

PROLEGOMENE

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From what I managed to explore preparing the opening speech that I was going to utter as President of the Academy of Romanian Scientists is the first time in half a millennium of Prince Radu the Great posterity when an event like the one today occurs. That is because unlike other princes of the Romania and Moldavia countries, especially Mircea the Great, Steven the Great, Michael the Brave, so often praised in the modern era and up until a few years ago, Radu the Great had not so far an anniversary nor a commemoration, and much less one with the participation of scientific institutions.

Some historians even challenged his right to this appellation, for the first time given in the Walachia Chronicle composed during Matei Basarab' reign, then taken by Gheorghe Sincai, and taken from him by modern historians.

Single „*Biserica Ortodoxă Română*”, the official journal of the Patriarchy, hosted half century ago the article „*La 450 ani de la moartea lui Radu cel Mare (1495-1508)*” published by the well known historian Constantin C. Giurescu in the issue No. 3-4 of 1958, p. 366-386. Here is where we find an attempt of characterization: “*The significance of this prince lies in religious and cultural activity developed by him, in organizing the Valachian Church, in his foundations and charity works, in introducing printing. Also, it lies in imposing a kindness and justice climate which according to contemporary unbiased witness characterized his reign, and in lake of provisions and bloody vengeance, so frequent at his successor, Mihnea the Bad.*”

Is also a fact that till now we do not have absolutely nor a monograph dedicated to Radu the Great, neither even a brochure. Also a fact is that all the titles we could find can be count on a hand's finger, without using them all! The largest one is the 32 pages 1936 study by Al. Lapedatu on „*Politica lui Radu cel Mare*”, and the most recent, „*Puncte de vedere asupra domniei lui Radu cel Mare*”, belongs to Professor Ph.D. Radu Stefan Vergatti, our colleague, issued in 2005 volume of „*Argeș*”, published by the County Museum of Arges.

One, as myself, will seek to find out of the great synthesis of Romanian history, beginning with A. D. Xenopol's discussed by Mr. Vergatti, ending with the many volumes most recently, where a single page out of the 873 of the Volume IV discuss Radu the Great, will understand why all together with

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His Eminence Ph.D. Nifon Mihaiță, Archbishop of Târgoviște, Metropolitan and Patriarchal Exarch, honorary member of Academy of Romanian Scientists, and with the members of Târgoviște's Academy Branch led by Professor Florea Oprea, we have found absolute necessity that at least 500 years after passage to eternity, Radu the Great should be properly celebrated, in the same time as an attempt to define his place and importance among those personalities which have gained on merit the surname "The Great" in our history. And the necessity to do that in the former capital which he was most linked, and preferred to the future Bucharest, "Dâmbovița citadel".

As for me without any specialist claims, I think that everything can be read so far by the mere scholar eager to learn from history books about this prince remains far more inferior to what he did in our history. Even considering only his role in this old Walachia capital's history, which he gave a double glow and meaning, had begun a new era through two initiatives.

The first one was a church foundation on the nearby hill, by far the most beautiful erected south of the Carpathians till that time, rival of the Moldavian wonders that his great contemporary sown throughout it, and forcing Neagoe Basarab to overcome it by the Argeș marvelous monastery and by Târgoviște Metropolitan Cathedral, the last one unfortunately demolished and replaced in the 19-th Century.

The second initiative was conversion of the same capital, Târgoviște, in the place where the glorious history of Romanian printing started. For some centuries, in the south-European area this printing stood as a unique phenomenon, and regardless the conclusions about who might have been Macarie the printer, or where he put and used his presses, the ruler who has ordered him to print the first book – its epilogue tells us clearly – was Radu the Great, even if he never got to see it done, and indubitable this capital of Wallachia was the place where the 1508 Liturgy („Liturghierul”), the 1510 Octoechos („Octoihul”) and the first year of Neagoe Basarab reign's Gospel („Evangeliarul”), the three books of Macarie known today, started their path in space and time.

But let us not forget that then both of these actions had a symbolic role to define the political status of Romanian countries. Status that some abroad historians continually strive to make it forgotten, by painting the map of Romanian countries territory in the same color as the South-Danube area under the Ottoman Empire. And yet, through the bells tolls, the Dealu Monastery remember inhabitants of Wallachian capital, as it should to Romanian historians as well, that there was no decapitation of the people who chimed the Christian, and there could not be punishment for those who rose churches higher than a Turk on a horseback in Northern Danube area.

Also, Macarie typographer's work draws a frontier between the two worlds, for in the Ottoman Empire the printing has been banned for Muslims and Christians until the first quarter of the eighteenth century.

Following in this respect his father, prince Vlad the Monk, a ruler wearing the monastic rase before the prince mantle, Radu the Great understood and managed to lead to the heights, while creating a tradition followed by Neagoe Basarab, Matei Basarab, Vasile Lupu, Serban Cantacuzino and Constantin Brâncoveanu, with a principle which had been forced to understand and implement in his last decades of reign the great prince Stefan of Moldavia, too: that the Orthodox Church and the culture are the most durable citadels for Romanian people, and for long time the only ones able to ensure their enduring and revival of historical disasters.

Consequently, he was a founder and supporter of the Church equal to his great Moldavian contemporary prince, and helped by Saint Nifon, established its organization for centuries to come. But at the same time, he included in his political vision the whole Orthodoxy which was under the Crescent rule.

Radu the Great was the first Romanian prince who built in Serbia and Bulgaria churches, of modest size, according to the laws of the place, but of major significance. He is actually in the footsteps of Steven the Great and Vlad the Monk, his father, the founder of that Christian and Romanian order opposing Ottoman policy, marking the Southeastern Europe history for centuries. He was shadowed by the brilliance of Neagoe Basarab personality, but the latter actually built on the foundations placed by Radu the Great.

This seems to be above all justification of the appellation "The Great", given him by posterity. And the lesson is always alive and necessary, even after 500 years of immortality in full repose.
