

INTRODUCTION

At the turn of a quarter of a century since nascency, the thematic issue of our review is dedicated to a central problem of the historian's work, that is the issue of primary sources, from the perspective of new methods of research and their interpretation. By this initiative, we wanted to extend an invitation to a reflection on the current relevance of history and its opening towards the application of some new methods of investigation suggested by the general evolution of knowledge. Of course, the sources of history essentially are still texts, artefacts and facts, and their older differentiation in traditions and vestiges is still timely,¹ implying interesting theoretical debates,² but the manner in which the researchers relate to these is permanently changing. Our review, after surpassing the search from the incipient period and, in an emphasised manner, after moving on to the exclusive publishing of thematic volumes, distinguished itself through the proposal of such new perspectives of investigating the past, which imply resorting to new sources or re-evaluating the interpretations bestowed on the traditional sources. This was the reason for organising a methodological workshop dedicated to new themes, sources and methods in historical research, which took place in Alba Iulia, on June 4 of the current year, which also proposed a suitable reflection on the tendencies of the Romanian historiography of the last three decades and its perspectives. The present volume contains part of the communications presented on that occasion, although others are relevant as well, but which could not be included in the volume.

Conducted in two major sections – archaeology and cultural heritage and history – the workshop mentioned created the occasion for debates on some diverse methods of research applied to the sources.

In the archaeology section, the presentations focused around three methods of research – archaeometry, experimental archaeology and non-destructive prospecting – the first two being illustrated through the articles

¹ Klaus Arnold, "Der wissenschaftliche Umgang mit den Quellen," in Hans-Jürgen Goertz, ed., *Geschichte. Ein Grundkurs*, third edition (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2007), 48-51.

² *Ex. gr.*, referring to the relation between history and archaeology: Ulrich Veit, "Über das ›Geschichtliche‹ in der Archäologie – und über das ›Archäologische‹ in der Geschichtswissenschaft," accessed on 30.11.2021, https://www2.gko.uni-leipzig.de/fileadmin/user_upload/historisches_seminar/02urundfruehgeschichte/Publikationen_Veit/083-Veit-Archaeologie_Geschichte-TAT9-2011.pdf; from the perspective of semiotics: Sascha Weber, "Historische Quellen als indexikalische Zeichen: Zum Verhältnis zwischen Semiotik und allgemeiner Quellenkunde," in Andreas Frings, Andreas Linsenmann, and Sascha Weber, eds., *Vergangenheiten auf der Spur: Indexikalische Semiotik in den historischen Kulturwissenschaften* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2014), 107-114, <https://doi.org/10.1515/transcript.9783839421505>. 107.

published in the present volume. A team of archaeologists and specialists in archaeometric techniques (Gabriel Balteş, Mihai Gligor, Ioana Daniela Dulamă, Cristiana Rădulescu, Sofia Teodorescu, Raluca Maria Ştirbescu, Ioan Alin Bucurică and Sorina Geanina Stănescu) realised a pioneering piece of research for the study of the metal pieces discovered in the form of a funerary inventory in a Scythian necropolis on the territory of Romania. Capitalising on a novel archaeological material considered representative for the Scythian civilisation, the authors resorted to archaeometric techniques such as OM, FE-SEM-EDS and ATR-FTIR in order to establish the chemical composition and the techniques of manufacturing the metal artefacts (“Archaeometric Analyses of Transylvanian Metal Artefacts. Case Study: The Scythian Necropolis of Sâncraia (Alba County)”)³

Monica Mărgărit and Valentin Radu, with a recognised activity in the research of the Neolithic and Aeneolithic of the Lower Danube, especially in the analysis and interpretation of archaeological artefacts made out of bone, horn, mollusc and marine valves,⁴ presented a work of experimental archaeology which details the operating chain of manufacturing adornments from *Unio* shells, beginning from archaeological discoveries belonging to Gumelniţa Aeneolithic culture from well-known sites, such as Pietrele, Căscioarele and Hârşova (“Processing *Unio* Sp. Valves for Adornments at the Gumelniţa Communities (Mill. V BC): Archaeological and Experimental Data”).

