have to be mentioned. I owe to Fernand Braudel the idea of memory as "structure" and to Traian Stoianovich for its application in the Balkan cultural area. On orality, the story as founding and articulating spaces, and border interpretation (transgression), I am in debt to Michel de Certeau. Mircea Eliade provided some key ideas, from interpretation (and the courage to do it) to the archaic universe of meanings as an ethnic specific cultural code (ethnic paradigm); the concept of mythical scenario as ideological structure, an exemplary pattern for thought

and action and which I applied to the military saints' case. Though we still do not know the whole "scenario" and details, at least we were able to extract the essence. It opened up a whole new area to be surveyed and reassessed. It was also helpful because that approach brought in information where the historical records were absent, providing continuity and more coherence to the large picture. Last, but not least, to Frederik Barth I owe the concept of cultural boundaries and (cultural) boundary maintenance, and for the ethnohistoric approach, the best suited to reconstruct the Vlach ethnohistory, a great debt to Anthony Smith. However, the only somewhat problematic item from the inventory of the ethnic core, which by the way, is a very useful concept, was the "ancestral land," which the Vlachs do not seem to possess or claim in that particular way, making a very unique case. Finally, the interpretations are very much my own.

To sum up, here are the most important elements of the Vlach ethnic core, ethnic markers and ethnohistory: the *comitatenses*, providing socio-political and economic structure, served as a matrix or a prototype for subsequent patterns responsible for subsistence and survival; the military tradition (with transhumance),<sup>417</sup> represented Vlach praxis (action), a social, historical, political, economic and cultural factor; the saints structured Vlach ideology and axiology and were cultural, religious, and spiritual symbols; the Latin-Slavic symbioses revealed ethnic structure, a cultural rule of relationships, geographic, linguistic, and cultural factors, identity with the mountain.

The relationships and interconnectedness between a belief, a value, a custom and a praxis converged through the particular concepts of war and the military saints, both united in the ethnic core which owns its existence to the institution of *comitatenses*, as argued.

Through these mutual relationships I got to fill in some of the emptiness or the silence of historical documents. The Vlach lesson is polyvalent. It is a history of resilience and endurance and of no ordinary accomplishments. It is also the history of a very successful strategy of survival. Against all odds the Vlachs survived and proved the strength of an idea and its memory, and what that idea was capable of achieving, together with the price paid for it. As for myself, I tried to stay close to what Michel de Certeau stated as being the historian's task, not in charge of "speaking the truth" but in charge of "diagnosing the false."<sup>418</sup>

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>"All things come out into the meadow" or "the truth will eventually come out." In the forested mountain (the Vlach traditional environment) you can only see things when they are in the meadow. Vlach saying, quoted in Nicholas Balamaci (2009:2)

<sup>2</sup>Reginald Wyon, a British foreign correspondent, in *The Balkans from Within* (1904).

<sup>3</sup>This is how the official name of the society is spelled.

<sup>4</sup>Tim Salmon (1995:304).

<sup>5</sup>Thede Kah (2006:57).

<sup>6</sup>Tom Winnifrith (1995:68).

<sup>7</sup>Thede Kahl (2006:60).

<sup>8</sup>Ion Vulpe (2005:22).

<sup>9</sup>Thede Kahl (2006,27).

<sup>10</sup>(Florin Curta 2006:416). It is of significance to notice that a pioneering initiative of "reconciliation" comes from the least European country, namely Turkey, with participation of teams from Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Romania and Turkey of course, to an eight month pilot project (2001-2002) supported, amongst others, by UNESCO, to bring together especially the academics, in order to review primary and secondary level history textbooks currently in use, to propose alternative ways of reflecting the political, social and cultural histories of these countries. See here Collective 2003 Improvement of Balkan History Textbooks Project Reports.

<sup>11</sup>See Bernard Lewis (1994) who argues that religion, rather than citizenship or nationality still is the principal element which determines identity in the Middle East; the Ottoman example worked within this framework.

<sup>12</sup>Walter W. Pohl (1998:20-1).

<sup>13</sup>Adolf Armbruster (1993:23).

<sup>14</sup>Tom Winnifrith (1987:119).

<sup>15</sup>Speros Vryonis Jr. (1968:130) sustains that "the Greeks eventually adopted the name Rhomaioi as they were conscious of the Roman political inheritance."

<sup>16</sup>Mark Mazower (2000:59).

<sup>17</sup>We have an example in the historical Asen brothers of the early XIIIth century, the founders of the Second Bulgarian Empire, a case in which we know for sure - from the correspondence between the Asens and the pope which was preserved, and where the specific Vlach identity of the brothers is mentioned; see Lee Robert Wolff (1949:190, note 60) - that our subjects were not only Vlachs but also brothers, something we would have never guessed otherwise. The Asen brothers were Ivan Asen, nicknamed Belgun, Theodor Peter, and Ioannitsa, nicknamed Kaloian. Ivan is a Slavic name, Asen eventually means "king" in the Khazar language (or at least it is of Turkish origin), and Belgun is a Cuman name. Theodor and Peter are Christian names which could be carried by any ethnic group living within the Byzantine world, including the Vlachs, of course; Ioannitsa is very Vlach, the only definite Vlach name from the bunch, and his nickname, Kaloian, is Greek (John the Handsome).

<sup>18</sup>Tom J. Winnifrith (2002:158); Serb, Albanian, Bulgarian and Vlach, all at once.

<sup>19</sup>Quoted in Marcu Beza (1920:44).

<sup>20</sup>"I am an Orthodox, I was an Exarchist (Bulgarian), now I am a Serb," a Macedonian is quoted as saying. See Bozidar Jezernik (2004:181). The same author tells us that "some people claimed to be Greeks, although they could not speak the Greek language. In Bitola (Macedonia)... in 1905, the three Talevtchine brothers, Stevan, Nikola and Dimitrie, notable merchants, were respectively Bulgarian, Romanian and Greek" (Ib., 182), a covert *pecalba* pattern in this case.

<sup>21</sup>See here especially Sarah Green's *Notes from the Balkans: Locating Marginality and Ambiguity on the Greek-Albanian Border* (2005), Tom J. Winnifrith (2002), Alexandru Madgearu (2001), Tim Salmon (1995), and Jean Nouzille (1996).

<sup>22</sup>(Florin Curta 2006:13); Robert Lee Wolff (1945), more than half a century ago, raised the same concerns.

<sup>23</sup>Robert Lee Wolff (1949:203). Though most of the scholars refer to the same period and the same event, they quote Cedrenus (Kedrenos) instead. I am impressed by R. L. Wolff's critical treatment of the topic so I will leave it at that, since I could not verify it myself. In principle here it does not affect our argument.

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<sup>24</sup>See Robert Lee Wolff (1949:206) on historical sources; Alan Wace & Maurice Thompson (1914:100) on folkloric material: "To aim at completeness would be impossible, for it would take a lifetime or longer to reach it." Trying to explain (or understand) certain aspect of Vlach history in Samarina, here is their conclusion: "These are the facts that local tradition loves to retail, and it is impossible to check them. To follow back for any period of years the history of any one of the families of Samarina with their ever-changing surnames and continual inconsistencies is beyond the patience of any ordinary mortal" (Ib. 147). As for Victor Friedman (2001:30), concerning the origins of the Vlachs, he states that it is "an issue that is implicated in various claims to legitimacy and entitlement, despite the fact that the concrete historical facts are not determinable with certainty given our present state of knowledge, and they may never be determined unless new sources come to light."

<sup>25</sup>See especially Tom. J. Winnifrith (1987) *The Vlachs: The History of a Balkan People* and Tom. J Winnifrith (1995) *Shattered Eagles - Balkan Fragments*.

<sup>26</sup>Following Radu Niculescu (1991:127), I consider the pair made of value and sign (axiology and semiotics), which are abstract cultural emblems, as complementary, one actually being comprised into the other, a reciprocal and simultaneous relationship: the values become forms (or achieve material shapes) through signs, the signs justify their existence as values. The same principle applies also to the Vlach military tradition (as value) and the military saints (as sign).

<sup>27</sup>Eric Hobsbawm (1990:9-10).

<sup>28</sup>Ernest Gellner (1983)

<sup>29</sup>Gilbert Durand (1999: 5)

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup>Ian Shapiro (2005). Pierre Bourdieu, cited in Michael W. Apple (1990:XV)

<sup>32</sup>See more on this in John Nandris (2001) and in the section dealing with the theory. This is also very similar to Radu Niculescu's relationship between value and sign (see footnote 20), here the relationship being between value and praxis (action) or sign and praxis; one could go a step farther and include all three factors in the correlation, making it three-dimensional: value, sign, and praxis.

<sup>33</sup>Anthony Smith (1999:14).

<sup>34</sup>Traian Stoianovich (1994), a student of Fernand Braudel, applies successfully the concept to the Balkans, drawing some very important conclusions, some of which we'll be used in this study, particularly about transhumance, *hajduks*, *pecalba*, etc.

<sup>35</sup>These traits become visible and crystallized especially by outside observers as in the case of Wendy Bracewell's treatment of the *hajduks*, the Balkan outlaws and "irregulars" (2003 and 1992), Ulf Brunnbauer's (2007) typology of highlanders (Balkan mountain type), Jovan Cvijic's Dinaric type (1918:281-299 and 318-332) - a very detailed and profound study- and metanastic movements (1918), Dinko Tomasic's Dinaric ("violent") type (1948), John Koliopoulos' "brigands" (1987), Vatro Murvar's "power seekers" (1956), Traian Stoianovich's Balkan merchant (1992) and "pecalba" (1994), to quote just a few authors that developed a sort of a "Balkan typology," a topic dealt with partially in the chapter The Long Military Tradition, and the rest in the chapter The Land beyond the Forest.

<sup>36</sup>See here Fernand Braudel (1980:31). For a succinct explanation, see Barry Cunliffe (2008, 17). "At the base of it all is the *longueduree*, the deep rhythm of underlying forces influencing all human society, a history in which all change is slow, a history of constant repetition, of ever recurring cycles. This is geographical time, a time of landscapes that enable and constrain, of stable or slow developing technologies and of deep-seated ideologies." I find several similarities between Fernand Braudel's *structure* and Anthony Smith's concept of an *ethnic core*; that which endures...

<sup>37</sup>I would like to remind the reader that in here again we are considering the relationships between value, sign, and praxis (practice, experience, action; see Radu Niculescu 1991), all found together and best explained through the concept of mythical scenario.

<sup>38</sup>Actually in name they are the only ones from all Romance-speaking peoples (or any other peoples for that matter) who preserved the appellation *Romanus*.

<sup>39</sup>More or less the equivalent of Anthony Smith's concept of the ethnic core (as a social expression).

<sup>40</sup>Both emperors were of Balkan stock so in a way one can argue that a local solution was provided, involving mobility and strategies present already in transhumant pastoralism.

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<sup>41</sup>Tom J. Winnifrith (1987:78) thinks that by weakening the *limitanei* and strengthening the *comitatenses*, the emperor Constantine must have helped Latin. From the Latin *comitatenses* in English we got "county" and "count."

<sup>42</sup>In a study translated from French, C.R. Whittaker (1997) argues that the social class structure implemented on the frontier lands under Roman control was retained, when conquered by the "barbarians." He also shows that the Roman frontier was rather permeable, allowing societies (and economies) to grow, permitting a transformation of Roman society, breathing new life into the empire and not causing its complete extinction.

