

THE WESTERN AND THE ROMANIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE MEDIEVAL COSTUME FROM THE FOURTEENTH-FIFTEENTH CENTURIES. AN OVERVIEW

Abstract: The aim of this article is to demonstrate the fact that is hardly possible for our historiography to talk about a history of the costume in the terms of western historiography, which developed from the beginning of the 19th century a clear path of analysis. After a short period of romantic evolution in the interpretation of the medieval costume, the positivist historiography managed to impose a line of study which today can count an impressive amount of particular studies on the matter of costume, design and fashion in the medieval period.

Keywords: Historiography, costume, fashion, Middle Ages, analysis.

The interest in clothing is as old as human history. The human need to get dressed goes back to the dawn of time. According to the Book of *Genesis*, by tasting the fruit of knowledge, the first people God created became aware that they were naked and sought garments to cover themselves before the Creator: “And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. [...] Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them” (*Genesis*, 3: 7, 21). This is how the Old Testament explains the emergence of clothing: as a divine creation, which ousted the first vegetable fibre clothes and made leather clothes for the humans and sent them out into the world, driving them out of Eden. This is actually the evolution of the *homo sapiens sapiens* from the stage of a gatherer to that of a hunter. There were already two categories of materials for the making of clothes: plant fibres and animal hides.

The “Neolithic Revolution” (Gordon Child) also meant the emergence of the more complex structures of material culture, and this was reflected in the development of objects of practical¹ and personal use. The materials used for clothing differed according to the geographical area: whereas in Southeast Asia the “fine fabrics,” such as cotton (India) or silk (China), prevailed, the coarser fibres, such as linen (flax and hemp) and wool, were characteristic of the European-Mediterranean area.²

The transition from the Eneolithic to the Bronze Period marked the emergence of two new economic branches: the crafts and trade. This led to the proliferation of garments, complete with increasingly spectacular clothing accessories. If up until the Bronze Age, man had used coloured stone, bone, shells or wood as raw materials for accessories, with the advent of metallurgy, bronze, gold, silver or copper objects began to be made.

¹ Immanuel Geiss, *Istoria lumii din preistorie până în anul 2000*, Bucharest, Editura All, 2008, p. 35.

² *Ibidem*, p. 36.

We may thus capture the parallel evolution of the concept of fashion alongside that of clothing, as well as the differentiation between various items of jewellery as clothing accessories.

The development of ancient civilisations led to the dissemination of the taste for refined clothing, comfortable living, jewellery making and the crafting of interior objects.³ In fact, in various passages, Herodotus mentions the items of clothing worn by the Greeks, the Persians or the Egyptians on various occasions.⁴

The Romans' concern for luxury and fashion developed after the transformation of Greece into a Roman province (146 BC), and during the imperial period, Petronius was rightly called *arbiter elegantiae*. In *Naturalis Historiae*, Pliny the Elder referred, in the book devoted to botany, to the perishability of perfumes compared to jewellery and garments.

During the reign of Constantine Porphyrogenetos, the work *De Ceremoniis* was written; to it, a supplement was later added, in the form of an anonymous fourteenth-century treatise, which describes in detail the splendid garb of the Byzantine court officials, their various head coverings, footwear and accessories.⁵

In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the emphasis laid on fashion and costume increased significantly, and the materials, colours, types of accessories and ornaments, as well as the patterns diversified.

From a historiographical perspective, this was the moment when the future Romanian space, with its different types of costume, began to be mentioned in the various accounts of the period: an example would be Bishop Verancius, who noticed that the Wallachians' garments were different from those of the Moldavians, because the former had borrowed different Turkish pieces, relinquishing their old traditional costumes.⁶ In 1574, the French traveller Pierre Lescapier noted the fact that the Hungarians and the Lechites who passed through the Ottoman Empire had told him that only if they wore the Oriental costume, could they practise their worship freely.⁷

The Romanian space continued to be under diverse vestimentary influences that left their mark on the various Western or Eastern models and types of clothing, with multifarious additions and influences, of the most interesting kind.

The emergence of the modern Romanian state after 1859 and its political-economic and cultural development led to the birth of educational and research institutions and to the formation of the Romanian school of history. Its evolution along positivist lines up until 1918, and then its diversification and refinement up until 1945, allowed the historians to address manifold aspects of history, as it unfolded on the national territory during various historical stages.

Romanian historiography has sporadically expressed an interest in aspects of vestimentary evolution, focusing more on the extra-Carpathian space,⁸ whereas

³ Adelina Piatkowski, "Studiu introductiv" to Herodot, *Istoriei*, Bucharest, Editura Științifică, 1961, p. XXXI.