The problematics of non-destructive prospecting currently being successfully used in archaeological research has been approached by four communications: “Drone Aerial Photogrammetry as a Method of Documenting Archaeological Sites: Case Study Dobrogea and Valea Mostiștei” (Marius Streinu, Bogdan Sandric, National Heritage Institute, Bucharest, and Horațiu Cociș, Sălaj County Museum of History of Art, Zalău); “High Resolution 3D Scanning and Archaeological Illustration” (Călin Şuteu, 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba

³ Of the more recent reference studies in this field, can be mentioned: Daniel Grolimund et al., “Shedding New Light on Historical Metal Samples Using Micro-Focused Synchrotron X-Ray Fluorescence and Spectroscopy,” *Spectrochimica Acta Part B*, 59 (2004): 1627-1635; Almir Olovčić et al., “Chemical Analysis of Iron Slags and Metallic Artefacts from Early Iron Age,” *International Research Journal of Pure & Applied Chemistry* 4, 6 (2014): 859-870; Peter Vandenabeele and Mary K. Donais, “Mobile Spectroscopic Instrumentation in Archaeometry Research,” *Applied Spectroscopy* 70, 1 (2016): 27-41.

⁴ See, for example: Monica Mărgărit and Valentin Radu, “The Use of Autochthonous Aquatic Resources in the Technologies of Gumelniţa Communities,” in Monica Mărgărit, Gaelle Le Dosseur, and Aline Averbouh, eds., *An Overview of the Exploitation of Hard Animal Materials During the Neolithic and Chalcolithic* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun Publishing House, 2014), 221-240; Cătălin Lazăr, Monica Mărgărit, and Valentin Radu, “Between Dominant Ideologies and Techno-Economical Constraints: *Spondylus* Ornaments from the Balkans in the 5th Millennium BC,” in Ana Rosa Cruz and Juan Francisco Gibaja, eds., *Interchange in Pre- and Protohistory. Case Studies in Iberia, Romania, Turkey and Israel* (Oxford: BAR International Series 2891, 2018), 5-21; Monica Mărgărit, *Personal Adornments in the Prehistory of the Northern Danube Area: From Aesthetic to Socio-Cultural Symbol* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun Publishing House, 2019).

Iulia); “Pojejena and Its Surroundings in Terms of Non-Invasive Polish-Romanian Prospecting” (Călin Timoc, The National Museum of Banat, Timișoara); and “Roman Settlement of Sânmihaiu Almașului: Case Study on Low-Cost Interdisciplinary Methods” (Horațiu Cociș). A relevant case study concerning the use of the dendrochronological method for obtaining absolute chronology data referring to an ecclesiastic monument was presented by Boglárka Tóth (ANNO DOMINI DENDROLAB), István Botár (The Szekler Museum of Ciuc, Miercurea Ciuc) and Ileana Burnichioiu (1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia) (“Dendrochronological Data in Building Archaeology: Case Study on the Medieval Church of Noșlac (Alba County, Romania)”). The methods of non-invasive and minimally invasive prospecting applied to built heritage were the subject of the communication presented by Ileana Burnichioiu (“On-Site Non-Invasive and Less-Invasive Investigation Methods Applied to Historical Building Walls”).⁵ In the same sphere of built heritage falls a case study referring to the collective sponsorship of the ecclesiastic monuments of the Post-Byzantine Epirus, based on the thorough investigations made by Katerina Kontopanagou, Vasiliki Koutsou and Foteini Tsakmaki on the inscriptions attesting to this phenomenon (“Remarks on the Anonymous Collective Sponsorships in Post-Byzantine Epirus (Greece): The Case of an Eighteenth-Century Painting Workshop”).