<sup>44</sup>See here the arguments presented already in footnote 21. In the modern use or acceptance of these concepts (what constitutes a "nation" and how it is made possible) the "ancestral homeland" is of vital necessity.

<sup>45</sup>Raphael Samuel (1999: 5), dealing with the idea of nation, mentions that "in Herodotus the term is freely applied both to *the pastoral nomads of Thrace* and to the city-states of Asia Minor and Attica."

<sup>46</sup>On this topic see Michael Ryder in Laszlo Bartosiewicz and Haskel Greenfield (1999:191), who argues for a very ancient practice of transhumance in southeast Europe, attributing its origins to the ancestors of the Vlachs ("from prehistory"), and John Nandris (ib.124), who points to the fact that linguistic terms "from the highly evolved technology of pastoralism" such as *stana*, *strunga*, *branza*, are held to be older than the Latin substratum and to derive from the Dacian or Thracian words; certain terms like *stana* (the site itself) passed into the Slavic languages (*stan*) and even in Greek (*stani*).

<sup>47</sup>See Averil Cameron (2009:17).

<sup>48</sup>See Thede Kahl (2006:117-118) and Matila Ghyka (1940).

<sup>49</sup>From the Byzantine perspective, these were the Vlachs within or rather in the proximity of the Hungarian realm; later on the Romanians from Transylvania will be called by their independent brothers (inhabiting Moldova and Wallachia) *Ungureni*, for the same reason.

<sup>50</sup>For the Byzantine records see Nicolae Serbanescu and Nicolae Stoicescu (1987:5).

<sup>51</sup>See here Victor Friedman (2001: 27), who spells the Vlach term Vlah, which is closer to what it ought to be. Since the term Vlach has a wider circulation and to avoid further confusions, I will be using the term Vlach.

<sup>52</sup>At least from Anna Comnena's time (1083-1148).

<sup>53</sup>Mircea Vulcanescu (1996:237)

<sup>54</sup>Sorcery (and magic) seems to be an ancient practice and attribute related to the Vlachs. There is a mention in the Primary Chronicle for the Galician Vlachs and more instances for the Byzantine Vlachs (during the revolt of the Asens for once, the "hints" of Benjamin of Tudela, etc.); within the southern Slav tradition a good presentation of the Vlach sorcery (called "*Vlash* current") is found in Radomir Ristic (2009).

<sup>55</sup>On this topic there will be a more elaborate discussion (pertaining the linguists and the presumed "original homeland" of the Vlachs) in the chapter "The Land beyond the Forest."

<sup>56</sup>Victor Friedman (2001:27).

<sup>57</sup>See here Theodor Capidan (1942:146). For the Hungarians it became *Olah*, since they took it from the Slavic version of old Rus: *Voloh* (*Boloh*), where *b* and *v* are interchangeable (similar case presents the Byzantine form *Vlachoi/Blachoi*, *Blahos/Vlahos*), explained in a different chapter. In the Primary Chronicle of the Kievan Rus, or Nestor's Chronicle, as it formerly had been known, which concludes by 1110 (See ed. Samuel Cross 1973:12), we encounter the *Volohi* and *zemljavolosskija*, the country of the *Volohi* (Vlachs). This form is the original one preserved by August L. Schlozer's edition (1802-1809) which is probably the most critical, in which the original Slavonic text was replaced with Latin characters, along with the German translation and commentaries. The following editions (starting with Franz Miklosich, 1860) the original Slavonic text is changed from *Voloh* to Vlach (Ioan Lupas 1934:307). The chronicle sets these events in which the *Volohi* are involved between the years 6396-6406 (888-898). The *Volohi* of Galicia became in time Slovaks, Moravians, Polish, Ruthenians, Ukrainians and "Moldavians." It is also very likely that this northern Slavic form of old Rus, *Volohi*, was passed on not only to the Hungarians but also back to the Germans, since we find in the *Nibelungelied* (the Nibelungen saga, written probably around 1200) the form *Vlochen*, which developed into *Wallachen/Wallachian* (the later Romanian) form.

<sup>58</sup>See here Isaac Taylor (1899:61); from the same Indo-European root (here Sanskrit) developed the name of the Beloochs, "the Welsh" of India.

<sup>59</sup>*Hoditai* could represent road guards, just as *kleisurai* stood for the guards (defenders) of the mountain passes, both functions performed traditionally by the Vlachs.

<sup>60</sup>See Tom J. Winnifrith (1987: 9-25 and 1995: 26-42).

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<sup>61</sup>See the information in Grigore Nandris (1966: XVII).

<sup>62</sup>The decree issued for this purpose states that Paulus is "*Comes de Valache, in partibus Greciae qui de Nobile Sanguine Tractus existit.*" So here is a count of "noble blood" from the Greek Walachia (Marcu Beza 1920:33).

<sup>63</sup>The term *Roman*, the equivalent of the Romanian version (or Daco-Roman) appears for the first time in a document from 1345, in a letter of Pope Clement VI. The Venetian writer Domenico Negri uses the term *Roman* in his work (*Geographiae commentariorum libri XI*: 103) in 1557, mentioning that the Vlachs call each other Romans (Romanians). See Octavian Buhociu (1979:254).

<sup>64</sup>On this matter and the Megleno-Romanian case see Thede Kahl (2006:17), who did field work amongst them. "Would have been as little likely to speak of themselves as Wallacks as would be an American to call himself a Yankee;" in Emily Gerard (1888:216).

<sup>65</sup>Stephanie Scwandner-Sievers in (ed.) Maria Todorova (2004:120).

<sup>66</sup>Victor Friedman (2001:32). Istro-Romanian, which is an Eastern Balkan Romance dialect (or language), according to this classification, is situated more to the west than Dalmatian, the Western Balkan Romance language.

<sup>67</sup>Most of the specialists consider that we are dealing with four dialects of a language called either proto Romanian or Romanian. Aromanian is for example called Macedo-Vlach by Matilda Caragiu-Marioteanu (1997:446), instead of Macedo-Romanian (the term most linguists would use), following the tradition used by Mihail Boiagi (Boyadzi) in 1813, himself a "Macedo-Vlach," who wrote a "Grammar of Aromanian or Macedonovlah" in Greek and German and published it in Vienna. Alexandru D. Xenopol, Alexandru Graur and Ion Coteanu consider that we deal with separate languages. The best presentation of this debate is in Gheorghe Ivanescu (1980: 30-46).

<sup>68</sup>Matilda Caragiu-Marioteanu (1997:451).

<sup>69</sup>In Pericle Papahagi (1927:147).

<sup>70</sup>During the mid 1700s Moscopole (Albanian Voskopoje) had a population of about 70.000, mostly Vlachs (according to some accounts - Johann Thunmann for once- from 1774, everyone there spoke Vlach); it had 72 churches, 300 workshops and 14 corporations, being second biggest Balkan city after Istanbul (Constantinople). Here was the only Greek printing press of the Ottoman Empire which, coincidentally, was the only other printing press that the empire had (besides the one in Istanbul) and an Academy, with works published in both, Vlach and Greek, using the Greek alphabet and promoting the Greek language. Daniel the Moscopolite, a native Vlach priest for example, wrote in 1770 a *Tetraglosson* (quadrilingual lexicon) of *Romaika* (Greek), *Vlahika* (Vlach), *Alvanitica* (Albanian) and *Voulgarika* (Bulgarian), the first Balkan (polyglot yet) dictionary, aiming obviously at the Hellenization of the non Greeks. It is important to notice that, after the final destruction of the city (1788), most of the Vlachs (by now an urbanized population which "used gold and silver cutlery and Italian faience plates... Venetians mirrors..." in Irina Nicolau 2002:82 and which obviously represents the commercial elite) returned to shepherding, as they have done many times before when everything else failed; a sort of back to basics Vlach style.

<sup>71</sup>For a good presentation of the Albanian Vlachs see Constantin Burileanu (1906) and, for a recent analyses, Asterios Koukoudis (2003: 270-369), who provides an excellent account (probably the best and up to date) of the Vlach diaspora (and dispersal).

<sup>72</sup>See here Ion Vulpe (2005: 22) who reproduces several good studies regarding the "colonization" and other topics about the Vlachs in Romania.

<sup>73</sup>This Vlachs are the offspring of the Meglen Vlachs who inhabited the mountains Paico and became Muslims in the XVIIIth century; see Thede Kahl (2006:17). In 1923 the entire village of Nanti (or Notia), since they were "Turks," was expelled to Turkey. Their present number in there is estimated at about 500. Before the expulsion (in early 1900) the village Nanti had a population of over 3.600.

<sup>74</sup>In this respect see also Mircea Eliade's stand, who states: "These universes of archaic spiritual values will enrich the Western world in other ways than by adding to its vocabulary (*manna, taboo, totem*, etc.) or to the history of social structures." See Mircea Eliade (1972: IX).

<sup>75</sup>John Vincent (2005:30).

<sup>76</sup>Ib. (23). How does the silence speak for the Vlachs? It is through their language and tradition, through the transhumant pathways, military expeditions, mountain passes and mule tracks, the *hajduk* and the epic tales, through the green leaves of the forest (as a cultural motif) mentioned in all the folkloric material, through the military saints...

<sup>77</sup>For the critical argument see Hans U. Gumbrecht (2003).

<sup>78</sup>For this and other arguments see (ed.) Jan Ziolkowski (1990).

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<sup>79</sup>Obviously a reference to Fernand Braudel's concept which we mentioned already (considered for structure), but not found in Anthony Smith's bibliography.

<sup>80</sup>Anthony Smith (1999:10).

<sup>81</sup>"The absence of a durable ethnic rhythm means anarchy and ethnic dissolution." Dumitru Staniloae (1939, 49).

<sup>82</sup>We have again the relationship value-sign (of Radu Niculescu), to which I added praxis, here our praxis being Pierre Bourdieu's correspondent notion of *habitus*. It is manifested in a "doxic" society, where "the established cosmological and political order is perceived not as arbitrary, but as a self evident and natural order which goes without saying and therefore goes unquestioned;" Pierre Bourdieu (1977:166).

<sup>83</sup>(George de Vos 1982:17).

<sup>84</sup>Franco Ferrarotti (1990:64).

<sup>85</sup>See here Keith Thor Carlson in (ed.) John Sutton Lutz (2007:49).

<sup>86</sup>See here the linguist Alexanrdu Niculescu and historian Ioan -Aurel Pop in (eds.) in Ioan-Aurel Pop and Ioan Bolovan (2006:129-130). More details on this topic in the chapter on identity.

<sup>87</sup>Anthony Smith (1999:14).

<sup>88</sup>See here especially Harald Eidheim (1969) and Abner Cohen (1969 and 1974).

<sup>89</sup>See Fredrik Barth (1969), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*.

<sup>90</sup>"Not method, but a capacity for subjective experience, is the only approach to understanding," writes Adolf Jensen (1963: 36), originally in German (1951). Leo Frobenius (another German) and Lucian Blaga (a Romanian of Vlach descent on his mother side) developed original systems of morphology and philosophy of culture, trying to account for the qualitative dimension in human culture, left unfortunately unexplored and unused.

<sup>91</sup>For a detailed exposure and in proper context see Sian Jones (1997:51-83).

<sup>92</sup>It is named after Karl Popper who regarded that the growth of scientific knowledge is done through critical selection.

<sup>93</sup>Fredrik Barth (1969:10).