⁴ Herodot, *op. cit.*, Book III, Chap. CXXXIX, p. 288.

⁵ A. A. Vasiliev, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, Bucharest, Editura Polirom, 2010, p. 650.

⁶ Alexandru Alexianu, *Modă și veșminte din trecut*, Bucharest, Editura Meridiane, 1971, vol. I, p. 9.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸ More recently for Moldova, see, for example: Ștefan S. Gorovei, Maria Magdalena Székely, *Maria Asanina Paleologhina. O prințesă bizantină pe tronul Moldovei*, Putna, 2006, 290 p. [text] + 128 p.

historiographical information on the Transylvanian territory continues to be underrated as a mere aspect/ component of the studies devoted to the fine arts.⁹

The Western historiography of costume. The origins of studies on costume go back to the late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance Period, when the first works of this kind were printed in Western Europe: Lazare de Baïf (1496-1547), *De re vestitaria libellus*, with a second edition printed by R. Stephanus in Paris (5 May 1536), and Cesare Vecellio, *De gli habiti antichi e moderni di diuerse parti del mondo, libri due, fatti di Cesare Vecellio*, printed by the printer Damian Zenaro in Venice (1590) and then reprinted under the title *Costumes anciens et modernes* (2 vol. in octavo, 1859-1860) by the famous French bookseller Firmin from Paris.

The first serious preoccupations were recorded in the Italian space, where Camille Bonnard and Paolo Mercuri published a work entitled *Costumes ecclésiastiques, civils et militaires des 13e, 14e, 15e siècles*, which the authors printed in Rome between the years 1827-1828. This work was reedited in Paris by the publishers Treuttel (1829-1830) and Goupil (1845), indicating the interest manifested by the public in the history of costume. Subsequently, the same authors wrote *Costumes historiques des 12e, 13e, 14e, 15e siècles tirés des monuments les plus authentiques de peinture et sculpture*, an edition revised by Charles Blanc, the former director of the School of Fine Arts, in Paris, in the presses of Lévi Publishers from 1860 to 1861. The edition was revised later by E. Lechaevallier-Chevignard and G. Duplessis as *Costumes historiques de 15e, 16e, 17e siècles*, with the same Parisian publisher, between 1867 and 1873. In addition to the text compiled by Bonnard, the book also contained a series of plates drawn by the Italian painter and engraver Paolo Mercuri. The trend initiated by the two was continued by the Belgian Jacques-Joseph van Beveren, who published *Costume du Moyen Âge d'après les manuscrits, les peintures et les monuments contemporains* in Brussels in 1847, and by Paul Lacroix (1806-1884), with the works: *Costumes historiques de la France d'après les monuments les plus authentiques, statues, bas-reliefs, tombeaux, sceaux, monnaies, peintures à tableaux, vitraux, miniatures, dessins et stamper. Histoire de la vie privée de français depuis l'origine de la monarchie jusqu'à nos jours*, published by Lacour et Cie Press in Paris in 1852, and *Moeurs, usages et costumes au Moyen Âge et à l'époque de la Renaissance*, Paris, Firmin-Didot, 1872. As can be seen, these were general works, the sources used in drafting them were visual (iconographic) and they were designed to outline a history of costume in general from antiquity until the nineteenth century.

On the other hand, the German historical school showed an interest in the subject through Carl Becker (1852)¹⁰ and Jacob Heinrich von Hefner-Alteneck (1811-1903), an art historian and custodian of the National Museum of Bavaria from 1868

[illustr.] with an analysis of the *dvera* (embroidered tombcover). For Muntenia, see Luminița Dumitrescu, *Der Mittelalterliche schmuck des unteren Donaubegebietes im 11-15 Jahrhundert*, Bucharest, 2001, 185 p. [text] with a systematic analysis of the jewellery and clothing accessories, as well as of the fashion from the Lower Danube [pp. 147-155].

⁹ See, for instance, Valentin Trifescu, *Bisericile cneziale din Ribița și Crișcior*, Cluj Napoca, Editura Eikon, 2010, 133 p. or Diana Iegar, *Fresce medievale din județul Satu Mare și Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Satu Mare*, Editura Muzeului Sătmărean, 2010, 52 p.

¹⁰ *Kunstwerke und Geräthschaften des Mittelalters unde der Reanissance*, 1852.

on,¹¹ who compiled two works on the history of costume: *Trachten des christlichen Mittelalters* (Frankfurt, 1840-1854) and the study in 10 volumes *Trachten, Kunstwerke und Geräthschaften vom frühen Mittelalters bis Ende des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts mit gleichzeitigen originalen* (1879-1889).

