

# ARCHAEOLOGY IN COMMUNIST AND POST-COMMUNIST ROMANIA<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** In this article we maintain that the apathy of Romanian archaeology stems from the reluctance to embark upon critical debates referring to its theoretical basis rooted in the positivist paradigm. We interpret this situation as a strategy echoing the strongly hierarchical and authoritarian centralised academic system of the communist period. Unlike some texts written during the post-communist period, ours shifts the core of the issue from the repression inflicted by the state to the responsibility of the archaeologists in rendering legitimacy to it. We attempt to grasp the length to which they went in developing a range of ideologically relevant discourses. We regard Romanian archaeological practice as reflecting and blending three types of discourse: 1. a national discourse; 2. a Marxist-Leninist discourse and 3. a positivist (culture-historical) discourse. Through building these types of discourse, Romanian archaeologists are among the main providers of symbolic capital for the country's various political regimes, including the communist one.

## *Prologue: archaeology in Romania – ideology, politics and practice*

Generally, it is considered that there is a single/unique tradition of Romanian archaeology, starting with collectors and antiquaries, and developing continuously and progressively through several stages marked by different personalities, notably *Alexandru Odobescu* (1834-1895) (Babeș 1976; 1981: 321-322; 1992; Condurachi 1964: 13-15; Nestor 1965: 424; 1995; Vulpe 1976: 21-24), *Grigore Tocilescu* (1850-1909) (Avram 1992; Babeș 1981: 322; Vulpe 1976: 23-24), *Vasile Pârvan* (1882-1927) (Babeș 1981: 324-325; Condurachi 1964: 16-18; Nestor 1965: 425; Zub 2002), *Ioan Andrieșescu* (1888-1944) (Babeș 1981: 325; Nestor 1965; Vulpe 1976: 29), *Ion Nestor* (1905-1974) (Babeș 1981: 325), *Constantin Daicoviciu* (1898-1973) (Condurachi 1974), *Vladimir Dumitrescu* (1902-1991) (Vulpe 1991) and *Radu Popa* (1933-1993) (Motzoi-Chicideanu 2003). We should add Pârvan's and Andrieșescu's students, the students of Nestor, Daicoviciu, Dumitrescu and Popa, as well as the students of the students of the above-cited scholars and of other scholars too. But when Mircea Babeș declares that "Romanian archaeology went a long way, always ascending, to become what it is today" (Babeș 1981: 319), we think that this evolutionist statement implicitly reflects the idea that archaeology can be treated as a closed system, detached from the context in which it is being produced. In addition, by saying that Romanian archaeology followed a continuously ascending path, Babeș intends to stress the prestige and importance of the contemporary archaeologists (and more exactly of those having high positions in the academic

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hierarchy). The actual statement he wants to make is that such archaeologists spring from a long series of archaeologists who contributed to the progress of Romanian archaeology, their merit being that they have carried and conveyed this duty to the next generations.

Rarely expressed explicitly by these representatives of Romanian archaeology, but manifested periodically through gestures, words and attitudes, is the opinion that the position in the academic hierarchy determines the right to criticize and to speak. Only when you produce archaeology, in the sense accepted by most of the members of our archaeological community, you may criticize. To be in the legitimate position to criticize, the Romanian archaeologist first has to process and publish a lot of archaeological materials, to excavate on his/her own account, to obtain the title of doctor, to hold an administrative position (not always owing to scientific merits), or to have reached a certain age. Curiously, this conviction coincides with that perspective on archaeological research that maintains that archaeological material must first be gathered and arranged objectively and classified culturally and chronologically. Only when these conditions are met the material can be interpreted. There are stages of research as there are stages in the evolution of an individual as an archaeologist. Just as conclusions regarding archaeological problems are reached through a whole ritual of research, the archaeologist has to climb several hierarchical steps, attainment of which is marked by various rituals of initiation and passage, before reaching the supreme position that will legitimate him/her to criticize. Even so, criticism is almost absent in archaeological practice in Romania. Why do we fear criticism? As can be glanced from some *Festschrift* volumes (for instance, Drașovean 2001; Oberländer-Târmoveanu 2000), the visiting card of the Romanian archaeologist is composed of the following sequences:

1. University milieu in which (s)he formed: the university, the professors;
2. the number and importance of the excavations in which (s)he participated;
3. the number and importance of the excavations conducted by him/her;
4. the number of titles published;
5. the leading positions held;
6. the cooperation with researchers or institutions from Western countries, preferably “great powers” (USA, Germany, Great Britain, France, etc.);
7. the participation in “scientific conferences of national and regional importance” and “in international scientific conferences;”
8. “study tours to museums;”
9. current position in the academic hierarchy;
10. the number of disciples.

This decalogue of scientific prestige and of the position in the academic hierarchy (from whence results the power of decision, the very authority), inhibits any kind of contradictorily debate, especially when such a debate derives from those holding subordinate positions. In the course of time, Romanian archaeology has found the solution of the problem of archaeological debate by establishing a feudal intellectual regime on the past. The past was simply divided up: to each archaeologist an era, a period or a culture, or at best a site (s)he could dig until retirement and beyond. The archaeologist specialized in a specific problem or master of a specific site retains their intellectual property and monopoly. Like in the Middle Ages, (s)he can reach this position by investiture, inheritance or usurpation (on the evolution of some East-European societies from socialism to feudalism, see Verdery 2003: 259-294). Since territories are so strongly demarcated, the Romanian archaeologist should be happy when (s)he is able to find colleagues with whom (s)he can debate the archaeological problems (s)he is concerned with. Consequently, the current publication of archaeological works even if valuable is met with apathy, and a debate on issues concerning the theoretical foundations of our discipline or its place in Romanian society is still lacking. Present-day Romanian archaeology is a sum of monotonous parallel discourses meeting rarely.

Additionally, the archaeologists possessing sufficient symbolic capital are now trying to impose a single way of research, and they violently reject any processualist or post-processualist heresy, both approaches being considered as Anglo-Saxon leftist curiosities. Rather, the Romanian archaeologist is fond of his/her status as an expert, a professional – or perhaps of the status of a detective. Like this one, (s)he scrupulously collects the evidence for solving a case, which for him/her is the gradual reconstruction of the past. Since new data, like the detective’s clues, keep on appearing, the solution of

the case is postponed *ad infinitum*, and only the interpretation of the evidence is performed (i.e. the cultural and chronological diagnosis of the material). The Romanian archaeologist dislikes uncertainties and consequently rejects the relativism arising from the polysemous nature of material culture; (s)he rejects the venturesome interpretations (s)he associates with Anglo-Saxon trends, whose representatives are viewed as a sort of poets at best. Paradoxically, many of these professionals who today impose a specific archaeological practice have not managed to publish the results of their research, some of which was initiated decades ago. Many excavations remain unpublished. The depots of the institutes, museums and universities are full to the brim with unwashed and unmarked archaeological finds stored in unimaginable conditions. Looked upon as provisions for the future, these “deposits” in fact represent the dust under the carpet, *viz.* the failure and sterility of Romanian archaeological practice.