<sup>94</sup>See Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers (2004). For a somewhat similar (but older) topic, plus rivalry and competition over the same resources, see the study done by Muriel Schein (1974) on Vlachs and Sarakatchans of northern Greece.

<sup>95</sup>See Sian Jones (1997:73).

<sup>96</sup>During the reign of Heraclius and after 628 "the Slavs were permanently and officially established in the northern section of the Balkans." (George Mylonas 1947:14).

<sup>97</sup>(Tom J. Winnifrieth 1987:91).

<sup>98</sup>(John Fine 1994:12-13).

<sup>99</sup>We mentioned earlier the equivalence of the terms Vlach and shepherd; its opposite term is Bulgarian which, within the Balkan context indicates a person engaged in agriculture (an agriculturalist; a farmer). See Jaques AnceI (1926:66).

<sup>100</sup>See H. R. Wilkinson (1955).

<sup>101</sup>This is a personal insight which will be treated in the last chapter, The Land beyond the Forest.

<sup>102</sup>Mircea Eliade makes use of this concept especially in the work entitled *Zalmoxis, the Vanishing God* (1972), originally published in French (1970). Zalmoxes is a Dacian god, the Dacians in their turn being one of the main peoples who were the ancestors of the Vlachs (the Dacians lived in present day Romania and belonged to the great Thracian family of peoples, being the most numerous, after the Hindus, according to Herodotus). Mircea Eliade argues that there is a religious meaning of ethnic names, in the case of the Dacians, who present a mythico-ritual scenario of the wolf, may explain the transformation of a martial initiatory designation into an ethnic eponym (Mircea Eliade 1972:15). As noted in the above quote, Mircea Eliade uses occasionally, besides mythical scenario, the mythico-ritual scenario version, stressing in that case the ritual part as the embodiment (expression) of the mythical scenario which it represents.

<sup>103</sup>See here some of the groundbreaking studies of Mircea Eliade like (1952) *Images and Symbols*, (1954) *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (or *Cosmos and History*), (1959) *The Sacred and the Profane*, works which are still unsurpassed.

<sup>104</sup>Mircea Eliade (1952:57).

<sup>105</sup>Mircea Eliade (1952:34,57).

<sup>106</sup>Mircea Eliade (1952:12-13).

<sup>107</sup>Mircea Eliade (1952:19).

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<sup>108</sup>Edward Sapir (1994:177).

<sup>109</sup>Jaques Le Goff (1992:55-6).

<sup>110</sup>In the Romanian version is used the term adhesion.

<sup>111</sup>Mircea Eliade (1972:189).

<sup>112</sup>See here Paul Simionescu (1983:50 and 112).

<sup>113</sup>See here John Nandris (2001:XII and 19).

<sup>114</sup>This is a relationship which I mentioned several times already. Because I consider it very important, I am trying to present various attempts of explaining it. It also gives us a good idea why customs and traditions are so strongly guarded and preserved.

<sup>115</sup>Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig, a Danish poet (and folklorist), quoted in Michel de Certeau (1988:131).

<sup>116</sup>Folklore or oral tradition in the Balkans comprises a great body of literature and is a complex subject. One can barely touch its surface in a study like ours. Nonetheless, I will be using certain folkloric motifs which are tangent to our topic like the military saints, the hajduks (outlaws), the "green leaf" or fir motif, the epic or transhumance and others.

<sup>117</sup>For oral-formulaic poetry see especially Albert Bates Lord (1960) and Miles John Foley (1995); for rhymed (lyric, traditional) poetry and memory relationship see Frederic Turner (1983).

<sup>118</sup>Tiberiu Alexandru (1980:6).

<sup>119</sup>See here Michel de Certeau (1988:133).

<sup>120</sup>Michel de Certeau, quoting Yuri Lotman and complementing Mircea Eliade (1988:123).

<sup>121</sup>Michel de Certeau (1988:124).

<sup>122</sup>Michel de Certeau (1988:129).

<sup>123</sup>Here Michel de Certeau implies the requirement of a transfer, a sort of a vehicle or a container, a bridgehead which does a transferring beyond, in another realm, unknown and invisible.

<sup>124</sup>Michel de Certeau (1988:129).

<sup>125</sup>Victor Turner (1969:95).

<sup>126</sup>Dumitru Macrea (1961,56).

<sup>127</sup>As Anthony Smith would have called it (1999:9).

<sup>128</sup>See Traian Stoianovich (1992:1-79).

<sup>129</sup>Fuelled by this tendency to extend a mastering embrace over as many things and places as possible, the Aromanian plays the roles of several characters. The transparency and simple solidity of his inner being, doubled by an extraordinary energy, help him bear the burden of so many disguises" (Irina Nicolau 2002, 61).

<sup>130</sup>Here see Theodor Capidan (1942), Alan Wace and Maurice Thompson (1914), Irina Nicolau (2002).

<sup>131</sup>Particularly Vatro Murvar (1956) and Constantin Papanace (1959).

<sup>132</sup>On this topic the best literature comes from the English and History departments. "Since Herodotus first singled them out as the bravest of all Thracians, the Getes (Getae) were repeatedly remarked in classical literature for their prowess in arms" writes J. A. Leake (1967:17). Leake goes on mentioning Homer, Strabo, Mela ("some of the Thracians, such as the Getae, are intrepid and mock death"), Solinus, Ovid ("...they cared nothing for the might of Rome" or calls them "veritable pictures of Mars"), Thucydides, Pliny, Virgil (in the *Georgics*, referring to the Getic lands calls them "the martial land of Rhesus"; in *Aeneid* he makes a similar remark: Mars..."rules over the Getic field"); according to Justin, the Getae were one of the few tribes ever to defeat the Macedonians in Alexander's

time, when they inflicted a great disaster on Alexander's general Zopyrion. Even after their (Geto-Dacians) conquest by Trajan, "their love of warfare continued unabated" (ib. 18). Dio Chrysostom complains that, from all the barbarians, the Getae "are virtually the most warlike of all" and Lucian comments in the same vein: "Whenever I looked at the country of the Getae I saw them fighting."

<sup>133</sup>"Because of their pre-eminence in war... the Getes are intimately connected to Mars... Mars may actually be of Thracian origins; his special haunts, Mt. Haemus, in the land of the Getae..." (J.A. Leake 1967:18). Uses Vergil (see the above note: "Mars... ruling over the Getic fields"), Statius (where Mars is referred to as Venus' "Getic lord") and Valerius Flaccus (in *Argonautica*), where Mars emerges "from his Getic caverns."

<sup>134</sup>The tribes of the Getae impressed the Goths (and the Germanic tribes in general) so much that the Getae were adopted as their mythical and historical ancestors. Most of the modern writers attribute this "adoption" to a "confusion" between Goths and Getae that goes back to Jordanes and Cassiodorus. Was that a confusion (or as it is fashionable now to call, "invented tradition") or a real tradition written down (adopted)? As a consequence the Saxon (German) settlers of Transylvania considered the Geto-Dacian their ancestors, the Spanish royal blazon has Getic insignia (via the Goths), Denmark was called Dacia on medieval maps and in historical

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records, and even the first piece of "English literature," Beowulf, has a Getic hero. It may help to remember that the Goths appeared as a historical entity in the area of the lower Danube, the heart of the Getic territory. There is a possibility of a Getic-Gothic symbiosis (see here Alexandru Busuioceanu 1954:99-114) but on that subject we can only speculate. Nonetheless, the martial qualities of the Geto-Dacians were not just a locally known phenomenon and only in antiquity; they echoed throughout Europe, until late medieval times, including, as we mentioned, the British Isles (via the Saxons). The best treatment of the subject is found in A. Busuioceanu (1954), unfortunately only in Romanian but a very good presentation is also found in English (J.A. Leake, 1967).

<sup>135</sup>Quoted in Stelian Brezeanu (2003:21).

<sup>136</sup>To simplify the problem and avoid a multitude of names, as well as confusion for the non-specialist, I will be using the term Thracian from now on for the ancestors of the Vlachs, as a generic name for the substratum, the Balkan natives prior to the arrival of the Slavs, including, besides the Thracians from south of the Danube, the Geto-Dacian tribes of former Dacia (present day Romania). Not only did the Getae live on both sides of the Danube, they were also Thracian tribes, together with the Dacians. This problem is actually similar to the one encountered with the generic name of Vlach and its spatial distribution, which, in general, matches quite precisely the distribution of the substratum, the totality of the Thracian tribes. I consider this fact in itself as part of the solution to the Thracian (substratum) - Vlach equation. On the relationship Getae-Dacians, the ancient authorities tell us that the Getae and the Dacians (Daci) were considered to be the same people and their names could be and were used interchangeably. "Strabo writes that their language was the same and that a distinction between the two could be made solely on the bases of geography" (Getae towards the Black Sea and Danube, the Daci being the western branch), quoted in J.A. Leake (1967:22). J. A. Leake also quotes Pliny, who "explains more simply that the Getae were called Dacians by the Romans;" Appian, who refers to "the Getae, who are called Dacians;" and Dio Cassius, who claims that Dacian is the term used by the natives themselves, though "some Greek writers refer to them as Getae."

<sup>137</sup>Robert Browning (1975:25).

<sup>138</sup>Patrick Geary (2003:90).

<sup>139</sup>64.000 on the lower Danube; "Thrace served as a reservoir of military manpower in late antiquity" (ib. 23-25).

<sup>140</sup>See Hugh Elton (1996:134).

<sup>141</sup>"Without doubt the medieval Vlachs were a highly mobile people..." Jean W. Sedlar (1994:8).

<sup>142</sup>See here Asterios Koukoudis (2004).

<sup>143</sup>A seasonal and economic migration for temporary work, in parallel to the military carrier, first for hard, dangerous, or specialized labour; later, for any type of work, but especially in ascendancy when the demand for military skills started to decline. It is generally conceived as a Balkan phenomenon, Stoyan Pribichevich calls a *pecalbar* an itinerant craftsman and considers it typical Macedonian (1982:171). Traian Stoianovich calls it a Slavic form of a term with a Romance etymology ("probably Arumanian," he adds), in which resides both the idea of cattle (a chief form of wealth) and money, occurring in English in such terms as "peculate" and "pecuniary" (1992:37). Besides its purpose we have to consider its structure and mode of functioning, because it is an open networking system with many options, very similar in principle to the other Vlach institutions, including the original *comitatenses*. It is probably because of the character of these institutions and their relationships that the German historian Gottfried Schramm does not admit a spatial continuity for the Vlachs (and here he includes the Romanians as well) but just one in time and which he calls "mobile continuity," an interesting concept.

<sup>144</sup>Eventually the idea of a centralized mobile army originated with Gallienus between 259 and 268. "It was a mobile, quick response force, which provided a defense that was both elastic and deeper than the linear system used by the early empire." See Richard Cromwell (1998:5). Both, Diocletian and Constantine added to its development.

<sup>145</sup>At one point in time the Byzantine army had a *comes* as a leader of a unit of 200 men called *bandon*.

<sup>146</sup>A parallel term, *turma*, survived in Romanian; it meant an army unit in Byzantine administration of 5.000 men, while in modern Romanian it simply means a large flock of sheep; a multitude.

<sup>147</sup>According to Wilhelm Ensslin (1961:295).

<sup>148</sup>Tom J. Winnifrith and E. Stanescu suggest a Vlach ancestry of Samuel, which would justify the title of *comitopouloi*, in line with our argument. See this in Tom J. Winnifrith (1987:104-5). The brothers' father is described as a "regional count" and known as *comita* Nikola.