The same thing was accomplished by Auguste Racinet in 1888, with a work entitled *Le costume historique*,¹² published by Firmin-Didot & Co. Booksellers in Paris, which had also published Paul Lacroix's work in 1872. The work comprised 473 plates accompanied by descriptive texts. The first edition of the work had over 1300 pages, in which Racinet gave extensive explanations on the fashion style he approached. His rhetoric was typical of the historians-academics from the late nineteenth century, using many circumlocutions and descriptive digressions. His sources included the writings of Latin historians, travelogues, and so on, which enabled him to describe civilisations and cultures that were subjected to an active process of colonisation at that time and were seen as part of the vast ethno-cultural melting pot of humanity. Practically, Racinet (1825-1893) was a combination between Bonnard and Mercuri, since he was both a historian and a painter, his merits being recognised when he was elevated to the rank of Knight of the Legion of Honour, on 5 August 1878.¹³

However, the replies of his rivals, such as Weiss and Hottenroth, did not take long to appear, and the works of Lacroix and Jacquemin were reprinted, as a counterbalance.¹⁴

With Racinet, the path had been opened, and both his adherents and his critics followed suit.

Maurice Maindron and Maurice Leloir were Racinet's harshest critics. They accused the Frenchmen that he had accomplished the work of a painter-engraver.¹⁵ For these reasons, in 1903 the two decided to compile a dictionary of costume since the Middle Ages. Its printing, with synopses, was completed only in 1951, after the demise of Leloir, who had been the illustrator, among others, of the Dumas and the Molière editions.¹⁶

In parallel, with Félix de Vigne, importance appeared to be given, beyond image (iconography), to studies based solely on documentary sources of the sixteenth century: *Recherche historique sur les costumes civils et militaires des gildes et des corporations des métiers, leurs drapeaux, leurs armes, leurs blasons*, printed in 1847 by Gyselynek Publishers in Ghent.

The compilation of a dictionary of medieval costume allowed the implementation of a working basis, of a systematisation of the studies devoted to costume and it opened new avenues in scientific research. In 1927, Eunice Rathbonne Goddard published the work *Women's Costume in French Texts of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* at the prestigious Parisian publisher PUF; this was the first approach

¹¹ Auguste Racinet, *The Costume History. From Ancient Times to the 19th Century*, second edition, Hong Kong-Köln-London-Los Angeles-Madrid-Paris-Tokyo, Taschen, 2010, p. 10.

¹² Auguste Racinet, *Le costume historique*, Paris, Libr. Firmin-Didot, 1888.

¹³ Auguste Racinet, *The Costume History*..., p. 8.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

specially dedicated to female costume and focused on a well-defined period of time. Four years later, in the U.S., Francis M. Kelly and Randolph Schwabe published a research entitled *A Short History of Costume and Armour* at Charles Scribner's Son, New York, which made a clear distinction between civil and military garments.

In 1939, Mary Galway Houston launched the work *Medieval Costume in England and France: The 13th, 14th and 15th Centuries* on the European historiographical market, having it published by A. and C. Black in London (the second edition: Dover Publications, New York, 1996). Initially, in the first edition, the book represented the third volume of a series entitled: *A Technical History of Costume*.¹⁷

The work was divided into 16 chapters, analysing the evolution, by century, of civil, ecclesiastical and military costumes. The author discussed the costume construction in the thirteenth century, then analysed the royal costumes of the thirteenth century, ecclesiastical costume (from the Eucharistic vestments to the habits of the various monastic orders), and examined, finally, military costume with its specific accessories. This type of analysis was also undertaken for the following centuries that the author focused on. At the end, Mary Houston introduced a glossary of specific terms and a bibliography representing the historiographical moment from the end of the interwar period, which spanned a page and a half, including, for example, only one article specialised on certain aspects of clothing.

As evidence of the integration of the vast vestimentary theme into historical study stands the organising of the first international congress on the history of costume in Venice in 1952, the studies presented there being published later in a volume of proceedings: *Actes du premier congrès international du histoire de costume*, Milan, 1955. Most of the presentations focused on the issue of military costumes from Switzerland, the German space and Spain (Don Manuel Rocamora, Martin Ellehaug, Hugo Schneider).¹⁸

Between 1964 and 1966, Rosita Levi-Pisetzky published the work *Storia del costume in Italia*, marking another moment in the historiographical regionalisation of the topic. For 1968, we can mention the work of Giselle D'Aissailly, *Ages of Elegance: Five Thousand Years of Fashion and Frivolity*, published in Paris, at the famous Hachettes Booksellers. This was a general work, which brought to the forefront the idea of juxtaposing fashion, luxury and frivolity. Subsequently, Françoise Piponnier wrote *Costume et vie sociale. La cour d'Anjou (14e-15e siècles)*, printed in Paris, by Mouton & Co. Publishing, in 1970. These works are milestones indicating the growing professionalisation of fashion studies, and the ever clearer transition towards regional identification and towards establishing a connection between costume and the life of the elites and of the royal courts.