In this article we want to demonstrate that the struggle against the other’s position and the rejection of criticisms (perceived as an attack on one’s own position) are instinctive defence reactions of a strongly hierarchical and authoritarian centralised academic system originating in the communist period, when most of the members of the current archaeological elite were formed. In fact, it is these defence reactions that maintain and reproduce this academic system. We start from the assumption that discourses on the past are written by people that live in specific historical and political contexts; consequently, that archaeology is not independent from the ideological, political or biased pressures and temptations of the time (e.g., Panameño and Nalda 1979; Tilley 1989). As in the case of history (Georgescu 1991; Boia 2000), architecture (Ioan 1999: 16-18, 103-118; 2000), literature (Negrici 2003), or the arts (Cârnci 2000), the archaeological field in Romania is far from being autonomous. It is subject to constraints – constraints referring to moral censure, to the compulsion of various programs, to academic controls and political directives.

Some texts written during the post-communist period emphasise the ideological constraints and pressures archaeologists had to face during the communist regime (see, for instance, Mihăilescu-Bîrlița 1997). As far as we are concerned, we want to depart from the issue of repressive state action and tackle, alternatively, the responsibility of the archaeologists in legitimating this system, and to consider in what way they built up ideologically relevant discourses.

From this perspective, we view the archaeological field in Romania as an arena where the social actors produce competing discourses referring to the past (which they consider as being unique and objective) in a competition whose stake is to gain socio-political, cultural, symbolic, and economic capital (Bourdieu 1986; 1999: 37-39; Verdery 1994: 205-248). Following Nestor who desired a history of Romanian archaeology in a social and political context, and in relation with contemporary philosophical and ideological trends in Europe (Nestor 1965: 421), we think that an archaeological text produced in Romania can be understood according to a three-fold reference system, namely 1. as an instrument of national ideology; 2. as a materialist-dialectical and historical (Marxist-Leninist) discourse, and 3. as a practice anchored in the positivist paradigm, with stress on method. True, our interpretation simplifies reality as any other; mostly, the three discourses may merge into each other. The archaeologist’s stature as a professional managing archaeological method legitimates the other two discourses (the national and the dialectic-materialistic and historical ones). Simultaneously, in order to practise archaeology (i.e., excavation, artefact analysis, publication – activities preceded by financial demands) and in order to accede to administrative positions and academic titles, the archaeological professional has to maintain discourses that are socially and politically relevant. (S)He needs those for obtaining the material and moral assistance from the higher institutions that are supposed to grant legitimacy (whenever they consider it necessary to make use of the past in their attempt to legitimate the contemporary political structure). There is no pure discourse, only a fine intertwining with a prevailing pattern spiced with some more or less diffuse elements of the other discourses. Reality is much more complex if we realize that the same social actor may use several types of discourse depending on the context. These discourses are ideological patterns aimed at controlling the past, for whoever controls the past also controls the present. It is interesting to observe how these ideological patterns legitimate themselves by using the same words, namely “scientific” or “objective,” while rejecting each other or other kinds of interpretations of the past by using opposite terms such as “anti-scientific,” or “subjective.” Our analysis of the transition from communism to post-communism has been influenced by similar studies by Eyal *et al.* (2001). They tackle the social changes in Central Europe brought about by the revolutions of 1989 by emphasising the action

of the social actors. The authors mentioned above complete Max Weber's distinction between status societies and class societies with Pierre Bourdieu's theory on the types of capital (social, cultural, economic, and symbolic) by making use of the concept of habitus. From that point of view, the transition to post-communism means passing from the socialist status order (based upon social hierarchy and owner-client relationships) to the capitalist class order (focused upon the economic criterion). Within this process, the social actors trying to keep things working have to convert the political capital earned during the communist period into the highly profitable cultural capital in post-communist society.

This article is not a summary of Romanian archaeology, nor is it a narrative of the repression inflicted upon Romanian archaeologists over time. We wish to understand Romanian archaeological practice of today by starting from the discourses issued by the archaeologists as providers of symbolic capital for various political regimes. It is an article on the archaeologist's responsibility in as well as to society.

### ***Origins: Romanian archaeology and the national ideology***

There is a relationship of interdependence between archaeology and the national ideology. The emergence and development of Romanian archaeology are to a great extent linked to the birth of the nation-state and to the latter's policy of searching and discovering its origins. On the other hand, where archaeology is bound to document earlier sites continuously, it will assist the national ideology in its tendency to fix the roots of the nation deeper and deeper into the past.

The resort to history and, implicitly, to archaeology has become an important component of national ideology (Boia 2002; Olivier 1998: 257-259). As is the case in Bulgaria (Bailey 1998: 90), Poland (Lech 1997-1998: 43-44), Germany (Arnold 1997-1998), or France (Scarre 1999: 160; Olivier 1999: 182), Romanian archaeology likewise plays an ideological and political role, becoming an instrument to legitimate the nation-state and to affirm national identity.

During the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries the provinces inhabited by Romanians were part of the Ottoman Empire (Wallachia and Moldavia) or the Austrian Empire (Transylvania, Banat and Bukovina). Among the intellectuals of that time emerged a conception of Romanian ethnic conscience maintaining that all Romanians have a common origin and speak a common language. Once this "Dacian feeling" emerged during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, autochthonous Romanian origins were projected deeper and deeper into the past (Georgescu 1992: 126-127). Gradually, culture began to play an important role in building up the Romanian nation, patriotic feelings intensified and the national language acquired key significance. In 1840 (when the Romanian State did not exist yet), Mihail Kogălniceanu (historian, writer and politician) desired his review *Dacia Literară* (Literary Dacia) to be "a general directory of Romanian literature, mirroring the writers of Moldavia, Walachia, Transylvania, Banat and Bukovina, each with his ideas, his language, and his type."