<sup>149</sup>Robert Browning (1975:127).

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<sup>150</sup>Ib., 129.

<sup>151</sup>See here Alexandru Madgearu (2001:53).

<sup>152</sup>Dimitër Anguelov (1976:45).

<sup>153</sup>It seems that in Transylvania the term *comitatus* could have been acquired from the Carolingian Empire, which between 791 and 811 brought the Avar Khaganate under its control. The Bulgarians, on the other hand, whose empire stretched to Transylvania at one point and had an earlier presence in the area, could have imposed the terms *comes* and *comitatus* themselves, if not through the Vlachs... Two traditions could have also met. I do not have enough information on this matter yet. Presently it has been assumed that the terms came into Hungary via scholastic Latin, from Western Europe. "The system was undoubtedly taken over from the Franks, though the technical terms are Slav in origin," in A.B. Yolland (1928, 19). I think he is referring to *ispan* (from Slavic *zupan*) and *megye* (from *medja*, 'territorial border' or marginal). An interesting combination of "Frankish" and Slavic concepts and terms. Whatever the origin of the Hungarian usage of the term may be, I argue that there has been an independent (and live) tradition of the concept, apart from the legalistic (Western) form, and, even more importantly, of the function of *comitatus*, preserved amongst the medieval Vlachs and the slavified Vlachs.

<sup>154</sup>Alan Wace & Maurice Thompson (1914:257-8).

<sup>155</sup>For this reference and additional information see again Alan Wace & Maurice Thompson (1914:259-273).

<sup>156</sup>This definition is found in Irina Nicolau (2002:12).

<sup>157</sup>Christ Anastasoff (1938:22).

<sup>158</sup>It is relevant to mention that Stephan Dusan, the greatest medieval Serbian ruler, amongst the many other titles he took, there was also the one (and the only one of its kind) of *Comite* of Great Valachia (Thessaly), pointing to a former Vlach title and tradition.

<sup>159</sup>Traian Stoianovich (1994:327), where he acknowledges and allows (even if shared with the "Serbians") the Vlach contribution. The reality is encoded in the name of the charter itself: *Statuta Valachorum*.

<sup>160</sup>Traian Stoianovich (1994:327). It would be interesting to see the explanation how this Latin word entered into the Slavic languages. From a source which I cannot recall at the moment, it was explained that it was given to all the Slavs by "the Bulgarians."

<sup>161</sup>See Kiril Petkov (2008:49).

<sup>162</sup>Nicolae Iorga, quoted in Alexandru Madgearu (2001:60).

<sup>163</sup>Two of the major known battles of the Geto-Dacians against the Romans took place at mountain passes, at Tapae. The first major medieval Wallachian war and victory (against the Hungarians) was at Posada, another mountain pass, not to mention the relationship between the Balkan mountain passes and the Vlachs. The main strategy was to surprise and ambush a larger army. The custom seems to be standard amongst the Vlachs.

<sup>164</sup>Nicolae Iorga quoted in Florin Curta (2006:60).

<sup>165</sup>Similar forms of war lordships - like the *kmetovi* - arose earlier or later across the entire area extending from the Carpathians eastward to the Don and the Caucasus, including the Ukraine (literally, "borderland" or "borderlands")... In the Ukraine, the border warriors were known as Cossacks. In the western Slavic provinces...*martolosi* (armed men)... in the Greek and Greco-Vlach provinces they were called *armatoloi* or *armatoles* (a term with the same etymology). In the northern territories subjected to Austrian rule in 1522, they were known as border men (*Grenzer*, *granicari*, *krajisnici*). Along the Venetian and Austrian coastlands... *uskoks*. In Hungary and Transylvania, they were known as *haiduks*, from which was created in Serbian and Bulgarian one of the customary terms for outlaw (*haidut* in Bulgarian)." Traian Stoianovich (1994:327).

<sup>166</sup>A whole chapter could be written on the parallelism between Hermes (end/or the *xoana*) and the Vlachs but we cannot do it here.

<sup>167</sup>See George Ghitea in Noul Album Mecedo-Roman, vol.II (1965:209).

<sup>168</sup>The *armatol* institution has probably the best (at least medieval) recorded history, up to the Greek war of independence. There are also the former Vlach (later "Serbian") *vojniki* and frontier institutions or the medieval Transylvanian border institution, the *Brodnici* (frontier men by definition in medieval Rus) and the Vlach Galician frontier institution which may have very well be consider as a pre runner of the "border culture" of Ukraine, developed into the institution (and culture) of the Cossacks, similar in principle to the "Serbian" case. The *armatol* example chosen here has also the advantage of preserving its own original Latin name.

<sup>169</sup>"*Neque rex ullus eos domare potes*," quoted in Matila Ghyka (1941:47).

<sup>170</sup>See Constantin Papanace (1959:331).

<sup>171</sup>Quoted in Apostolos Vacalopoulos (1970:157). Claude-Charles Fauriel acknowledges the Vlachs but their mentioning is at the very end of the second quote. Introducing the *armatole* institution, Apostolos Vacalopoulos

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would make the reader believe that it is a Greek institution. "According to oral tradition among very old Greeks, the warlike and unsubdued people of the mountains used to come down into the plains, entering villages and towns and robbing Turks and raia with impunity" is how the first quote ends.

<sup>172</sup>Mentioning a number of Christian lords from Macedonia "of Slav and Greek origin", and some of their descendants that became converts to Islam, Apostolos Vacalopoulos (1970:155) mentions an "Umur, son of Theodore" and "Bayezid, son of Augustus," a very Greek name, indeed. Dealing with western Thessaly and central Hellas, he mentions "the presence of many Albanians, or to be more precise, Arvanito-Vlachs" (ib., 154). This is a subtle word association where the Vlachs are just a step away of being (almost) Albanian. Though a good, well intended and meticulous work, it is an example of the fashion in which the Vlachs usually become "disguised" into something else. Stranger yet, sometimes some of the Vlachs present themselves to outsiders as anything but Vlachs (usually as Greeks).

<sup>173</sup>Apostolos Vacalopoulos (1970:157). "Rather than set a course which would only arouse the bellicose instincts of the mountain people, the sultan sought to win them over with privileges in return for garrisoning strategic points in their mountain region" adds Apostolos Vacalopoulos, again, with no mentioning of the Vlachs or any indication as to who these "mountain people" with "bellicose instincts" might be, other than "Greek" (ib.,159).

<sup>174</sup>Stavro Skendi (1980:122). There is an unusual consensus from all the sources in regards to the defence of the mountain passes, including the areas north of the Danube, a feature which will be dealt with when we present the institution of *kleisurai*.

<sup>175</sup>Apostolos Vacalopoulos (1970:159)

<sup>176</sup>Rennell Rodd (1892:144).

<sup>177</sup>Vatro Murvar (1956:57).

<sup>178</sup>See again Vatro Murvar (ib.58) where he quotes Ciro Truhelka.

<sup>179</sup>See an example in Tom. J. Winnifrith (1987:112).

<sup>180</sup>The resemblance is at least in style, when it comes to ambivalence. There is much controversy about who the *Bagaudae* really were. The official imperial view was that they were bands of brigands. Other considerations are Celtic nationalists, impoverished (marginal) local peasants or even Basques. They were definitely insurgents and their name probably means fighters. There is an acceptable etymology from the Celtic *baga*, meaning "war" and the Celtic suffix *-aud*. A fair presentation of this topic is found in Raymond Van Dam (1985:25-56) and Patrick Geary (2003:106-7), who narrates, when dealing with the *Bagaudae*, that they "roamed the countryside, at times banding together to protect their region from barbarian raids in the absence of Roman troops, and at other times joining forces with barbarian armies to lay siege to cities, thoroughly terrifying the elites."

<sup>181</sup>Irina Nicolau (2002:13).

<sup>182</sup>The institution was eventually abolished by a decree of the Sultan in 1721, according to Stavro Skendi (1980:123).

<sup>183</sup>Wendy C. Bracewell (1992:28).

<sup>184</sup>Wendy C. Bracewell (1992:28-29).

<sup>185</sup>See Tom J. Winnifrith (1987:113).

<sup>186</sup>The Asens (or the Asenids), notably Kaloian, in his correspondence with the Pope, claimed to be of Roman origin ("he claimed to be of Latin stock," writes Tom Winnifrith, ib.,113). In his turn, the Pope seems to know even more details, reaffirming Kaloian's Roman and noble descent.

<sup>187</sup>Wendy C. Bracewell (1992:29).

<sup>188</sup>Quoted in Dominic Mandic (1955:138).

<sup>189</sup>See Stavro Skendi for more information on the *martolosi* (1980:121-129).

<sup>190</sup>Benjamin of Tudela mentions that the Vlachs descend from their mountains to rob the Jewish travelers, but do not kill them, as they do to the Greeks. Constantin Papanace (1959:331) quotes the Byzantine Acominatos and the French historian A. Rambaud on "the eternal strife between Latinism and Hellenism." H.N.Brailsford (1971:91-92) quotes the Byzantine historian Priscus who remarks significantly that "the Thracians never took kindly to Greek, while they acquired Latin with ease."

<sup>191</sup>That pattern will be a topic in the last chapter of this thesis.

<sup>192</sup>Traian Stoianovich (1992:107). Our "Christian groups" are here, as a rule, the Vlachs, of course.

<sup>193</sup>Ibidem.

<sup>194</sup>Traian Stoianovich (1992:62).

<sup>195</sup>In a very recent book we are told that "the Greek Revolution of Independence from the Ottoman Empire of 1821 was blessed to be involved in its beginnings with the proud population segment of the north and the northwest of Vlachs, Saracatchans, Kutsovlachs and their relatives in Hepeiros (Epirus), Thessaly, Macedonia

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and elsewhere. They were proud of their Greek and Vlach origin..." The *Armatoles* are also presented: "they were presumably not against the law, but for it," mentioning "Odysseas Androutsos, Georgakis Olympios, George Karaiskakis, the Tjavellas Bros (brothers), the Botsaroi Bros, were Captains of brave and fierce guards...used as police special forces, of heavily-armed men. These specialforces were the only Greek groups allowed to carry arms; they were of exceptional fighting ability and, soon, glamour of heroism surrounded the Armatoles... The nomadic life of the Vlachs, the freedom they had to move about in the mountains... made the involvement of the Vlachs with the Armatoles and Kleftes an easy matter. The evidence of this kind of action has passed down to demotic songs of the Vlachs..." At least it is a beginning. See this in John Marangozis (2010:59-60).

<sup>196</sup>Henry N. Brailsford (1971:186-7).

<sup>197</sup>See here Wilhelm Ensslin (1961:299).

<sup>198</sup>A *kleisurai*, or what was later to become one, was created by the emperor Justinian II as "a military outpost on the Struma valley" against the attacks of Bulgarians and Slavs. See here Florin Curta in footnote 80 (2006: 107).

<sup>199</sup>For more information on Byzantine army and administration see Wilhelm Ensslin (1961) and David Nicolle (1992). Ralph-Johannes Lilie (2005:18) argues that although the akritai nominally accepted the overlordship of the emperor, they were not willing to concede to him any real power over themselves. The emperor's command was accepted eventually only when he was present and accompanied by a large army.