1979 saw the publication of Michèle Beaulieu's *Le costume, miroir des mentalités de la France médiévale (1350-1500). Mélanges offerts à Jean Dauvillier* in Toulouse. This melange was published by the press of the University of Social Sciences, where there also functioned a department of legal history.

¹⁷ The bibliographical note of the second edition of Mary Houston's work from Dover Publications.

¹⁸ Christine Aribaud, *Les taillades dans le vêtement de la Renaissance: l'art des nobles déchirures, in Paraître et se vêtir en XVIe siècle*, Université de Saint Etienne, 2006, pp. 146, 148.

Stella Mary Newton published a research entitled *Fashion in the Age of Black Prince: A Study of the Years 1340-1365* at Boydell Press in 1980: here the author examines, in short time segments, the changes occurring in the world of costume, based on various sources: chronistics and the contemporary literature from the relevant period, illuminated manuscripts, sermons exposing the clerical perspective on the luxury of the time, anti-luxury legislation and domestic records. The author actually walked in the footsteps of Françoise Piponnier, through her work dedicated to clothing at the Angevin court, and inaugurated a line of research with influences coming from anthropology and semiotics.

In 1983, François Boucher edited in French a history of costume in the West from antiquity to the present day, with an introductory chapter signed by Yvonne Deslandres.¹⁹ Four years later, this work was translated into English under the title *20000 Years of Fashion: The History of Costume and Personal Adornment*, an extended version printed under the auspices of the New York publisher Harry N. Abrams Inc.

A collection of essays, under the coordination of the editors N. B. Harte and Kenneth G. Ponting, was published by Ashgate Pub & Co. in London in 1984, under the title *Cloth and Clothing in Medieval Europe: Essays in Memory of Professor E. M. Carus-Wilson*. The studies grouped under this title examine the textile industry, the textile and clothing trade, fashion and types of clothing up until 1500. This miscellanea was meant as a tribute to researcher Eleanora Mary Carus-Wilson (1897-1977), the author of works dedicated to medieval English economy and to clothing as well (for instance: the series of essays entitled *Medieval Merchant Ventures*, published by the Taylor & Francis Group in 1967). In fact, Kenneth Ponting had also approached the problems of the wool industry beginning in 1961.²⁰

Danièle Alexandre Bidon addressed a particular aspect of clothing, focusing on the clothes worn by children in the study "Le vêtement de la prime enfance à la fin du Moyen Âge. Usages, façons, doctrines in Linge de corps et linge de maison." As shown in the journal where the study was published in 1986 (*Ethnologie française*, volume 16, no. 3), this was a review of various types of shirts for the new-borns, starting from the interpretation of fifteenth-century miniatures found in the custody of the National Library in Paris.

After the model of Françoise Piponnier, Agnes Page wrote a work entitled *Vêtir le prince: tissus et couleurs à la cour du Savoie (1427-1477)*, which was published by the press of the University of Lausanne in 1993. The paper analysed clothing as a symbol in medieval society, regarded as an emblem from the perspective of both the marginals and the elite. From this point of view, she adhered to the historiographical trend set by Piponnier-Newton-Pastoureau-Mellinkoff, which focused on insights coming from anthropology and symbology.²¹

¹⁹ Fr. Boucher, *Histoire de costume en Occident, de l'Antiquité à nos jours*, Paris, Flammarion, 1983.

²⁰ Kenneth G. Ponting, *The Wool Trade, Past and Present*, Manchester, Columbine Press, 1961.

²¹ Frédérique Lachaud, "Dress and Social Status in England before Sumptuary Laws," in *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England*, edited by Peter Coss, Maurice Keen, Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2002, p. 105.

It was also Françoise Piponnier, together with Perrine Mane, who edited another work in which they synthesised information on medieval clothing: *Se vêtir au Moyen Âge*, Paris, Société Nouvelle Adam Biro, 1995, in translated into English in two editions bearing the title *Dress in the Middle Ages* (2000, 2002).

In Italy, Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli's book entitled *Gli inganni delle apparenze: disciplina di vesti e ornamenti alla fine del medioevo*, Scriptorium, Turin, 1996 was part of the same trend of approaching the problem of clothing in anthropological-semiotic terms.

Valérie R. Hotchkiss's work *Clothes Make the Man: Female Cross-Dressing in Medieval Europe* (Garland Publishing, New York, London, 1996) belongs to the category of gender studies. Hotchkiss examines the impact exerted by the "women in breeches" on the masculine Middle Ages and how they reinvented and asserted themselves through travesty in masculine society.