In 1834, when the Romanian principalities were still under Ottoman rule or Russian protectorate (following the Peace of Adrianople in 1829), the Museum of Natural History and Antiquities was founded in Bucharest. Its goal was to promote patriotic feelings, especially through the journal *The National Museum*. In that review it was announced in 1837 that "it is high time we turn our glances back" to find out the origin of the Romanians (Păunescu 2003: 23), an important action for defining national identity.

After completing the union of the Romanian principalities (1859) and gaining independence after the Russian-Romanian-Turkish war (1877-1878), a modernisation programme of the new state was initiated, which set out to building up the Romanian nation, and endeavouring to create a national culture, for, as Pârvan wrote, "culture will save the Romanians, and culture can be national only" (Pârvan *apud* Zub 2002: 131). The Universities of Iassy (1860) and Bucharest (1864) were established, the National Museum of Antiquities introduced new regulations (1864) (Păunescu 2003: 30-35), and the Romanian Academic Society was founded (1866) including a history and archaeology department. The contemporary archaeological elite was profoundly involved in this programme. Cezar Bolliac, an antiquities collector but known above all as a journalist and poet, initiated archaeological excavations. Odobescu, who in 1874 gave the first lectures on archaeology at the University of Bucharest (published in 1877; Odobescu 1961), was a novelist as well. Pârvan was not just an archaeologist who created a true

school, but also a philosopher of culture. These were all men deeply committed to society, to the political life of the time, who occupied high positions in the academic system: leaders of the Archaeological Committee, managers of the National Museum of Antiquities, members of the Academic Society, university professors.

These founders of Romanian archaeology gradually built the discipline as a positivist science (see also Nestor 1965: 424-426; on the positivist discourse in Romanian archaeology see below). At the same time, through their main works (Odobescu 1889-1900; Tocilescu 1880; Andrieşescu 1912; Pârvan 1926), they took part in the elaboration of a national discourse (Nestor 1988: 278-279). The characteristic elements of this discourse are terms like “romanizing” (of the native “Geto-Dacians”), “continuity” (of the “Daco-Romans,” after the evacuation of the Roman administration from the province of Dacia), or “ethnogenesis of the Romanian people;” dichotomies such as “autochthonous – allochthonous” (“Daco-Romans” *versus* “migratory peoples”), “sedentary – nomad,” or “farmers – shepherds;” as well as the slogan “of national importance.” Conceived as an auxiliary science, archaeology joined history to find out the origins of the Romanian people, and to demonstrate the continuous presence of the autochthonous Geto-Dacians in the Roman province, subsequently that of the Daco-Romans after Aurelian’s retreat. In the absence of written records, Romanian archaeology was asked to offer information relating to these issues. “So the issue of the natives is the beginning of Romanian history and prehistoric archaeology the most valuable knowledge auxiliary” (Andrieşescu 1912: V).

After World War I, the Romanian State doubled its territory by including Transylvania, Banat, Bukovina and Bessarabia, provinces that had been occupied by the Austro-Hungarian Empire and by Russia. It is probably not by chance that *Dacia* is the name of the first Romanian journal of international prestige. Edited by Pârvan, its first volume was issued in 1924. The review presented results of archaeological research in Romania in foreign languages (foremost in French). As a matter of fact, the intensive excavations carried out between 1923 and 1926 were above all due to Pârvan’s interest in the pre-Roman period. He did not accept that in contemporary writing Romanian history started with the romanisation of Dacia and not earlier (Ştefan 1984: 138).

In the inter-war period, when Romania primarily was an agrarian state, Pârvan glorified the Gethan and Dacian “ploughmen” (see also Andrieşescu 1931: 7): “Present-day Romanity does not derive from Illyrian shepherds and miners nor from Thracian shepherds and miners. It straightly springs from the Danube native ploughmen living at the western frontiers of Pannonia [...] to the mouth of the Danube” and “the Romans could not have come to stay in other places than in those where they could become peasants” (Pârvan 1958: 153-154).

The village became the place where the soul of the Romanian people manifested itself fully (regarding “the soul of a nation,” see Andrieşescu 1912: 23). The representatives of the sociological school established by Dimitrie Gusti believed that it was worthwhile to investigate and preserve the village (as well as the monuments related to the glorious past of the nation) in the Museum of the Romanian Peasant and the Museum of the Village (founded in 1906 and 1936 resp.).

Now Andrieşescu (1912: 119) formulated the theme of the “allochthonous” populations flowing to the south

“and leaving behind precisely so many of them as we could bring to our nature and language, making Romanians out of them thus making our nation to grow stronger, in the same way our Daco-Roman ancestors had settled and formed it here” (Pârvan 1923: 16).

In conclusion, the outstanding representatives of the pre-communist archaeological elite not only defined archaeology as an independent discipline, but also took actively part in creating the myths of Romanian historiography (Boia 2000), forming the constituent elements of the national discourse. The final outcome of this kind of discourse is patriotism (Berciu 1938: 1-2; Nestor 1988: 278-279). As Mihai Eminescu, Romania’s national poet, wrote: “Patriotism is not love for one’s country, but love for the past, since without the cult of the past, there is no love for one’s country” (Eminescu *apud* Berciu 1938: 1).

As early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century the activities of those members of the archaeological elite who possessed sufficient cultural and social capital enabled the themes of the national discourse to enter into the collective memory by way of the history handbooks (Grigoriu 1983). These themes were also

disseminated abroad. At the World Exhibitions of Paris (1867, 1889, 1900, 1937) and Vienna (1873) the Romanian pavilion stressed national identity by displaying archaeological artefacts (Catalogue 1873; Vlad 2001).

***Romanian archaeology in the communist period: national ideology, dialectical and historical materialism***

Despite playing a negligent role on the political stage during the interbellum, due to the small number of members and the obedience towards the politics of the Soviet Union whose interests contravened those of the Romanian State, the Romanian Communist Party, with Soviet support, succeeded in coming to power also in Romania by the end of World War II (Deletant 1998: 9-72). During the process of “building up communist society” the Romanian Academy was turned into the Academy of the People’s Republic of Romania (1948), the National Museum of Antiquities was transformed into the Institute of Archaeology (1956), the representatives of the inter-war intelligentsia were excluded from university chairs and even arrested, many dying in prison (Moisa 2002: 19-49).