<sup>200</sup>Alexiad 10.2, quoted in Tom J. Winnifrieth (1987:116). Tom J. Winnifrieth considers *kleisourai* as derived "perhaps... from the Latin *cludo* (shut) rather than the Greek *kleidion* (a little key)," and it is "a word that has obvious association with Vlachs, who to this day are found occupying sites near mountain passes, one of which is called Klisoura" (Ib.).

<sup>201</sup>Tom J. Winnifrieth (1987:112).

<sup>202</sup>See more on this in Apostolos Vacalopoulos (1970:157) where he calls the institution *dervenochoria*.

<sup>203</sup>See here Florin Curta (2005:7). There is given an example of the Karamanid Turks, their rise of power and their aggressive policy, which "cannot be understood without control of the network of small forts on the frontier."

<sup>204</sup>Ralph-Johannes Lilie (2005:13-14). The author expands on the topic, mentioning that such boundary districts are mentioned by Procopius in the mid-sixth century as having been in existence "in the Balkans and in other regions", quoting Jadran Ferluga (ib.14).

<sup>205</sup>*Uskociti* means "to jump in"; see Stavro Skendi (1980:123).

<sup>206</sup>Rebecca West (1994:125), who calls them "Slavs." For a proper identification see Wendy Bracewell (1992) and Dumitru Gazdaru (1952:80-82).

<sup>207</sup>Over a period of fifty years the Uskoks presented their demand to be transferred somewhere inland, so they can maintain themselves, suggesting to perform military duties, as they have done before, and not live by piracy. Neither Venice nor Austria would agree on details or make an initial insignificant payment, and would not allow them to enlist in other armies or go to other country. Many ended up, as pirates do, hanged or beheaded. For more details see Rebecca West (1994:123-128) and Wendy C. Bracewell (1992).

<sup>208</sup>There are several explanations about who these Brodnici might have been. According to some opinions *broditi* means "to wonder" in Slavic, enhancing probably this people's mobility if this is the true explanation. *Brod* is a ford, water crossing in Slavic languages (see here Alexandru Boldur1937:120-132), Brodnici being "men of the ford." They were also frontier people in the mountains. In a document from 1222, the Hungarian king Andrew II donates the area of Burzenland in Transylvania to the Teutonic Knights, which bordered the land of the Brodnici. A papal document from the same year confirms the donation and replaces *Brodnicorum* with *Blacorum*. Some Byzantines sources, referring to the battle of 1190 (in which the Asens defeated the Byzantines with help from the north) mention "Cumans and Bordonii," while other sources mention "Cumans and Vlachs." We know of a Brodnici leader with a very Vlach sounding name of Ploscanea (Ploskynja). Dimitri Onciul sustains that the Slavonic term *broda* (ford) and its derivatives (*broditi*, *brodnia*, *brodiaga*) have the meaning of wondering around, in which case the two meanings would have a common origin. The name's etymology would indicate "the inhabitants of a frontier river or of an unsettled (vagrant) people;" in Aurelian Sacerdoteanu, vol.I (1968:454).

<sup>209</sup>Bolohoveni or Volohoveni, derived from *Voloch* (*Vlach*, *Valach*), a term which is attested also in toponymy. The place Bolechov in Galicia is written in documents *villa Valachorum*. Their first mentioning is in 1231, in Galicia, as Hungarian allies. Bolochovo, on the upper Bug River, is attested already in 1150. Both peoples, Bolohoveni in the north and Brodnici in the south, benefited of a great deal of independence on their own

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autonomous territories. This information and more details on this subject is found in Dimitri Onciul, edited by Aurelian Sacerdoteanu, vol.I (1968:453- 455).

<sup>210</sup>This information is from a runic inscription found at Sjonhem, on the island of Gotland, from the end of the eleventh century. The *Blakumannaland* is mentioned in the twelfth century by the Icelandic chronicler Snorri Sturluson in the connection with the expedition of Alexis Comnenus (Matila Ghyka 1941:47).

<sup>211</sup>This is how it appears in Matila Ghyka (1941:47).

<sup>212</sup>Nicetas Choniates quoted in Matila Ghyka (ib.).

<sup>213</sup>The historian Nicolae Densusianu, quoted in Ioan Lupas (1934:273). Since Mathias Corvinus was mentioned, I have to say a few words about his father, the Wallachian John Corvinus Hunniades (of Hunedoara, in Romanian), who summarises his époque. His character is well worth a brief consideration. He was so dreaded by the Turks that they gave him the name of the Devil (before Vlad Tepes receives the epithet), and used it to frighten their children when they misbehaved themselves. "If his biographers are to be believed," states James Samuelson, "he must have been a remarkable man. As fishes are used to the water, says one, as the deer to the forest glade, so was he adapted for the bearing of arms, a born leader of warriors, and the field of battle was his life-element. Pope Nicholas ordered the cardinals to perform a magnificent requiem in his memory, as the pious and successful defender of the Christian religion. Even the Sultan Mohammed, whom he had just defeated - when George, Despot of Serbia, brought him what he thought would be the gratifying news of the prince's death - lowered his head, and, after a long silence, exclaimed, "There never was, under any ruler, such a man since the beginning of the world." See most of this information in James Samuelson (1882:176-178).

<sup>214</sup>See Alexandru Madgearu (2005:111).

<sup>215</sup>Siculi (in Latin) or Szekler (in German); a Hungarian speaking minority (originally speaking probably a deferent language) in Transylvania.

<sup>216</sup>For more data on this matter see Gheorghe Popa-Liseanu (1941), including a presentation of Pal Hunfalvy's theses.

<sup>217</sup>See the work of Paul Binder (1995).

<sup>218</sup>"...*Olaci et Siculi...passus ilos sic clausurunt...*" in Paul Binder (1995).

<sup>219</sup>In Petre Panaitescu (1969:264), where he has Marino (instead of Martino) Sanudo, as it appears in Paul Binder.

<sup>220</sup>"*Sed Siculi, Olachi et Saxones omnes vias ipsorum cum indagibus stipaverunt sive giraverunt;*" Paul Binder(1995).

<sup>221</sup>Interestingly enough, the largest Transylvanian town, Cluj-Napoca, owns its name (etymologically) to the Latin "*clausa- clusa*" (closed place, strait; as in the German *kluse*, "mountain pass"). See Gheorghe Lazarovici (1997:32). What we have here is a version of the familiar *clausura-clisura*, reminding us of the Vlach specialty (and practice) found also with the Armatols and in the institution of *kleisoura*.

<sup>222</sup>Ambrus Miskolczy (2008:12).

<sup>223</sup>Carlile A. Macartney (1968:10).

<sup>224</sup>Petre Panaitescu (1969:212), a Romanian historian, points to the term *celnic*, used first by Kekaumenos, which "refers to a military leader." The shepherds, he states, had to protect their flocks (wealth, property) armed. "That is why the shepherds had a military organization." In a sense it is a good functionalist explanation but it is not enough. From mere protection to elite troops and frontier specialty there ought to be more to account for.

<sup>225</sup>With the exception of Greece, where is called a *kleft* (or *palicar*). We have to remember that Traian Stoianovich considered the *hajduks* as the equivalent of the *armatols* (of Greece, Macedonia and Albania) in Hungary and Transylvania, gradually degenerating into outlaws.

<sup>226</sup>See Tom J. Winnifrith (2002:98).

<sup>227</sup>More details in Tom J. Winnifrith (2002:98, 158-159). Skanderbeg is the Albanian national hero.

<sup>228</sup>The "social bandits" are "peasant outlaws whom the lord and state regard as criminals, but who remain within peasant society, and are considered by the people as heroes, as champions, avengers, fighters for justice, perhaps even leaders of liberation, and in any case as men to be admired, helped and supported." Eric Hobsbawm (1959:20).

<sup>229</sup>Wendy C. Bracewell (2003:22-36).

<sup>230</sup>See the Dilessi affair in Greece, for example, in Romilly Jenkins (1961).

<sup>231</sup>For more details on the *hajduk* Novak, who also served as a captain in the army of Michael the Brave of Wallachia (another half Vlach; his mother was a Vlach from Epirus), see Janos de Asboth (1890:240-241). A neighbouring toponym in his area of origin and activity is Vlasenitza, which is quite suggestive.

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<sup>232</sup>See this in Walter Kolarz (1946:33). Marko Bozzaris was also the author of a Greek-Albanian dictionary and his wife, it appears, could only speak "Albanian" and Bulgarian.

<sup>233</sup>Wendy C. Bracewell (2003:28).

<sup>234</sup>Dinko Tomasic (1948:11).

<sup>235</sup>The reference to Antun Radic is in Dinko Tomasic (1948:56).

<sup>236</sup>The first probably are Alan Wace and Maurice Thompson (1914:270-271) so the idea was around for half a century at the time of Dinko Tomasic's writing. Revising his bibliography it seems that he was influenced by the Bulgarian historian Vasil N. Zlatarski, who considered heavily the role of the Ural-Altai warriors in the formation of the Bulgarian state.

<sup>237</sup>Albert B. Lord (1991:211-245). See here also Munro H. Chadwick (1940:74-75): "Dinaric heroic poetry...almost identical with the narrative epic of the Tartars, the Altaian herdsmen of Western Asia."

<sup>238</sup>These topics in themselves would require more and separate attention but it is not possible to deal with them in here.

<sup>239</sup>Probably the most important characteristic of the Dinaric package. Through the Vlachs and from their Thracian ancestors (as well as being "the inheritors of Rome"), the military tradition goes back to antiquity. Another one is the horse motif, dealt with especially by Albert B. Lord (in folklore) and to which I would have liked to devote more space myself. However, in the chapter "The Military Saints", I do make a brief incursion into the history of that motif, as it pertains to the Balkans (and to the "mounted saints").

<sup>240</sup>There is some fresh material and attempts at some new interpretations when it comes to these issues in East European history. The historical importance of migration and the pastoral economy was to develop in the area, from the Ukraine to the shores of the Aegean Sea, a very specific type of culture, "historically important but unrecognized structures and strands" to which, in this new study, are given prominence over the more temporary initiatives of centralizing powers. The interaction of imperial rulers and migrating steppe nomads, both with each other and with the indigenous farmers and herdsmen forms a central strand of European history; Roger Batty (2007), where the author recognizes the existence and importance of the indigenous herdsmen.

<sup>241</sup>Andrew B. Wachtel (2008), *Balkans in World History*. For an older but in depth study, probably the best and most professional work of its kind, to represent the complexity and interconnectedness of "the great cultural crossroads" which the Balkan area is, see Traian Stoianovich (1994), *Balkan Worlds. The First and Last Europe*. As for the Balkan contribution, ancient Greece is a genre of its own. Next to the Greeks there are the Bulgarians who are quick (and rightly so) to point out that there was a Bulgaria before there was an England. The Byzantine princesses, marrying the Western European princes, introduced there (amongst other things) the table manners and the fork. Byzantine monks developed in their monastic institutions what later became known as hospitals, and Byzantine scholars who fled from the Turkish menace to Western Europe (mostly Italy), brought with them "the new learning," especially Plato (Aristotle has been "the philosopher" for the West - studied by the scholastics, via the Arabs, who esteemed him highly - but arrived to a dry halt; Plato, and the neo-Platonism which emerged, gave the West a new perspective); it was such a dramatic change that we called it "Rebirth" (the Renaissance)... And let us not forget that the Civil Code which we use today (Western civilization), with a little modern touch by Napoleon, is the one summed up by Justinian and his jurists, himself, according to some historians (Charles Previte-Orton 1924:290), a Vlach; the first Vlach.