An important chapter in research on medieval clothing is the work written by the historian Odile Blanc, a graduate from the University of Lyon (1983), Doctor in Medieval History, a professor and literary critic, who has published continuously since 1983 a series of studies and articles, as well as books on clothing. We shall mention a few: *Le luxe, le vêtement et la mode à la fin du Moyen Âge*,²² *Le stratégies de la parure dans le divertissement chevaleresque (15 siècle)*,²³ *Historiographie du vêtement: un billance*,²⁴ and *Parades et parures. L'invention du corps de mode à la fin du Moyen Âge*, Paris, Gallimard, 1997.

The researcher's work straddles the border between the two lines of historical analysis, combining elements of symbology, the analysis of the social status and insights from gender studies. The miniatures adorning the manuscript imposed a fashion at the princely courts for which luxury and ornamentation were essential. Ornamentation was the ultimate proof of comprehensive knowledge of the medieval code of ethics and social mores. It was an expression of the fashion explosion around 1400 and the new conception of the human body and the role of garments, which were no longer seen as mere pieces concealing nudity, but as means of self-expression in relation to oneself and to the others.

Complementing the sources of iconographic and documentary research, archaeology comes to complete the picture of clothing through the work of Geoff Egan and Frances Pritchard entitled *Medieval Finds from Excavations in London, volume 3: Dress Accessories, c. 1150-c.1450*, Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2002. This work is not simply a repository of archaeological information, but manages to outline the typology of fashion accessories, ranging from those destined to hairstyle to the most practical, like coin pouches or shoe buckles.

Since 2005, Boydell & Brewer Publishing House has published a series of miscellanea, comprising, in the six volumes printed so far, the latest research in the field, from studies on textiles to articles on diverse fashion accessories.²⁵

²² *Bulletin du centre d'histoire économique et sociale de la région lyonnaise*, 4, 1983, Paris, pp. 23-44.

²³ *Parure, pudeur, etiquette, Communications*, no. 46, Paris, Seuil, 1987, pp. 49-65.

²⁴ *Cahiers de léopard d'or*, 1, Paris, 1989, pp. 7-33.

²⁵ *Medieval Clothing and Textiles*, vol. 1-6, Woodbridge, Boydell & Brewer, [2005-2010].

Among the latest historiographical products, mention should be made of the publication, in 2007, of the proceedings of the first international conference on textiles from the Bronze Age to the late Middle Ages, which took place in Sweden and Denmark in 2003.²⁶ Thematically, the miscellanea comprises four main sections: methodology, production, technology and society,²⁷ covering approximately 4500-5000 years and over 50 different contributions.

Sarah-Grace Heller's *Fashion in Medieval France*, which was published in 2007, analyses twelfth- and thirteenth-century literary texts, suggesting that there existed a "system" of medieval fashion prior to 1300 in the urban environment of the area she examines. The book came out at Brewer Publishing, in Cambridge, which also undertook the printing of works focusing on fashion themes.

One final work we ought to mention in this section is researcher Maria Hayward's book on court costume during the reign of King Henry Tudor VIII (1509-1547).²⁸ This is a work based on the analysis of the royal wardrobe inventory, of the royal registries, and of several manuscripts and documents,²⁹ some of them unpublished. The work also has slight citation or argumentation inaccuracies, but this does not detract from its applied analysis merits.

As regards the Hungarian, neighbouring historiography, its interest in clothing and accessories has tended to be considered a mere historiographical whim, since the priorities of a historiography afflicted by censorship and ruptures used to be altogether different. Our current investigations allow us to observe that it was not until the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century that a more applied approach to the topic began, conducted from the same standpoint from which the theme had also been launched in Western historiography (see Camille Bonnard and Paolo Mercuri). From the data we have gathered so far, we can mention several works that fall into the "romantic" period of research in the field. Thus, 1900 saw the publication by Franklin Press in Budapest of the historian Nagy Géza's work, *A magyar viseletek története*. It contained 200 pages of costume analysis, starting from the Scythian and Sarmatian costumes to those from the end of the nineteenth century. The text was accompanied by 39 colour and 71 black-and-white drawings, miniatures and about 1500 illustrations (plates). The work benefited from a CD-ROM version in 2002 and was reprinted in 2007.

Nagy Géza collaborated with the painter Nemes Mihály, who in 1903 compiled a separate album presenting the evolution of the Hungarian nobiliary costume, with watercolour portraits and costumes of the Hungarian aristocracy. Entitled *A magyar viseletek története*, the album comprised 27 colour plates, whose focus was primarily thematic. This album was reprinted in 2005.