Most Romanian archaeologists, however, succeeded in “keeping things working” (Eyal *et al.* 2001) by turning the cultural and social capital earned during the previous period into political capital. They achieved that by their adhesion to the party apparatus, by having political functions and/or by collaborating with the Secret Police (Opriș 2004: 21-335). The grasp over the political capital was conditioned by the practice of the official discourse of the Communist Party. Between 1945-1964 the national discourse was suspended, and archaeology was rather based on “the Marxist-Leninist outlook and founded on the principles of dialectical and historical materialism” (Nestor 1960: 8-9). Out of many instances of social conformity due to the change in the type of discourse (compare, for example, Nestor 1988 with Nestor 1960), a comparison of Dumitru Berciu’s texts written during the inter-war period with those from the period following the installation of the communist regime is particularly illustrative. While in 1938 Berciu wrote about the duty of “knowing and putting to good use our past that begins with the emergence of the first prehistoric humanity in Dacia and Southeastern Europe” and about the “belief in the generations of today and tomorrow” (Berciu 1938: 31-32), in 1949 at the local conference of archaeologists in the People’s Republic of Romania, he “mentions the necessity of revising the terminology and presence of certain reactionary remains” in some excavation reports and “draws the attention upon the failure of our archaeologists to fully acquire the Marxist-Leninist knowledge” (*Conferința* 1950: 21). The next year Berciu published an article on “the emergence and development of the patriarchy on the territory of the People’s Republic of Romania” (Berciu 1950), using various prehistoric materials to confirm archaeologically Frederick Engels’ evolutionary thesis presented in his *Origin of Family, State and Private Property*. Most bibliographical references relate to works written by Iossif Stalin, Engels, Mihail Roller and various Soviet authors.

The key-terms of the new type of archaeological discourse were “social system,” “class struggle,” “mode of production,” “forces and relations of production,” etc. As Roller wrote, history as part of “the new culture” should be “national in form, and socialist in contents” (Roller 1956: 45). The main achievements of Romanian archaeology in “the years of the popular democracy” were considered to be the new sites from various periods (the research being also stimulated by the foundation of the Institute of Archaeology of Bucharest in 1956 and of the Central Board of the Historical Monuments in 1959), the development of the archaeology of the migration period and the Middle Ages (Nestor 1970a: 411-413), the organization of a national network of museums, and the archaeological documentation of some favourite themes of the national discourse, such as the continuity of the Dacians during the Roman period and their romanization, or the relation of the autochthonous and allochthonous populations (Nestor 1960). The set of problems related to the continuity of the Dacians was broadened by the inclusion of the discoveries made beyond the Roman province (the so-called free-Dacians). The archaeological exhibitions organized every year in the period 1949-1952 aimed at illustrating these achievements by displaying the materials in chronological order, from “the age of savagery” and of “barbarism” to the “emergence of the feudal relations of production” (for instance, *Expoziție* 1949).

But the discourse on “the origins of the Romanian people,” its continuity and national unity was slightly blurred because emphasis was put on studying the role played by the Romanian people as a creator of history, on the “unmasking” of the false theories of bourgeois historiography, and on the documentation of the “brotherly relations between the Romanian and Russian peoples” (Roller 1956: 44-45). Until 1955 reviews in the journal *Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche (și Arheologie)* (Studies and Researches of Ancient History and Archaeology) had been dedicated exclusively to books published in the Soviet Union (Babeș 1999: 8) – a significant fact. One of the favourite themes of current discourse was class struggle (i.e., “the struggle against Roman domination and slave exploitation”). This struggle was for instance reflected in the support given by the Dacians to the barbarians attacking the Roman province, the flight beyond the frontiers, “the action carried out in the interior by groups of isolated fighters named *latrones*,” or the “mass uprisings of the oppressed population” (*Istoria României* 1960: 426-435; see also Berciu 1951; Chirilă 1951). The mechanical usage of specific Marxist concepts in the investigation of past societies resulted in a simplifying economic determinism (Crișan 1975: 33). For instance, improved tools meant an “increase in labour productivity,” hence of the “surplus product,” leading to the emergence of the “exploitation of man by man” (Daicoviciu 1965: 33). The interest in palaeoeconomy stimulated multidisciplinary research, which became in fact an appendix of the dominant discourse (Anghelinu 2001-2002: 45-46). The complexity of past societies was simplified by the usage of evolutionist concepts such as “matriarchate” or “patriarchate” (Berciu 1950).

However this period also had a positive side, notably in Nestor’s attempts to critically examine Romanian archaeological method (Nestor 1965; 1970a). He was the only scholar who tried to theorize this type of archaeological discourse. In his accurate and slightly ironical style he defined the Marxist archaeology of this period as being Lewis Henry Morgan’s evolutionism “coloured in a Marxian way” by Engels and “deepened” by Irmgard Sellnow (Nestor 1965: 423; for Sellnow, see Kossack 1992: 97-98). Nestor suggested new research directions, referring to the “economic basis” and “superstructure,” neglected in the previous period (Nestor 1965: 427). These efforts to theorize combined with ethnographical examples were continued in his lectures (Nestor 1970), an unusual work in our archaeological landscape, a work containing many surprising interpretations.

Despite appearances, Marxist archaeology in Romania was substantially different from Marxian archaeological approaches in Western Europe, in that many archaeologists made use of a *vulgar* Marxism. In fact, in most Eastern European communist countries (including Romania) so-called Marxian explanations consisted in nothing else than mechanical statements pasted to the beginning or end of entirely traditional (equals positivist) archaeological publications. Illustrating is the fact that although especially Editura Politică (Political Publishing House) published translations of books written by Marxian theorists (Louis Althusser, Jürgen Habermas, Herbert Marcuse, etc.), these were never used by Romanian archaeologists. Moreover, we feel that Marxian interpretations similar to those produced in England in the 1980s centering on a series of concepts such as ideology, power, and domination would have been incompatible with the Romanian totalitarian regime. Given the validity of such concepts both for the past and the present (Miller and Tilley 1984; Miller *et al.* 1995), Romanian archaeological discourse would have become critical of the communist system.

After 1965, with the rise to power of Nicolae Ceaușescu, and up to 1971 followed a phase of ideological relaxation. While in the period 1956-1975 in Poland arose a discrepancy between the official Marxism-Leninism of the communist party and the academic Marxism (Lech 1997-1998: 84-93), in Romania archaeological discipline followed the Party, gradually adopting a national discourse necessary in order to legitimate a Romanian communism kept away from Moscow intervention (Verdery 1994: 97-102). Some texts of this period blended the Marxist-Leninist discourse typical of the 1950s (history being conceived as a succession of “social systems”) with the national one (referring to romanization, continuity, unity). Some museum exhibitions were organized along the same principle. For instance, a short presentation of the themes proposed for the organisation of the History Museum of the Socialist Republic of Romania (opened to the public on May 8, 1972) combined sections referring to: “the emergence of the primitive commune,” “the consolidation and development of matriarchal gentile organisation,” and “the beginnings of patriarchal gentile society and the dissolution of the primitive commune system” with sections like “material culture of the romanised autochthonous population” and “unitary material culture over the whole Romanian territory” (*Schiță tematică* 1970: 3-4, 9).