<sup>242</sup>Vatro(slav) Murvar (1956).

<sup>243</sup>Vatro. Murvar (1956:24).

<sup>244</sup>Charles Eliot (1908:370-371).

<sup>245</sup>Theodor Kahl especially (2006) and even a century ago, the idea of "camouflage" was present; see Henry N. Brailsford (1906).

<sup>246</sup>Noel Malcolm (1994:73).

<sup>247</sup>See here the Romanian translation of the original Serbian book from 1927, Dusan Popovic (2007), who is also the author on a book on *Hajduks*.

<sup>248</sup>"It seems to us that it would be difficult to find any kind of more important institution, cultural or humanitarian, to which this people (the Vlachs; here especially the urban class) or their descendants, did not contribute as founders or great donors;" Dusan Popovic (2007, 106). The Greek case is no different. "Their great bankers contributed to the Greek ideal with great sums of money. The baron Sina founded in Vienna the first philhellene association and started to gather funds for the Greek revolution. The great protectors of Greek culture: Tosita, Sturnari, Pangas, Averof, Sina, they are all of Aromanian origin." Marchidisi Pulliu (a Serbian Vlach), "the editor of the first Serbian newspapers was a great Greek nationalist... Captain Ghiorgi

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(Gheorghachi), one of the best comrade of the *hajduk* Vellico, was amongst the most important members of the Greek Eteria;" Dusan Popovic (2007:11).

<sup>249</sup>Traian Stoianovich (1992, vol.2:55); the essay is entitled "The Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant".

<sup>250</sup>On this subject see Theophylact and Theophanes quoted in Tom J. Winnifrith (1987:86). It is the phrase "*Torna, torna, fratre*," registered in A.D. 586.

<sup>251</sup>With the case of the Asen brothers, eight centuries ago, we already dealt. I also found some very recent Hungarian literature which admits of the Vlachs' Roman origin. The chronicle of Gaspar Heltai (1575) is quoted as saying ( though "as the general accepted mythology," adds Ambrus Miskolczy) that "the land was occupied by Romans whose descendants, the Vlachs, continue to live in the forests and high places, and are now called *Romanus*;" Ambrus Miskolczy (2008:3). In the same book is quoted the Italian Humanist Antonio Bonfini who "emphasises several times" that the Hunyadis (Corvins) were of Roman origin. Another Hungarian from the sixteenth century, Farkas Kovacsoczy, is quoted as stating: "our Wlacks brag about their alleged Roman character." Nicolaus Olahus (a humanist, friend of Erasmus of Rotterdam and archbishop of Esztergom, at the court of Matthias Corvinus) is presented as "Miklos Olah" (1493-1568), who "was partly of Romanian descent... a Hungarian noble who never denied his Romanian roots," and is quoted as writing: "Tradition has it that the Vlachs are former Roman colonists;" (ib.:44-46).

<sup>252</sup>Rados Ljusic (1999:26).

<sup>253</sup>Ulf Brunnbauer (2007:31-56). For the Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian equivalent of Ulf Brunnbauer's Bulgarian case, see Ivo Zanic (2007) who employs discursive analysis of epic poems, news media or political speeches, and shows the way they are manipulated in order to mobilize social memories in pursuit of various agendas, during the post-Yugoslav recent wars. The most important cultural motif seems to be, of course, the *hajduk* (here spelled *haiduk*).

<sup>254</sup>For the noble savaged theme see Larry Wolff's essay "The Rise and Fall of Morlachidssimo. South Slavic Identity in the Mountains of Dalmatia," (2003:37-52). For the Vlachs as the unspoiled original Slavs see Larry Wolff (2001), Venice and the Slavs.

<sup>255</sup>Up to the present days the people around Velebit Mountain still count the sheep in the Vlach language.

<sup>256</sup>See here the ethnologist Muriel D. Schein (1974:90).

<sup>257</sup>Henry N. Brailsford (1911:90).

<sup>258</sup>A. Chatzemichaeles in *Sarakatsans* (1957), quoted in Muriel D. Schein (1974:89).

<sup>259</sup>They are called by the author Aromanians but they are of the Farsherot type. Officially the language distinction (as dialectal) is acknowledged but they are all classified for other purposes by the Romanians as Aromanians, and so is in the German case, as I mentioned earlier.

<sup>260</sup>See Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers (1999:19).

<sup>261</sup>A whole chapter could be devoted to the Greek case and the Albanian, Romanian or even Hungarian case would deserve some attention as well, but we cannot do it here, save a few remarks on Greece.

<sup>262</sup>See Asterios Koukoudis (2003); his work contains four volumes, one of which (the book quoted here) is translated into English.

<sup>263</sup>John Koliopoulos (1987:239). Notice the covert description of a Vlach, easily recognizable by now. Indirectly we find out that a "typical bandit"/fighter equates a "young mountaineer"/"migratory shepherd." Somewhere else (ib.:22) we are presented with the other components of the equation. "The main pastoralists of the region, all transhumants, were the Greek speaking *Sarakatsans*; the *Koutsovlahs*, who also engaged in muleteering and merchant activity, who spoke Greek and Vlah (a tongue akin to Romanian); and the *Arvanitovlahs*, who spoke Albanian in addition to Vlah and Greek." Though a great book full of details, a certain ambiguity is preserved when it comes to dealing with things Vlach.

<sup>264</sup>Traian Stoianovich (1994:326), the former Yugoslavian counterpart, when treating the subject of this area and the *armatoles*, calls them "border warriors" and the area "Greek and Greco-Vlach regions."

<sup>265</sup>John Koliopoulos (1987:20).

<sup>266</sup>When John Koliopoulos (1987:39) deals with Ali Pasha of Ioannina in relationship to the *armatols*, he states that Ali Pasha eventually tried to establish a working alliance of "Christian Greeks" and Muslim Albanians to neutralize Turkish authorities in the region, rather than trying to destroy or eliminate them. These shepherds/fighters seem to be "Greek" as *armatols* but "Vlachs" as "social bandits."

<sup>267</sup>Robert W. Seton-Watson (1925:15).

<sup>268</sup>I am referring here to the Long Military Tradition, dealt with in the previous chapter, as well as transhumance.

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<sup>269</sup>It was published by the Society *Farsarotul*, volume III, Issue I, February 1989 in Trumbull, Ct., U.S.A. and where *icoana* means "the icon."

<sup>270</sup>See here Richard Temple (2001).

<sup>271</sup>The idea of "cosmic Christianity" developed by Mircea Eliade is that of a popular theology imbued with many cosmic symbols (like the tree, the mountain, water, etc.) sanctified by the church, cosmic liturgies (as in the ballad Miorita) and religious folklore.

<sup>272</sup>Mircea Eliade, an authority on myth and mythical thought, which I introduced earlier, holds that myths, images and symbols cannot be translated into concepts because they are complex, have many frames of reference and multivalent meanings. To translate an image into concrete terminology by restricting it to any one of its frame of reference is to do worse than mutilate it - it is to annihilate, to annul it as an instrument of cognition. One only has to think of myth among the moderns (Christians for one) who preserved nothing of their religion but the dead letter. Mythical thought is obviously a non-logical way of cognition which we were quick to throw into the illogical category to which it does not (necessarily) belong.

<sup>273</sup>The book by Andrei Oisteanu (2004) is written in Romanian and the original title is *Ordinesii Haos: Mitsi Magie in Cultura Traditionala Romaneasca*.

<sup>274</sup>See here Octavian Buhociu (1979:7-8).

<sup>275</sup>Octavian Buhociu (1979:9).

<sup>276</sup>John Nandris (2001:24)

<sup>277</sup>Radu Niculescu (1991:127).

<sup>278</sup>Michel de Certeau (1988:270).

<sup>279</sup>Ibidem.

<sup>280</sup>Speros Vryonis Jr.(1988:121-122).

<sup>281</sup>Patrick Leigh Fermor (1983:36). "All over Greece, the army of saints has taken the place of the ancient pantheon. This is especially true among the nomads; *Ai* (the saint) is little more than the first among His peers. As one would expect in a masculine and patriarchal society, male saints have cornered the high places in this celestial company. Numbers have been drastically reduced (P. Fermer's nomads here are the Vlachs and the "Sarakatsans"). Only a handful, from the thousands which overlap and crowd each other in the villagers' calendars and Synaxary, have found their way into the huts." He goes on mentioning the equestrian St. George, St. Demetrius and St. Theodore but on their description will return soon.

<sup>282</sup>Compare with the "green George" motif within the Western European tradition and especially its English counterpart.

<sup>283</sup>Speros Vryonis Jr. (1988:135), quoting from George Megas, Greek Calendar Customs (1958:113-116).

<sup>284</sup>Nikolay Nikov (2004:46).

<sup>285</sup>See here Emily Gerard, vol.I (1888:59-60, 335).

<sup>286</sup>See (ed.) Frederic Shoberl, vol.II (1821:40-41).

<sup>287</sup>Patrick L. Fermor (1983:36); *tsellingas* is actually the Greek version of the Slavic term *celnic* ("forehead"; leader), designating the Vlach clan leader invested with total authority.

<sup>288</sup>Traian Stoianovich (1994:64).

<sup>289</sup>For more details see Dumitru Tudor and Christopher Holme (1976), as well as Dumitru Tudor in "Magazin Istoric" (1970:26-32).

<sup>290</sup>See here Noel Robertson (1992:167).

<sup>291</sup>Interestingly enough I found a close resemblance of our saints to some Vedic (Hindu) divinities, the Asvins.

<sup>292</sup>Alexander Fol (1999:40).

<sup>293</sup>Frederique Vivier (2005:60).

<sup>294</sup>Andrei Timotin (1999:92).

<sup>295</sup>Quoted in Vytautas Bagdanavicius (1970:93-94). "We know at least that neither Demeter nor her daughter Proserpine belonged to the Mount Parnasus of Zeus's gods. They are said to have originated in Thrace."

<sup>296</sup>On the festival - icon relationship see John Baggley (2000).

<sup>297</sup>James Rives (2006:81).

<sup>298</sup>For the treatment of this subject see Joseph Henderson (1979:123).

<sup>299</sup>A similar attitude we encounter within the medieval Serbian mind and which we could call the Kosovo syndrome, after the Ottomans defeated the Serbians at Kosovo. Its impact is still heavily felt today through the maintaining and energizing of each new Serbian generation.

<sup>300</sup>Lee Levine (1998).

<sup>301</sup>Christopher Walter (2003:90).