From a historical perspective, a primary theme was represented by the research projects dedicated to primary sources. A transcultural approach of the Jewish funerary inscriptions from Medieval and modern Europe constituted the subject of the communication of Carsten Wilke (Central European University, Vienna), who brought into discussion the characteristics of the texts of the inscriptions by starting from the examples offered by the most important data bases dedicated to such inscriptions in the last decades:⁶ *EpiDoc: Epigraphic Documents in TEI XML* (developed starting with 1999 within the Text Encoding Initiative consortium), which includes inscription from Antiquity, as well as texts realised on papyrus and manuscripts;⁷ *epidat – epigraphische Datenbank* (developed by Salomon Ludwig Steinheim Institute für Deutsch-Jüdische Geschichte, University of Duisburg-Essen, and Akademie der Wissenschaften und Literatur, Mainz, since 2006), a platform dedicated to Jewish funerary epigraphy from the Medieval, modern and contemporary periods, primarily from the territory of Germany;⁸ *PEACE: Portal of Epigraphy, Archaeology,*

⁵ For the author’s plea regarding this direction of research, see, recently, Ileana Burnichioiu, “Building Archaeology în România?” [Building Archaeology in Romania?], *Caietele Restaurării* (2021): 162-199.

⁶ We would also like to thank Mr Carsten Wilke for making the text of his presentation available.

⁷ <https://sourceforge.net/p/epidoc/wiki/Home/>, accessed on 01.12.2021.

⁸ <http://www.steinheim-institut.de/cgi-bin/epidat>, accessed on 01.12.2021. Other cemeteries included thus far in this platform originate in the Netherlands, Latvia, the Czech Republic, Poland

Conservation and Education on Jewish Funerary Culture (launched in 2017, which initially integrated three epigraphic data bases developed by the University of Utrecht for the antique and Medieval inscriptions in Italy, Steinheim Institute – *epidat*, and University of Brown, USA, for the inscriptions from Antiquity and early Middle Ages in Israel / Palestine);⁹ and *AID – Ashkenazi Inscriptions Database* (developed starting in December 2018, through a collaboration between the Central European University and the University of Wrocław).¹⁰

The wealth of sources of this kind coming from the Romanian space, illustrated by the article of Lucian-Zeev Herșcovici, included in this volume (“Hebrew, Aramaic, Yiddish and Judeo-Spanish Sources Concerning the History of the Jews of Romania and the History of Romania”) proves the usefulness of the Romanian research involvement in such projects. As a matter of fact, the debate concerning the possibility of transforming the sources in data and the digital history methodology is older,¹¹ and our volume relates to it through the articles signed by Radu Nedici (“Digital Data and Prosopography: Preliminary Results of the *DaT18* Database”) and Vlad Popovici and Angela Lumezeanu (“Employing Digital Prosopography in the Study of Mid- and Upper Social Strata in Transylvania (Mid-Eighteenth to Mid-Twentieth Centuries): Tools and Approaches”), which reflect the implementation of this method in the sphere of prosopography based on sources referring to the confessional history of Transylvania of the eighteenth century, as well as the history of the elites from the same territory for the eighteenth–twentieth centuries. Another two articles, signed by Ana Dumitran, Veronka Dáné, Vasile Rus and Volker Wollmann (“Russian Icon Marketing in Transylvania as a Means of Political and Social Destabilization”) and Tasos Kostopoulos (“Itinerant Suspicions: Russian Icon Traders in the Macedonian Hinterland Through the Eyes of Greek Consuls and Agents”), represent case studies realised by investigating documentary sources as stages of a project aiming at a similar objective from the perspective of visual

and Spain.

⁹ <https://peace.sites.uu.nl/>, accessed on 01.12.2021.

¹⁰ Carsten Wilke, “Hebrew Funerary Inscriptions from Medieval and Modern Europe: Transcultural Research Perspectives” (Video lecture, University of Alba Iulia, June 4, 2021); see also: Idem, “Medieval Hebrew Inscriptions: A European Database,” accessed on 01.12.2021, <https://medievalstudies.ceu.edu/projects/medieval-hebrew-inscriptions-european-database>; Idem, “Medieval Hebrew Inscriptions: Towards a European Database,” *Jewish Studies at the CEU* VII (2009-2011): 147-172.