Gradually Marxism-Leninism receded into the background both in the political and in the archaeological discourse, echoing the 17 theses presented by Ceaușescu at the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (July 6, 1971), meant to be nothing less than the beginning of a cultural revolution. The theses outlined the leading role of the Communist Party “in all political and educational fields of activity,” improvement of political and ideological training of the party agents and members, promotion of militant revolutionary artistic productions, and strict control aimed at preventing the publication of writings failing to meet the party’s requirements (Deletant 1998: 168-169).

History was to be “not a specialized profession,” but a purely ideological activity practiced “only by people recruited by the party, only by people who were to become party activists.” “The teaching of history cannot adopt any other perspective” (Georgescu 1991: 69-70). Archaeology, being after all “an auxiliary science” to history was affected as well. *The Program of the Romanian Communist Party for the making of the multilaterally developed socialist society and the advance of Romania towards communism* (1974) opened with a history of the Romanians. This sketch of history began with the Thracians, set forth with the old national themes referring to the romanization process, continuity, and unity, and was spiced with several xenophobic accents (the migratory peoples, the Ottomans, and the empires were stressed to be responsible for Romania’s retardation). Dacianism, a trend reducing the origin of the Romanians to the Dacian element, and present in the writings of several rightist intellectuals (for example, Vulcănescu 1991: 37-55) in the inter-war period, saw a rebirth in this period (Crișan 1977: 6). Controversial problems referring to events of the Past were solved through decrees. The Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party for instance fixed the year when Burebistas ascended the throne so it was able to celebrate the 2050 years since that event in 1980 on the occasion of the International Congress of Historical Sciences in Bucharest (Georgescu 1991: 99). “The art of our days must continue to glorify such a brilliant Past on all coordinates” (Crișan 1977: 81). Indeed, history became the main element of official propaganda:

“[History] invades the press, the radio and television programs, the theatres, the film studios, music halls, art galleries [...]. Each moment of the present is referred to the Past, being rooted in the depth of the centuries, each achievement is presented as the final achievement of a long historical evolution” (Georgescu 1991: 117).

Writers, actors, rock bands, folk singers and pop singers took part in *Flacăra* Literary Circle (whose leader was the poet Adrian Păunescu) and in the festival *Cântarea României* (a cultural movement initiated by the secretary general of the communist party himself), glorifying the past of the socialist homeland and Nicolae Ceaușescu, whose personality united all the qualities of a whole series of Geto-Dacian kings and Romanian rulers (Petrescu 1998; Negrici 2003: 53-56, 67-70).

Archaeology continued to be focused on the themes of the national ideology, but in a more exalted tone. Since the favourite theme was “our ancestors,” the archaeological discoveries taken out of their context were themselves manipulated (sometimes even by the archaeologists, e.g. Crișan 1977; Berciu 1986) in the elaboration of this type of discourse. During that period, Berciu (appointed director of the Romanian Institute of Thracology, founded in 1979) changed his type of discourse once again, returning to the nationalist rhetoric he had adopted during the inter-war period (see the discussion above; in order to get a full image of the sinuous pattern of Berciu’s archaeological discourses see, successively, Berciu 1938; *Conferința* 1950: 21; Berciu 1950; Berciu 1986). In a short text in which he celebrated “2500 years from the first written historical testimony of the Geto-Dacian struggle for freedom,” Berciu democratically quoted Herodotus and Ceaușescu (Berciu 1986).

Despite some critics (Babeș 1974), the propagandistic archaeology maintained that the Romanian national state had existed ever since Burebistas who

“laid the foundations for the first state in our history, which will be then perpetuated facing all kind of vicissitudes, reaching the glorious moment of the conquest of our state independence and later the making of the Romanian unitary state” (Crișan 1977: 80).

Similarly, a history of Romanian philosophy had to begin with the Geto-Dacians as even Plato borrowed from them “models of dialectical thinking” (Crișan 1977: 168-169). History played an

important role in the development of the “revolutionary consciousness” and of “the new man, builder of socialism,” who had to be aware, for instance, that

“the defining feature, that of justice, inherited from the Dacian and Getae ancestors and preserved as such, can be found abundantly in the entire policy of the Romanian Communist Party, in the whole domestic and foreign policy of our state” (Crișan 1977: 81).

In fact, at least in the official intention, the archaeologist blended two statures, viz.: that of researcher and ideologist (for Bulgaria, see Bailey 1998: 93-94):

“Parallel with its research activities, the collective of archaeologists engaged itself entirely in the activity of propaganda, of spreading scientific knowledge and of educating the young generation in a patriotic spirit [...]. In this way, archaeology responds to a second major task incumbent on research in general, namely by contributing on multiple levels to the building of socialist society in our country” (Preda 1984: 233).

The museums also took actively part in the official propaganda, as is evident from several articles published in *Revista Muzeelor* in the 1970s and 1980s (e.g., Ștefănescu 1973; 1976; Zaberca 1976; Ardeleanu 1978). The museum was considered to be a political institution. Consequently, it had to contribute to “changing mass conscience,” the “formation of socialist consciousness” and the “making of the new man” by means of museum propaganda (an action assumed as a result of the party directions), including the organization of symposia, propagandistic movies, recitals of poetry and patriotic music, pioneer competitions (for instance: *Meeting the ancestors* organized by the Museum of History of the Romanian Socialist Republic), or meetings with Party propagandists (organised by the same museum, see Ștefănescu 1973: 305). Some meetings with the “pioneers” at the National History Museum had themes such as “Decebalus, an ethic role model” or “The Romanian people – a result of the intertwining of Daco-Getian and Roman civilisation” (Ștefănescu 1973: 305; 1976: 34).