In 1908, Janos Szenderei published a 90-page monograph entitled *Adatok a magyar viselet történetéhez*, reprinted by Kessinger Publishing in May 2010. The author approached synthetically the evolution of Hungarian costume throughout its history until the end of the nineteenth century.

²⁶ Carole Gillis, Marie Louise B. Nosch [editori], *Ancient Textiles: Production, Craft and Society*, Oxford, Oxbow, 2007.

²⁷ Mary Harlow in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles*, vol. 4, 2008, p. 209.

²⁸ Maria Hayward, *Dress at the Court of King Henry VIII*, Leeds, Maney, 2007.

²⁹ Melanie Schuessler in *Medieval Clothing and Textiles*, vol. 4, 2008, pp. 210-211.

Prior to 1923, Rozsa Nagy wrote a book dedicated to the Hungarian costume from the eighteenth century to the nineteenth century. Although it envisaged a stage of research on the modern era, we shall highlight it here as a moment in the development of the historiographical trend.

In 1980, Katalin Foldi-Dozsa published a synthetic work in English entitled *How the Hungarian National Costume Evolved in the Imperial Style: Fashions of the Hapsburg Era* at the press of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. This study followed the line inaugurated by Rozsa Nagy, indicating, at that time, the objectives of the costume historians in Hungary aimed to fulfil.

The Romanian historiography. Moving on to the historiography of the Romanian space, we should point out that it is not as rich or detailed as the historiography of Western Europe. The primary concern of Romanian historiography, like that of its neighbouring historiographies, has been addressing the major historiographical problems (chronological segments, state formation, dynastic issues, social structures, and political developments). The Romanian school of historiography strongly asserted itself in the nineteenth century, especially after the establishment of the Romanian Academy (1866) and the Department of Archaeology and History (1867), as well as of the research institutes. After 1918 and the annexation of the other historical provinces to the Old Kingdom, the Romanian historiographical trend aligned itself with the schools of European research up until 1945.

The first serious attempts to address the fashion issue were made by the Moldavian Gheorghe Asachi (circa 1812), who gathered a series of drawings, engravings, lithographs of scenes, portraits and costumes from periods prior to the nineteenth century in the Principalities. Many of these can be found at the University Library in Cluj and at the Cabinet of Prints of the Academy.³⁰

Asachi's concerns indicate that in trying to draw and lithograph various personalities of national history, the scholar exhibited a critical spirit, going directly to the source (for instance, the portrait of Michael the Brave from the church he founded in Bucharest).³¹

Like in France, in the Romanian Countries the idea that prevailed, in the beginning, was that of drawing, reproducing, creating plates, as was the case of the painter C. Lecca, between 1829 and 1834, or of the foreign painters commissioned by Academia Mihăileană from Iași in 1834.³²

The first systematic reconstitution of the Romanian costume by periods was made by Bogdan Petricescu-Hașdeu, who, in the winter of 1864, gave a series of lectures to Theodor Aman's painter-students from the School of Fine Arts in Bucharest. In the same spirit, the painter Gheorghe Tatarescu contributed, together with four ministerial commissioners (Alexander Odobescu, Major Papazoglu, Cezar Bolliac and Alexandru Pelimon), to compiling a national album (1860), which included portraits and

³⁰ Al. Alexianu, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 20.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 21.

costumes of Romanian princes, ladies, boyars and boyars' wives, copied in pencil after the frescoes of the monasteries in the country.³³

Alexandru Odobescu is considered the father of Romanian art history and archaeology, and he was also a pioneer in the field of clothing (1861).³⁴ In his works, he described the robes from the votive paintings in the episcopal church of Argeș, launching several methodological imperatives concerning the role of mural portraits as documents that must be related to the research conducted on written sources.³⁵ At various exhibitions in Paris or in the country, he stressed the artistic role of popular costume and assigned it to its well-deserved place in Romanian art. In fact, we may conclude that this first stage, prior to 1900, was one of probing, searching, correlating the folk costume with that of the elites, and attempting to systematically analyse the documentary and historiographical sources our historians had at their disposal.