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- <sup>302</sup> On this topic and the record of similar views of other great scholars like Paul Lemerle, see Christopher Walter (2003:70-72).
- <sup>303</sup> Giles Morgan (2006:85).
- <sup>304</sup> See (ed.) Denison Hull (1972:XXIV).
- <sup>305</sup> Denison Hull, ed., (1972:4).
- <sup>306</sup> See here Garry Wills (2001:253-254). Wills thinks that Theodore's legend is probably a variant of George's. Theodore was the patron of Venice, often paired with the warrior patron of the city, St. George. They also shared the same iconography but gradually Theodore got demoted.
- <sup>307</sup> See for example the Kosovo syndrome mentioned previously, amongst the medieval Serbians and still felt today; it maintained and fuelled each Serbian generation's identity and culture.
- <sup>308</sup> The Cabiri were worshipped by the ancient Greeks but their origin is Thracian. They were popular as protectors of seafarers. "Although they were a seafaring people, the Greeks were apparently not content with their own sea-gods." See Martin Nilsson (1981:92).
- <sup>309</sup> Cyril Mango (2000:256).
- <sup>310</sup> James Skedros (1999:29).
- <sup>311</sup> Miranda Vickers (1974:337-350); the others are summarized in James Skedros (1999, 12-13).
- <sup>312</sup> James Skedros (1999:28). Though Skedros argues for the opposite movement of the cult and the relics with it, from Thessalonica to Sirmium, he recognizes the supreme demetrian attributes of the saint, which makes better sense within the Sirmium (Thracian) scenario.
- <sup>313</sup> David Woods (2000:221).
- <sup>314</sup> See this in E. L. Ochenschlager (1971:51-68).
- <sup>315</sup> D. I. Suciu (1977:34).
- <sup>316</sup> James Skedros (1999:19-20).
- <sup>317</sup> Noel Malcolm (1998:25).
- <sup>318</sup> Ovid Densusianu (1943:35).
- <sup>319</sup> Christopher Walter (1989:659).
- <sup>320</sup> See here Octavian Buhociu (1979:7).
- <sup>321</sup> An ancient cloak, a sort of smaller mantle fastened at the shoulder and worn by men.
- <sup>322</sup> Christopher Walter (1989:664).
- <sup>323</sup> See here Robert Lee Wolff (1949:183); probably the most critical and best account of the Second Bulgarian Empire.
- <sup>324</sup> Robert Lee. Wolff (1949:183). I could not get access to the original source, *Historia* (written by Nicetas Choniates, the emperor's secretary and a participant of these events). In R. L Wolff is rendered "both sexes;" in Florin Curta (2006:359) "both races." If the last translation is correct, obviously the Bulgarians were also familiar with the saint's Vlach version.
- <sup>325</sup> Quoted in Ivan Douichev (1985:65).
- <sup>326</sup> Will Monroe (1914:23).
- <sup>327</sup> See this in Robert Lee. Wolff (1949:174).
- <sup>328</sup> After the foundation of the Romanian principalities and their states (see especially the case of Wallachia), the Romanian leaders (*domn*, from the Latin *dominus*) used (adopted) the investiture formula IO, followed by the specific name of each leader, not clearly known why or what it represents. One of the explanations is that IO stands for Ioannitsa Kaloian (Asen), as an abbreviation, probably for identity and legitimacy purposes, since he sets the stage and opens up a pattern, begins a tradition. The Serbians had a similar custom by adding, for every new ruler, the name of Stephan (of the Nemijanac family, the founding dynasty).
- <sup>329</sup> Christopher Walter (2003:89).
- <sup>330</sup> For this data and more details see again Christopher Walter (2003:84-93).
- <sup>331</sup> See Raymond Van Dam (1993).
- <sup>332</sup> Vasile Lupu "fancied himself to be descendant of the Byzantine emperors - he was in reality a Vlach from Epirus - and lived accordingly in great splendour." Marcu Beza(1943:44).
- <sup>333</sup> Dumitru Gazdaru (1953:19).
- <sup>334</sup> See Pavel Chihaiia (1976:241). Vlad Tepes belonged to a dynasty of warrior-princes named Basarab. Because of its prominence and famous martial qualities of its members (usually attributed to the "barbarian invaders"), the dynasty's founder is considered of Cuman origin by Neagu Djuvara (2007). Djuvara argues that in order to understand the geneses of the new states of medieval Europe we have to take into account the migratory barbarians' perspective. "We need our own barbarians." Fair enough and very good point which I strongly agree

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with; however, I have many reasons to disagree with Neagu Djuvara on the Cuman origin of Basarab. Unfortunately, as part of a larger trend and as I already pointed out, not much credit is given to anything local in the Balkans in general and to the Vlachs in particular.

<sup>335</sup>Quoted in Ovidiu Birlea (1981:53).

<sup>336</sup>Dinko Tomasic (1948,90). The "Dinaric Serbs" here are our former Vlachs. There are instances of the saint's appearance (recorded even by west Europeans) during the Balkan Wars and The First World War, though some identify the victory bringer warrior with the epic hero Prince Marko (Marko Kralyevic). Interestingly enough, Marko himself built a church, which he dedicated to St. Demetrius, at Susica in Macedonia. The saint's function was invested or transferred into the historical and epic hero. More on the "vanishing theme" as related to the ancient god of the Dacians, in Mircea Eliade (1972), when discussing Zalmoxis, the Vanishing God.

<sup>337</sup>Patrick Wormald (2003:22).

<sup>338</sup>Roger Collins (1998:1).

<sup>339</sup>See again Roger Collins (1998:23) in endnote 84.

<sup>340</sup>Though the Slavic term designates "an other" (a foreign, different -from us-entity), it is a softer stand, implying some sort of familiarity. This becomes evident when we consider the Slavic *nemetz*, "the other," firm and definite, the generic "other;" in this light Vlach becomes a particular "other," still a foreigner (outsider) but not a stranger.

<sup>341</sup>"The land beyond the (forested) mountain;" the concept will be elaborated upon later on in this chapter.

<sup>342</sup>It is quite possible that *Pascua Romanorum* (one attested in Pannonia and another one in Dalmatia) represents a forerunner of the concept Vlachia, Wallachia, in its Latin form, showing a state of affairs from the western perspective.

<sup>343</sup>See Gordon Park Baker, Justinian: The Last Roman Emperor (2002), originally published in 1931.

<sup>344</sup>Previte-Orton, Charles (1924), mentioned earlier.

<sup>345</sup>The most prominent or representative of this trend are Lucian Boia (2001) and Victor Neuman (2010).

<sup>346</sup>To discharge an entire tradition because someone wants to be in step with a contemporary (especially "western") fashion (deconstruction, postmodernism, etc.), when we do not have enough "evidence," we should act with more caution. Fashion, even in culture, is ephemeral. This is another reason why history is been re-written. The historical and cultural acts, consummated already, are not going to change. Careful analyses and verification is necessary when we have to decide what is kept and what discarded, especially when the tradition is the only source available.

<sup>347</sup>The local, regional, and national history is a good and necessary history. I am arguing that in order to understand Vlach history and overall Balkan history, including even aspects of the local history with its own flavours, the whole area has to be considered, along with any other discipline, besides history, that can throw some fresh or any extra light on the subject.

<sup>348</sup>With the exception of some Pontic Greeks, brought from Turkey with the huge population exchange almost a century ago, from lack of space.

<sup>349</sup>See Henry N. Brailsford (1906:91).

<sup>350</sup>Marion Newbigin (1915:148).

<sup>351</sup>William Miller (1908:123).

<sup>352</sup>Alexandre Sturdza (1904:257).

<sup>353</sup>Quoted in Norman J. G. Pounds (1994:97).

<sup>354</sup>Norman J. G. Pounds (1994:153).

<sup>355</sup>John A. R. Marriott (1917:33).

<sup>356</sup>H. R. Wilkinson (1955:171).

<sup>357</sup>H. R. Wilkinson (1955:171).

<sup>358</sup>An anonymous Latin text (probably written by a French monk) from 1308.

<sup>359</sup>H. R. Wilkinson (1955:173).

<sup>360</sup>H. R. Wilkinson (1955:180).

<sup>361</sup>Alexandru Madgearu (2001:57).

<sup>362</sup>John Fine (2006:25).

<sup>363</sup>John Fine (2006:129).

<sup>364</sup>Eugene A. Hammel (1993:4).

<sup>365</sup>Eugen Lozovan (1998:100).

<sup>366</sup>See all the details in Matila Ghyka (1941:24-25, 30).

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<sup>367</sup>For more information on this topic see Eugen Lozovan (1998). *Staul* is what the Vlachs call a sheepfold or a demarcated area, usually fenced in; *magura* is height and *barbat* is man (of strength) or husband .

<sup>368</sup>"*Gelou*" is mentioned as "*quidam Blacus*" and "*dux*" in *Anonymus*, the Hungarian earliest preserved document, adding about the Vlachs that "they are the biggest rascals in the whole world" (*uiliores hominess essent tocius mundi*). See Istvan Bona (1994:112). This is the manner in which the "Hungarian tradition" (via Anonymus) on Vlach matters starts, similar somehow to the Byzantine tradition (via Kekaumenos), already dealt with, both perspectives being representative of the central power.

<sup>369</sup>Gheorghe Bratianu (1977:32).

<sup>370</sup>Karel Kadlek (1916). Gheorghe Bratianu's "law of the country" should be considered in relationship to *jus Valachicum*, mentioned earlier, as a (polyvalent) mean of identity maintenance, with its social, economic and political implications, besides its original, cultural role.

<sup>371</sup>J. Fine (2006:129).

<sup>372</sup>Henry N. Brailsford (1906:178).

<sup>373</sup>Henry N. Brailsford (1906:178).

<sup>374</sup>Quoted in Stelian Brezeanu (2000:52).

<sup>375</sup>Theo Kahl (2006:12).

<sup>376</sup>Lucy Garnett (1896, vol. I:193).

<sup>377</sup>An old but detailed presentation of the Zagori case is found in Ioan Nenitescu (1895:410-411). The two main mountains which "constitute Zagori" are *Muscele*, which the Greeks call *Mischeli*, and *Bradetu* (Greek *Vradeton*). The "*Armani*" (Aromanians, Vlachs) started to become Greeks here since 1780, due to the work of the Greek missionary (later made saint) Cosmas of Aetolia (1714-1779), cursing and stigmatizing vehemently the Vlachs who spoke their language. "From 44 Vlach villages in Zagori only 14 were left speaking Aromanian. The others, save the old people, speak Greek."

<sup>378</sup>See Anna Comnena (Alexiad, vol.I:168), quoted in Florin Curta (2006:274). The reference is related to the battle of Dyrrachion (1081) in which the Normans defeated the Byzantines. "Comiscortes" is a corruption of a Byzantine title, *komestescortes*, "count of the tent, explains Curta." Since it is unlikely that Anna Comnena was unaware of the significance of that title, the name of the Albanian leader must have been derived from a title previously bestowed either on him or on one of his ancestors." In Florin Curta (2006:274, in footnote 54). This explanation is important because, though from Albania, the commander "*Comiscortes*" does not have to necessarily be an Albanian but I think is rather a Vlach, precisely because of that title (and probably inherited). A similar argument was presented earlier by Tom J. Winniffrith, in reference to the Latin titles, concluding that a returning of the Byzantines (from Greek) back to Latin was extremely unlikely, leaving the Vlachs again as the main contenders or the real inheritors. The Vlach traditional title of *comes* and its implications was already explained.

<sup>379</sup>Panagiotis L. Vokotopoulos, quoted in Florin Curta (2006:119, footnote 18).

<sup>380</sup>On the map from 1588 by Ortelius is spelled *Sagora*.

<sup>381</sup>Andre Du Nay (1977:21).

<sup>382</sup>See Vasil Zlatarski (1927:231).

<sup>383</sup>Larry Wolff (2003, 38), quoting Jovan Cvijic.

<sup>384</sup>Jacque Bacic (1995:68).

<sup>385</sup>See Eugene A. Hammel (1993).

<sup>386</sup>More on this topic see in Jan Wielek (1999).