Museums would likewise organize itinerant exhibitions in factories; “scientific brigades” consisting of museographers could even go to the houses where the workers lived (Zaberca 1976). The museum, storing the exemplary past, became a place of consecration where after an entire ceremonial the pupils became “pioneers”. When in 1978 Ceaușescu reached the age of “60 years of life and over 45 years of revolutionary activity,” the Museum of History of the RSR opened with an exhibition with the suggestive title: *Tokens of the love, high esteem and profound appreciation enjoyed by president Nicolae Ceaușescu and comrade Elena Ceaușescu, of the ample relations of friendship and cooperation between the Romanian people and the peoples of other countries* (Georgescu et al. 1981). The visitor perceived visually, walking through the whole exhibition from prehistory to the halls dedicated to the secretary general, the entire ceremonial of the official propaganda: the fulfilment of national destiny through Ceaușescu, in whose personality all the qualities of the ancestors were gathered.

### ***Excursus: on positivism and positivists***

In the meantime, the representatives of that archaeology which we have conventionally called *positivist archaeology*, “based on document and rigorous examination” (Zub 1985: 22), carried on their activity in silence (though occasionally producing propagandist texts as well, see *Colegiul de redacție* 1985; *Editorial* 1986; Berciu 1986) – through their silence practically legitimating the dominant discourse (Boia 2000: 126). Given the fact that this kind of archaeology is obsessed with impartiality and considers the past as being independent of the subject we could also name it, following Nestor (1988: 277), *realist-objective* archaeology. This kind of archaeology has several characteristics, notably the use of the concept of “archaeological culture” (as defined by Gustaf Kossinna or Vere Gordon Childe); consequently it could be included in *culture-historical* archaeology (Trigger 1989: 148-206). The intellectual sources of this approach were the positivism of the German archaeology (especially that of Gero von Merhart, see Kossack 1992), as well as the “school of criticism” of Romanian historiography of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a school which laid emphasis on method, empirical approach and objectivity (Zub 1985; 1985a; Nestor 1988).

The representatives of positivist archaeology claim independence of their field of knowledge from politics and sometimes even from history as this discipline lays the accent on its own methods. The methods “restrict the movements of the archaeologist’s imagination and emotions, but we don’t know whether we could say that they also protect him always from these” writes with humour Nestor (Nestor and Vulpe 1971: 131). Nestor, a student of Merhart, introduced “the methods” specific to archaeology in Romanian practice – the three true “pillars” of archaeological research, *viz.* typology, stratigraphy, and spatial distribution of artefacts (Nestor 1965: 422; Nestor and Vulpe 1971; about Merhart, see Kossack 1986; 1992: 89-90). In a work that laid the foundations of contemporary Romanian archaeology, Nestor succeeded in bringing order into a great amount of materials scattered in museums and in formulating interpretations whose influence is still manifesting itself (Nestor 1932). Moreover, Nestor, following Childe, theorized in several unforgettable pages the inductive approach of archaeology (Nestor 1937).

However the works belonging to the positivist school are flooded with excavation reports, county repertoires, monographs on “cultures” or archaeological sites, studies referring to a specific type of pot, metal artefact etc., “rigorously” described and classified according to subtypes or variants. The purpose of these works was confined to the chronological and cultural ordering only. The approach to various archaeological themes had the tendency to become standardized: a history of research under the form of a series of names, years and titles of works, a description of dwelling types and mortuary practices, a typology of artefacts, chronology and a catalogue of finds (compare Roman 1976, or Roman and Németi 1978 with texts published after 1989, such as Paul 1992; Schuster 1997; Székely 1997; Cucuș 1999; Ciugudean 2000; Dumitroaia 2000 *et al.*). Typology and chronology, which could be used to define centers of production, modalities of exchange or help to understand the meanings of pottery or of other categories of artefacts, become in the archaeological practice from Romania aims in themselves, exclusively employed for cataloguing finds and sorting out formal analogies. And as if in answer to the above-mentioned ideological aggressions, Romanian positivist archaeology refuses to engage in any kind of theoretical approach (which would leave aside “the facts”); instead it is taking refuge in method or in blind empiricism. It is an archaeology built on the belief that the archaeologist’s first duty is to excavate in an objective way, to order the finds and to interpret them only afterwards (e.g., Nestor 1937: 155-156; Berciu 1938: 15; Nestor and Vulpe 1971; Babeș 1994: 94-95). However, an immediate and objective understanding of material culture is illusory because filtered through *a priori* codes which, having been assimilated by the observer, have become cultivated aptitudes (Bourdieu 2001: 190; see also Bourdieu and Delsaut 1991). In fact, the Romanian archaeologist excavates, collects and interprets his/her finds in accordance with several pre-defined concepts (culture, phase, ethnic group), which (s)he ultimately considers as objective realities. Interpretation is actually based on a flawed familiarity with the archaeological material, and is reduced to a cultural and chronological diagnosis. In other words, by means of “proper methods,” material culture is “integrated” into “archaeological cultures,” “aspects” and “cultural groups;” along the way, new such entities are defined and their chronological position (“relative” or “absolute”) adjusted. “Interpretation” becomes a combination of evolutionist and diffusionist concepts linked also to Friedrich Ratzel’s geographical determinism. “Cultures” are territorially and typologically defined entities with clear-cut frontiers; they have origins, interact with each other, migrate, develop through several phases, disappear and they usually contribute to the “birth” of other “archaeological cultures” (see, for example, Roman 1981).

When we move from “methods” to interpretations we see that they are utilitarian (a criticism of this type of interpretations using ethnographic examples was expressed by Nestor 1970: 87-88). They are anchored in common-sense notions such as “house,” “(garbage) pit,” “grave” (which in the past would have had the same function as currently), or – better – “archaeological complex,” a neutral term and a supreme sign of “objectivity.” Contexts that go beyond common sense are classified in the category of “cult” (“cult building,” “cult grave” and “ritual burial,” or “burial with special character”), on account of a logic that projects a contemporary dichotomy between sacred and profane into the past. The societies of the past, as interpreted by Romanian archaeologists, are a-historic – a danger pointed out by Nestor (1965: 426) –, and are structured similarly to almost all epochs and periods. Put otherwise, they are societies consisting of men, women and children (“the archaeological sex”), who are members of “families” and “clans” and belong to various status groups (“high”/“special” and “common”). Conceived as mechanisms (the role of the social agent being completely ignored), past societies “function” according

to specific rules, which the (Romanian) archaeologist thinks to have rediscovered when specific types of association within the component parts of the funerary inventory are established. In general, however, archaeologists belonging to this category claim that methodological improvement is the one and only necessary condition for the interpretation to be produced.