Nicolae Iorga was the one who devoted himself seriously, after 1914, to investigating the problem of clothing. It is not by chance, perhaps, that one of his books printed in 1921 in Craiova was entitled *Istoria românilor în chipuri și icoane* [*The Romanians' History in Portraits and Icons*]. His diverse interests, including even the domestic crafts, enabled him to collect information about the popular costume or the boyars' garments. In the 1920s-1930s, he compiled two rich albums comprising portraits of voivodes and their wives, arranged chronologically. They represent fundamental documents for the study of court costume:³⁶ these were *Domnii Români după portrete și fresce contemporane* [*The Romanian Rulers according to Their Contemporary Portraits and Frescoes*] (1930),³⁷ and *Portretele Doamnelor Române* [*Portraits of the Romanian Ladies*] (1937).³⁸

The work of I. D. Ștefănescu (1928-1943) launched the series of studies dedicated to the costume from Transylvania, besides those devoted to the costume from the extra-Carpathian countries, namely those of the knezes present in the church frescos from the thirteenth-fifteenth centuries.³⁹

As regards the crafts that Nicolae Iorga had addressed for the first time, 1954 saw the publication of Ștefan Pascu's *Meșteșugurile din Transilvania până în secolul al XVI* [*The Crafts in Transylvania up until the Sixteenth Century*], printed under the auspices of the Romanian Academy's Publishing House. This study managed to "fill a void that is vividly felt in Romanian historiography (...) the older historiography showed great indifference to this problem."⁴⁰ Although based on the previous contributions of

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 23.

³⁴ Corina Nicolescu, *Istoria costumului de curte în Țările Române. Secolele XIV-XVIII*, Bucharest, Editura Științifică, 1970, p. 10.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

³⁷ Nicolae Iorga, *Domnii Români după portrete și fresce contemporane*, Sibiu, Editura și Tiparul Krafft & Drotleff S. A., 1930.

³⁸ *Idem*, *Portretele Doamnelor Române*, Bucharest, 1937.

³⁹ I. D. Ștefănescu, *La peinture religieuse en Valachie et Transylvanie depuis les origines jusqu'au XIXe siècle: album* (Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1930).

⁴⁰ Șt. Pascu, *Meșteșugurile din Transilvania până în secolul al XVI*, Bucharest, Editura Academiei RPR, 1954, p. 5.

Hungarian historiography, the author believed that his study was a happy addition, organised into five chapters, Chapters 3, 4 and 5 being useful for identifying the crafts related to clothing and accessories. Extremely useful is the glossary of terms, which is a step forward in the development of such research directions. Of no lesser importance are the identifications of craftsmen such as the furriers, leatherers-tanners, millers, etc.⁴¹ The bibliography attached at the end was, in fact, a historiographical survey of Saxon and Hungarian historical writing hitherto, with particular reference to the crafts and to craftsmen.

Between 1956 and 1969, the researcher Corina Niculescu wrote a series of articles that prepared her 1970 synthesis devoted to the history of court costume. In the work published by Editura Științifică, Bucharest, entitled *Istoria costumului de curte în Țările Române. Secolele XIV-XVIII* [*The History of Court Costume in the Romanian Countries. The Fourteenth-Eighteenth Centuries*], Corina Niculescu created a comprehensive picture of the problem. With the information provided by the collections of old Romanian art from the museums and resorting to systematic archaeological research, the author made a significant contribution in the field of Romanian culture and civilisation. The work consists of two distinct parts, one devoted to the materials used in the period for making garments (local and imported fabrics, cloth, silk, fur) and to the crafts related to clothing. The second part focuses on the evolution of both masculine and feminine court costumes, from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries until the eighteenth century. There is also a catalogue of imported fabrics (from Italy or the Orient) preserved in the museum collections in the country, of the royal costumes, preserved either whole and or in fragments, as well as of a series of portraits of princes, boyars and ladies, kept in the frescoes of places of worship founded by the princes of Moldova and in Wallachia.

In the text, there are interspersed colour and black-and-white plates, which are designed to facilitate the reader's access to an accurate panorama of medieval clothing. Although the work is entirely dedicated to the extra-Carpathian space, the author makes significant references to the territory of Transylvania, especially in terms of the textile crafts but also as regards the knezial costumes of the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries. This can be considered a starting point for research focusing on the evolution of Transylvanian clothing that includes the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries.

A year later, in 1971, the researcher Alexandru Alexianu's *Modă și Veșminte din trecut. Cinci secole de istorie costumară românească* [*Fashions and Dresses of the Past. Five Centuries in the History of Romanian Costumes*] was published by Editura Meridiane, representing a different approach to the genre, including in terms of the temporal scale.

Well-documented, the work suffered, however, from an aesthetic-literary overemphasis, which brought it closer to the epic genre, even though it did not entirely fit in it. It can also not be regarded as a work exclusively devoted to art history, because it is a boundary study, after all.

The work is a blend of history, art history and literary chronicle, with epic overtones that give it a special flavour. Practically, this is the work not only of a

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 22-23.

historian or art critic, but of a simple reader, who wants to know more information about the history of the costume in the Romanian space. The study is divided into two volumes, chronologically covering a little over five centuries in the history of clothing, presenting the various influences that have been exerted on the Romanian territory. The first volume stops at around the time of the Phanariot Rule, indicating the existence of a sharp dividing line between the influence of the Turkish fashion and the total import of the Turkish costume and fashion.