<sup>387</sup>The ballad *Miorita* (the "little yew lamb" or the young sheep) is considered "an icon of Romanian culture;" Ernest Latham (1999). In its opening verses it states "Pe-un picior de plai / Pe-o gura de rai...", rendered as "On a low hillside / Where heaven spreads wide..." Considering the concessions due to the translation much of the poetic (and metaphoric) magic of the original is lost but what is important here is the equation of the *plai* (the alpine pasture) with an access to Heaven. *Gura de rai* is literally "mouth of heaven," a little opening or pathway; a narrow access (to Paradise). The mioritic motif continues to permeate the Romanian culture.

<sup>388</sup>See Pericle Papahagi (1912:12).

<sup>389</sup>Henry Stahl (1968:16).

<sup>390</sup>See here Andre Du Nay (1977:24), who adds also *Murgule* (dark-bay horse) and (*S*)*Palator* (washer; where wool was washed).

<sup>391</sup>For this references an more, especially on the northern Danubian scenario, see Virgil Candea (1983:186-187).

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<sup>392</sup>Being a funeral oration, one may be inclined to think that departing from this world, the dead enters the "darkness" and cannot get back to "light." Metaphorically speaking it would be correct. But the "*codru*" is been used, an everyday encounter and a historical reality, encoded even in the language, becoming more evident as we proceed with the argument.

<sup>393</sup>This interpretation corroborates also with the idea that the term Slav, "Sloviani" would come from "*slovo*" (word); Slavs would be "the ones that speak" (our language); the ones that utter intelligible words, as opposed to the "dumb" ones. Notice the similar argument in the Greek case of "*barbaroi*" (barbarian; other) as language related.

<sup>394</sup>The expression "*tace ca Neamtu*" means (he/she) is silent as a German, does not speak; is "foreign" to the cause, the case in point.

<sup>395</sup>It is still a puzzle to me why the Romanians consider *neam* derived from the Hungarian negation *nem* (no). The Hungarian *nem* just happens to be somewhat close to *neam*, which is a coincidence and explains nothing. After more careful analysis it seems that the Slavonic concept served as a model for the Romanian as well as for the Hungarian case, which has it even as a family name, Nemeti. The Hungarian *nezet*, like the Romanian *neam*, means nation.

<sup>396</sup>The bride's crown is adorned with live little fir boughs and the eve of the wedding, because of this custom, is occasionally called *ziua de brad* (the fir tree day); at funeral the dead is accompanied by a little fir tree, cut specifically in the day the death occurred, to whom is sang *cantecele bradului* (the songs of the fir tree). See Petru Iroaie (1942:22).

<sup>397</sup>For tree symbolism and especially the fir tree, see Germina Comanici (2004:119-134). For a study of survival of tree-cult mythology within southeastern Europe and mythical communion between "plant" and human see Romulus Vulcanescu (1978) in *Coloana Cerului* (The Heaven's Column).

<sup>398</sup>See Sorin Paliga (2002:20).

<sup>399</sup>Quoted in Alexandru Madgearu(2001:53-54).

<sup>400</sup>Robert W. Setton-Watson (1943:2).

<sup>401</sup>Marion Newbiggin (1915:148).

<sup>402</sup>Griffith Taylor (1947:437).

<sup>403</sup>Bernard Newman (1945:146).

<sup>404</sup>To have a better idea about the polarity mountain-plain, Latin-Slavic or Latin-Hungarian, I would like to quote a verse written by the most esteemed Hungarian poet, Sandor Petofi (1823-1849), of Slavic ethnic origin:

"What are you to me, land of the grim Carpathians,  
For all your romantic wild-pine forest?  
I may admire you, but I could not love you,  
For in your hills and valleys my imagination cannot rest.  
My home and my world are there,  
In the Alfold, flat as the sea..."

This is quoted in Laszlo Kurti (2001:84); Alfold is "the Lowland" or "the Great Hungarian Plain."

<sup>405</sup>Bernard Newman (1939:323).

<sup>406</sup>In Jean Nouzille (1996:81) it appears as *Erdeelw* ("beyond the forest, from *erde* - forest, and *elw* - beyond").

<sup>407</sup>It is quite interesting to notice that we have confirmation, on the north of the Danube, via the notary *Anonimus*, of my proposal, which parallels the situation we presented on the south of the Danube in Bulgaria, Kosovo, and Thessaly: the Vlachs, usually by themselves (and controlling) in the mountains and with other peoples in the plains. "Speaking of Transylvania, *Anonimus* mentioned only Vlachs (*Blacs*): *Blachii*; however, in Pannonia, he spoke of them in the company of Slavs, Bulgarians, and the shepherds of the Romans, never alone." Z. J. Kosztołnyik (1987:294).

<sup>408</sup>According to Jean Nouzille (1996:81), writing about this "mountainous and forested land," claims that in 1060 it was called *Erdeelw*, in old Hungarian, "but in the twelfth century the Hungarians designated Transylvania by the name *Ultrasilvana*, whereas the name *Transilvana*, which indicates the Germanic Latinity, appears after 1190, to become Transilvania after 1461." *Gesta Hungarorum* was written around 1200 (between 1196 and 1203), not in 1060, and the form "*Partes Transsilvanae*" is present in the XII century.

<sup>409</sup>For the variations and their history see Stefan Pascu (1972:19-22).

<sup>410</sup>The first Zagoria (mentioned already) appears in documents by 705, during the reign of the Bulgarian khan Tervel (anywhere from 695, as the earliest date, to about 721, the latest), "as a Byzantine territorial concession" (by Justinian II) to the Bulgarians, for military help. I explained the Vlach-Bulgarian relations previously and if

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Zagoria was basically inhabited by Vlachs, the Byzantine "concession" becomes just another crafty political move, giving the Bulgarians a trouble spot area (a "Greek gift") which in a long run benefited the Bulgarians.

<sup>411</sup>The *Anonymus* notary, introduced already (court secretary in the thirteenth century Hungary), "said that it was the Kievan princes who have told Almos, leader of the Magyars and the father of Arpad, that Slavs, Bulgarians and Vlachs, together with the shepherds of the Romans, had inhabited Pannonia." Quoted in Z. J. Kosztołnyik (1987:297).

<sup>412</sup>Talking about "the system of transhumance... characteristic throughout the Dinaric region of *planine*," the anonymous writer for the British Naval Intelligence Division explains that "it is significant that the term *planine* is applied to mountain pastures as well as to mountain massifs, just as the word "alps" is used in Switzerland and Germany for a similar dual purpose." Anonymous (1945:107).

<sup>413</sup>On the left Danubian bank (former Wallachia) we encounter a very old toponym, Vlas(h)ca, an area still used until very recently for winter pastures by the Transylvanian shepherds (Mocani, Barsani, Tutuieni). It is probably because of this fact that Iorgu Iordan thought the Vlas(h)ca toponym contains somehow the second sense of "shepherd", preserving the pastoral tradition, dismissed (I think wrongly) by Eugen Lozovan. See Iorgu Iordan (1952:261-262) and Eugen Lozovan (1998:67).

<sup>414</sup>See it in Florin Curta (2001:64).

<sup>415</sup>Notice in this case the etymology of the word *lume* (world), which comes from the Latin *lumen* (light), within its proper context, as explained earlier, acquires new significance. The darkness of the forest is contrasted to the "light" from its edges. The expression "*A iesi in lume*" (literally, "exiting into the world," means to go out. It is also within this context that we can fully appreciate the Vlach saying which I used as motto: "*Tuti lucri iesu tu pade*;" all things come out into the meadow or "the truth will eventually come out" (into the light; becomes transparent, visible).

<sup>416</sup>Eugen Lozovan (1998:124). On page 147 (notr 86), Eugen Lozovan compares Roman Dacia with Roman Africa, quoting the definition of *fossatum* advanced by Jean Baradez: "(vertical) obstacle, network system of observation points and fortifications, established right next to the edge of a populated area." He also quotes a passage from *Jordanes* (Getica, 266), where *Fossatisi* "who were nothing but the Roman inhabitants retreated beyond the *obstacles*." Just north of the Danube, "after an approximate count" of *cetate* and its derivate *cetatuia*, Eugen Lozovan finds 130 toponyms. "The corresponding Macedo-Romanian (Aromanian) terms are: *Tscitate, La-tsitate*." The military atmosphere (which the author attributes to the *limes*) was also preserved in the ("Daco-Romanian") terms *tinda* and *curte* (entrance hall of a peasant's cottage and courtyard), from the Latin *tenda* and *cohortem* (extend, pitch tents and cohort, which represented the tenth part of a Roman legion). In Aromanian *tenta* (or *tenda*) from the Latin *tenda* is preserved as tent or bedspread, and *castru* (castle) from the Latin *castrum* (fortified post; military camp). *Ib.*(125).

<sup>417</sup>For reasons of space and because the overwhelming majority of Vlach studies focus on their (transhumant) pastoralism, I specifically left it out, not for lack of importance by any means.

<sup>418</sup>Quoted in Graham Ward (2000:18).

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## GLOSSARY

akritai – Byzantine frontier defenders; the equivalent of the Roman *limitanei* troops

armatols – men of arms; a Vlach medieval institution; the survival of Roman *comitatenses* at the regional level

cantec – chant; song

celnic – chieftain; leader (Vlach); term of Slavic origin

chlamys – an ancient cloak; smaller mantle

choban – shepherd

comite – count

comitaji / comitagiū – unruly freedom fighter; a rebellious man of war (paramilitary)

comitatenses – a Roman military frontier institution; elite, mobile striking force

Digenis Akritas – Byzantine epic: The Two Blood Borderlord

Dinaric culture – the traditional fighting culture of the Balkan highlands

ethnie – ethnic group, nation; ethnic community

Farsherot – Albanian Vlach, traditionally very mobile

gyepu – medieval Hungarian frontier system

hagiolatry – cult and worship of the saints

haiduks – the equivalent of armatols, degenerated into outlaws; the most institutionalized form of social banditry

hoditai – mobile Vlachs in Byzantium; possible road guards

*jus (ius) Valachicum* – the Vlach code of law

kleisurai – defenders of mountain passes; Byzantine key frontier districts

klisura – mountain pass

kmetovi – itinerant soldier; orthodox soldier colonist (comes from the Latin *comes*)

limitanei – Roman frontier army (stationed)

long duree – historic rhythm; structure, patterns

martolosi – frontier soldiers (in the Ottoman armies), the equivalent of *armatols*

Maurovlachs – Black Vlachs (Greek), the equivalent of the Latin *Nigri Latini*

Morlacks – Dalmatian Vlachs (called so by the Venetians)

myron – apotropaic unction

mythical scenario – a cultural (ethnic) specific paradigm

pecalba – itinerant worker; a Balkan institution of Vlach origins; a seasonal and economic migration for temporary work

planina – mountain

Pomacs – Bulgarian Muslims

Romaioi – the (real) Romans; latinophone

Romioi – the Byzantine (Greek speaking) “Romans”

Sarakatchani – Greek speaking pastoralists

sipahi – Christian troops fighting for the Ottomans and exempt from taxes

Thracian – generic name for the indigenous Balkan populations (other than Greek)

tsellingas – Greek version of *celnic*

Tsintsar /Cincari – urbanized Vlachs (especially Serbian)

Uskok – a Christian (mostly Vlach) subject who “jumped” from the Ottoman held territories into the Habsburg lands

Valachides – Greek Muslims

Voivod(a) – military leader (term of Slavic origin)

vojnuk / voinic – brave (frontier) soldier; the Slavic equivalent of *armatol*

xoana – ambiguous statuettes (in ancient Greece) marking out limits by moving themselves

zupa – plain; an administrative unit of the (south) Slavic medieval world