The predominance of this style of interpretation in Romanian archaeological discourse prior to 1989 is mirrored by the Index of the journal *Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie* (Vol. 36, no.1-2, 1985). Indeed, “this publication offers the largest and most faithful mirror of the evolution” of Romanian archaeology of the past 50 years (Babeș 1999: 5). The articles are classified by epochs, periods, cultures, phases, artefact categories, problems (metallurgy, deposits), and context categories (settlements, cemeteries). The national ideology is present under the heading “foreign populations and their culture.” Symptomatically, in the category “miscellaneous” we find terms like “man,” “fauna,” “pleistocene palynology-palaeoclimatology,” “holocene palynology,” “palaeobotany,” “dendrochronology,” and “absolute chronology.” Ten articles most of them containing criticism or advice related to the refinement of some archaeological repertoires are placed under the heading “methodology in archaeological research.” Unfortunately, the index of *Dacia* published in 2003 reflected the same image.

### ***Romanian archaeology in the post-communist period***

The continuation of the bureaucratic centralised institutional system typical of the communist period and the infliction of the positivist discourse to the detriment of the others (national and Marxist), considered to have been compromised during the previous period, are the two main characteristics (found in a relation of interdependence, as we are going to argue below) of Romanian archaeology in the post-communist period.

A “Marxist-Leninist discourse” was fully adopted by Romanian archaeology only in the Stalinist period; after 1989 it survived in diluted forms, for instance in the guise of an accentuated economical determinism. Similarly, the discourse of political power has been gradually oriented toward European integration by trying to marginalize its nationalist side, at least while in dialogue with Europe. National ideology has little need of archaeology in the new political context, as is reflected in the budgetary resources allocated, in the publication problems of the “prestigious journals” (*Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie*, *Dacia*, *Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice*, etc.) (Babeș 1999: 9), in the absence of foreign-language books and, last but not least, in the salaries of archaeologists and museologists. The national discourse prevailing in the last decades of the former regime and used periodically in specific contexts after 1989 was preferred now by the representatives of the category named the “water melons” (those who now promote an extremist nationalism, but who before 1989 were closely linked to the communist structures: like water melons red inside and green outside, cf. Radu 1991), as well as by those promoting Thraco-maniac exaggerations (I.C. Drăgan, N. Săvescu). Sometimes the national discourse is also used in exhibitions organized “upon demand,” at the occasion of important political events, when Romania must display her “glorious past.” Some works, especially those referring to the migration period, even after 1989 promote a national discourse with the favourite themes, such as “the uninterrupted continuity of the autochthonous population, its relations with migratory nations that penetrated temporarily in the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic regions” (Teodor 1996: 5). The history of Romania in some “specialized works” (Ursulescu 1992) starts with the appearance of *Australopithecus* at Bugiulești.

After 1989, the positivist discourse has become the most important feature of Romanian archaeology, sporting key words like “fundamental research,” “steps of research,” “scientific,” “objectivity,” “empirical.”

The spectacular presence of this type of discourse was mirrored in the *Plan de măsuri al Comitetului din Institutul de Arheologie din București al Frontului Salvării Naționale* (*Plan of measures of the National Salvation Committee Front of the Institute of Archaeology of Bucharest*), a document conceived in the context of the December 1989 Revolution and published in *Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie* (Vol. 41 no. 1, 1990, p. 3-6). In the preamble of this document, the authors deplore the losses that occurred in the period of the old regime that were caused by “the ideological intervention

and pressures,” by the promotion of “a primitive and anti-scientific nationalism” and by imposing isolation. “In these circumstances, which worsened year after year, most of the specialists in our field of knowledge succeeded however in preserving their professional dignity, a fact which should be underlined at this beginning of this new era.” In the sweet style consecrated in the period condemned by that document several lines above, “the staff of the Institute of Archaeology of Bucharest, the main specialised institution in our country” declared “enthusiastically their total commitment to the principles of the program of the Council of National Salvation Front.” Apart from concrete measures referring to the reorganization of the institute, the plan proposed measures which, on the one hand, continued the centralization of the totalitarian period and, on the other hand, assured the monopoly on the interpretation of the past to this type of “scientific” discourse. The Institute of Archaeology was subordinated to a “central forum” (i.e. the Romanian Academy) (the first item of the plan), but at the same time, it was subordinated to the higher education and the Archaeological Commission. This commission had the task “to work out a national research plan, to control archaeological excavations and to supervise their progress, as well as the awarding of scientific degrees” (the 14<sup>th</sup> item). In brief, the plan proposed to reform the archaeological field in Romania only through administrative measures not affecting the centralized academic system, and would guarantee the domination of the “scientific” discourse to the detriment of the other discourses.

The Institute of Archaeology in Bucharest indeed passed (like the other archaeological institutes in the country) under the control of the Romanian Academy, forgetting that this type of organisation followed a Soviet model (as was the case also in other countries of the former Soviet block, see Neustupny 1993: 131-133; Gringmuth-Dallmer 1993: 136, 139; Bököny 1993: 142-144; Dolukhanov 1993: 150-151). Meanwhile, the Archaeological Commission had acquired an ornamental status under the Ministry of Culture (which subsumes also all the national museums in the country), the ministry remaining the only body financing excavations with public money and deciding on Romanian archaeological policy.

Even after 1989, these institutions of the political and academic power kept on trying to impose an interpretation of the past reproducing to a great extent the solutions that had been official during the totalitarian period. For example, in 2001 a great number of archaeologists actively took part in the implementation of an older project of the Romanian Academy, namely, the publication of a new *Treatise of the History of the Romanians*. These experts were introduced as “the best specialists of the stages treated” (Berindei 2001: XVIII). The Romanian Academy wanted to convince about the high professionalism of those involved. A recent critical study, however, of the archaeology of the origin of the nation as laid down in these volumes exposed the dark face of the project, viz. the political directive and the nationalist discourse (Niculescu 2004-2005; see also Babeş 2002).