The second volume vividly and colourfully presents the Phanariot stage, with all its specifically Oriental excesses and nuances, but also with the frequent small fissures engendered by the Austrian or the Russian military occupations, which brought about short-term fashion changes, depending on the conqueror of the time.

In 1976, at the same publisher Meridiane, the researcher Adina Nanu made a review of global clothing in her *Artă, stil, costum* [*Art, Style, Costume*], which includes two chapters on medieval costume in Europe. A similar approach is adopted by Cristina Maria Angelescu, in her study *Veșmânt și podoabă* [*Garment and Adornment*], published by Albatros in Bucharest in 1979, and by Constantin Oros with his *Pagini din istoria costumului* [*Pages in the History of Costume*], Dacia Publishing House, Cluj Napoca, 1998.

The same thematic register was adopted, in 1980, by M. M. Popescu, who published a synthesis on medieval ornaments⁴² that was the result of his previous studies.⁴³ The work analyses the crafts related to the manufacturing of precious metals and the techniques used in making gold and silver jewellery.

A recent study is the researcher Luminița Dumitriu's doctoral thesis entitled *Der Mittelalterliche schmuck des unteren Donauebietes im 11.–15. Jahrhundert*, published in Bucharest in 2001. The author constructs a typology of the medieval ornaments discovered in the Lower Danube area, dating from the eleventh-fifteenth centuries. The ornaments are rigorously classified into ornaments for the head, neck and chest, hands and arms, belt items, and, last but not least, clothing accessories such as appliqués and buttons.

In 2003, there appeared an article by Victoria Paraschiv-Batariuc, *Elemente vestimentare figurate pe cahle din Moldova medievală* [*Fashion Elements Featuring on the Tiles of Medieval Moldavia*],⁴⁴ and in 2006 there came out a collective work, addressing, however, chronological segments prior to those under examination here: *Piese de podoabă și vestimentație la grupurile etnice din Transilvania (sec. VII-XII)* [*Items of Jewellery and Clothing with the Ethnic Groups in Transylvania (The Seventh-Twelfth Centuries)*].⁴⁵

Complementing the research studies on medieval clothing and accessories, and also touching on such issues, are the more general works devoted to medieval art history

⁴² M. M. Popescu, *Podoabele medievale în Țările Române*, Bucharest, Editura Minerva, 1980.

⁴³ For instance, "Idem, Iconografia podoabelor medievale," in *Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor. Monumente de Istoria Artei*, Bucharest, 1975, no. 2.

⁴⁴ *Acta Moldaviae Meridionalis*. Anuarul Muzeului "Ștefan cel Mare". Inspectoratul Județean de Cultură Vaslui, Vaslui, 2001-2003, 22-24, no. 1, pp. 62-68.

⁴⁵ Zeno Karl Pinter, Aurel Dragotă, Ioan Marian Șiplic, *Piese de podoabă și vestimentație la grupurile etnice din Transilvania [sec. VII-XII]*, Alba Iulia, Editura Altip, 2006.

written by the pioneers of art history, like Virgil Vătăşianu: *Istoria artei feudale în Țările Române* [*The History of Feudal Art in the Romanian Countries*], Volumes I and II, printed by the publishing house of Academia Republicii Populare Române, Bucharest, 1959, and Vasile Drăguţ: *Pictura murală din Transilvania, secolul XII–XIV* [*Transylvanian Mural Painting, The Twelfth-Fourteenth Centuries*], published in Bucharest in 1970, and *Arta gotică în România* [*Gothic Art in Romania*], published by Meridiane, Bucharest, 1979. The Transylvanian historian Marius Porumb has focused on *Pictura românească din Transilvania, secolele XIV–XVII* [*Romanian Painting in Transylvania, The Fourteenth-Seventeenth Centuries*], publishing the first volume at Dacia in Cluj-Napoca in 1981. Unfortunately, insofar as the analysis of clothing is concerned, attempts have failed so far to launch a new stage of interpretation or to identify new sources/ types of sources from which research on fashion and clothing could be initiated. In addition to this, weak communication with the neighbouring historiographies is unlikely to help much in this type of approach, not to mention the lack of specialised researchers in the field.

This is the stage the historiographical research of clothing has reached at a very broad level. It is obvious that Western historiography, even as regards general studies, is at an advanced level of research, while Romanian historiography is making attempts to rally itself to the gender studies conducted in the western academia. Unfortunately, local (Romanian) impediments are much greater and the sources for such approaches are much fewer, which means that the gap can be more or less easily understood and accepted - up to a point.