¹¹ See Arguing with Digital History working group, “Digital History and Argument” (white paper, Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, November 13, 2017), accessed on 01.12.2021, <https://rrchnm.org/argument-white-paper/>, and, more recently, Stephen Robertson and Lincoln Mullen, “Arguing with Digital History: Patterns of Historical Interpretations,” *J. Soc. Hist.* 54, no. 4 (2021): 1005-1022, and the articles of Rachel Midura and Leonardo Barleta, published in the special section “Arguing with Digital Histories” of the same volume.

culture: the construction of a data base that will contain information on the religious art artefacts illustrating the cultural transfer from Russia to the Balkan area in the interval between the sixteenth century and the early twentieth century.¹²

A particular method of usage of the primary sources, which implies the use of interdisciplinarity, is inferred by the research dedicated to urban history, illustrated by the presentation of Dan Dumitru Iacob (Institute of Socio-Human Research, Sibiu) on the project of editing the historical atlas of Romanian towns by the Commission of the Romanian Academy of History of the Romanian Towns (“The Historical Atlas of Romanian Towns: Challenges, Achievements and Perspectives”), of which, thus far, have been published seven volumes in accordance with the norms established by the International Commission for the History of Towns.¹³ The case study realised by Daniel Dumitran and Tudor Borşan, included in this volume, referring to the reconstitution of the Jewish community in Alba Iulia (“Reconstitution of an Absence: The Jewish Community of Alba Iulia in the Context of Urban Development”), proves the usefulness of the geo-referencing method, based on the usage of documentary and topographical sources, and proposes its extension by applying the GIS methodology to the research of urban history.

The evaluation of the interpretations from the last decades bestowed on ethnicity and nationalism from an archaeological perspective constitutes the subject of the article of Florin Curta (“Ethnicity, Archaeology and Nationalism: Remarks on the Current State of Research”), who also realises a comparison between the publications on the subject of delineating ethnic identities in the early Middle Ages in the East-European historiographies and the American historiography, pointing out the methods of surpassing the ideology-spreading tendencies of the results of archaeological research. In another article (“Urban History Research in Romania in the Last 30 Years: Sources, Topics, Methods, Limits”), Laurențiu Rădvan offers a perspective on the difficulties of delineating a sphere of research of urban history after the ideological restrictions imposed

¹² “Visual Culture, Piety and Propaganda: Transfer and Reception of Russian Religious Art in the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean (16th - early 20th century)” (RICONTRANS), project funded by the European Research Council under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme, principal investigator Dr Yuliana Boycheva (Institute for Mediterranean Studies – FORTH, Greece), <https://ricontrans-project.eu/>, accessed on 01.12.2021. See also the previous volume edited by Yuliana Boycheva, *Routes of Russian Icons in the Balkans (16th - Early 20th Centuries)* (Seysse: La Pomme d’Or, 2016), and, concerning the project, “The RICONTRANS Project: ERC Consolidator Grant 2018,” *Museikon* 3 (2019): 189.

¹³ <https://icsusib.ro/proiecte-de-cercetare/atlasul-istoric-al-oraselor>, accessed on 01.12.2021; <https://www.historiaurbium.org/activities/historic-towns-atlases/atlas-working-group/>, accessed on 01.12.2021. See also Wilfried Ehbrecht, ed., *Städteatlanten. Vier Jahrzehnte Atlasarbeit in Europa* [Städteforschung, Reihe A, vol. 80] (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2013).

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during the Communist regime period and, later, due to the field's lack of a coherent and systematic approach.

In the debates section, the volume includes three examples of capitalising on primary and/or secondary sources. The analysis of the iconographic programme and the inscriptions from three wooden churches in Maramureş is realised by Dumitriţa Daniela Filip in order to answer questions related to the possibility of the existence of a cultural transfer of Kyivan origin in the Romanian space (“Transfer and Reception of the Kyivan Spiritual, Artistic and Cultural Environment in the Iconography of Three Wooden Churches in Maramureş, Eighteenth Century”). Mykola Haliv and Vasyl Ilnytskyi examine the principles of the documents’ internal criticism applied to the works of education historians in Ukraine (“The Methods of Internal Criticism of Written Sources in the Works of Ukrainian Historians: On the Example of Scientific Narratives of the History of Education (1840s-1930s)”). Sorin Şipoş presents the manner in which the results of the Romanian historical research from the inter-war period were disseminated amongst the ranks of the European scientific circles and public opinion through the review *Revue de Transylvanie* (“*Revue de Transylvanie* (1934-1944): Creation, Structure and Research Themes”).

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