In spite of some critical attempts and of the emergence of new styles of interpretation (Bolomey 1973; Niculescu 1997; 2000; Curta 2001; Vulpe 1999-2000; Popovici 1999-2000; Anghelinu 2001-2002; 2003), the “positivist” discourse remains dominant even now. At the same time, joint projects with Western institutions (totally lacking during the communist period), although introducing new approaches especially as regards micro-zonal researches (e.g., the Southern Romanian Archaeological Project, resulting from the collaboration of Romanian and British institutions, see Bailey *et al.* 2000) and regarding excavation methods and multidisciplinary research (e.g., the Romanian-French project at Hârşova, see Randoin *et al.* 2000), did not succeed in breaking up the monopoly held by the practice of archaeology rooted in the positivist paradigm. A new element in post-communist Romania is the appearance of contract archaeology and of a new type of archaeologist – the cultural manager. The main feature of the cultural managers is that they look upon the past from a capitalist perspective, based on the idea of efficiency and profit. Archaeology is reduced to the status of a product “that has to be sold in order to recover the investment cost, which presupposes developing a marketing strategy likely to ensure the sale, a strategy likely to persuade the public to buy” (Angelescu 2004: 10)<sup>4</sup>. Although this type of

<sup>4</sup> This book is plagiarism (see the demonstration and debates on this “incident” on the website <http://www.archaeology.ro>). Later, the author, at the time director of the Archaeology Department of the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs, modified this book and published it in a new form on the website [www.cimec.ro](http://www.cimec.ro). Our references relate to the first printed variant of the book.

discourse is mainly produced by the officials of the Ministry of Culture, the profits are not used in reforming the archaeological field, but rather for preserving the scheme of organization and working of the old institutions. The cultural managers do not intend to decentralize the system. They are interested only to occupy the key positions within the framework of the system, as these positions ensure them immediate access both to the budgetary resources – which could be redistributed to their personal archaeological sites or to those conducted by the obedient archaeologists (whose critical voices are not heard) – and to great projects which attract extra-budgetary funds. The cultural managers adopt and make use of the discourse specific to positivist archaeology, although in certain contexts they resort to the national discourse. As professionals, they consider that they practice a modern archaeology, conceived in fact as a traditional archaeology plus GPS.

It is obvious that after 1989 the status society in Romania characteristic of the communist period was not replaced by a capitalist class society whose main criterion of differentiation is the economic one. Taking advantage of the absence of a civil society, communist bureaucracy grabbed political power, maintaining the institutions, practices, hierarchies, and power relations typical of the previous period. Under these circumstances, Romanian archaeology could only look like the rest of the society: a centralised, hierarchical academic system in which everyone is supposed to know his/her place. Romanian archaeologists played an important role in maintaining this system. After the revolution of 1989, the members of the Romanian archaeological elite once again had to adjust their social standing by turning the political capital earned during the communist period (by their adhering to the Party and by providing ideologically relevant discourses) into cultural capital (Eyal *et al.* 2001: 44-48, 80-82); in other words, by trying to prove that they owed their positions exclusively to their intellectual merits. As they gained their place in society (functions in the academic system, “scientific prestige”) by adopting the positivist discourse in archaeology, the only one that has become legitimate after 1989 (many are now attempting to conceal the works written in a nationalist or Marxist-Leninist style), these archaeologists have no other solution than to fiercely defending this type of discourse. Under the circumstances, a critique of the positivist discourse is largely seen as an attack against the “authority,” that is against their social position, and perforce a true menace of the academic system. For the same reason other archaeological interpretations are rejected vehemently.

This system has an extraordinary capacity of survival. The main strategy used to this end is bracketing-off communism, attempting to efface it from the collective memory. Many archaeologists resort to a radically anticommunist discourse (going as far as to vehemently reject any “leftist” ideas). In our opinion, the reason of this change of attitude is identical with that one described by Daniel Barbu in the case of the members of the post-nomenclature:

“[The politicians and the intellectuals] have resorted immediately after the fall of the regime to the denial of communism as a way to refuse to admit that their own careers started before 1989 were in principle the result of a selection based on the criterion of fidelity, publicly declared or tacitly assumed, to the ideology and / or the institutions of state socialism. Claiming today that at the origin of their present dominant positions (in politics, administration, business or culture) there is exclusively the personal merit, they are the most interested to wipe communism from the collective memory” (Barbu 2004: 30).

This desire to wipe out all traces linked with the communist past, which is common to many of the members of the present elite, is also proved by the lack of interest in the archaeology of the recent past. In accordance with legislation, “archaeological sites should be generally older than 100 years” (Oberländer-Târnoaveanu 2002: 14). There exists a classification of historical monuments that uses chronology as a distinguishing criterion: very old (over 400 years), old (200-400 years), relatively old (100-200 years), recent (buildings from the period 1914-1950) (Oberländer-Târnoaveanu 2002: 14-16). We can agree with the statement that “each generation establishes its own criteria of appreciation,” but we do not believe that “a distance in time is always necessary in order to appreciate the value of cultural assets” (Oberländer-Târnoaveanu 2002: 16). Also, the Romanian Academy considers that it is necessary that time passes in order to be able to judge *sine ira et studio* the communist period. This is why it has not been included in the *Treatise on the History of Romanians* mentioned above. We argue that we have to do here with a

deliberate policy of ignoring, postponement and even destruction of the sites that remind us of the communist regime – the archaeologists and those responsible for the protection of monuments behaving as if these monuments do not exist. Archaeology deals with the investigation of material culture from the Palaeolithic down to the present (for studies regarding contemporary material culture, see Hodder 1982; Shanks and Tilley 1992: Chapter 8; Galaty *et al.* 1999; Rathje and Murphy 2001; Buchli 1999; Buchli and Lucas 2001; Lucas 2004; Gonzalez-Ruibal 2005). Industrial buildings (works, factories), industrial zones (e.g., regions radically changed by mining), materializations of the scientific mythology of communism according to Boia (1999), tokens of the cooperativization of agriculture (Agricultural Cooperatives of Production, Stations of Agricultural Machines, Agricultural State Enterprises), villages built by those deported in Bărăgan, blocks of small flats standardized in order to create the illusion of equality among the citizens (see Drazin 2005), communist cemeteries (Petre 1998), jails and prison camps, the notorious “food shops,” places of manifestation of the “stay in line” culture, were or are to be privatized, demolished, degraded under the form of piles of scrap iron or they have simply have been transformed into other things with a new significance. Soon we shall study the monuments of the communist period only on the basis of written documents, propaganda texts, handbooks of economic geography, and documentary films. But why shan't we study them also archeologically? According to the legislation in force, we will have to wait several decades. The lack of interest for the contemporary period is also due to the fact that Romanian archaeology still is conceived as an auxiliary science of history, archaeology itself being asked only to round out the image of the societies of the historical periods. Additionally, issues of chronology and of cultural classification – favourite subjects of Romanian archaeologists – are already solved in the case of the contemporary sites, and that is why they are no longer considered worthy of attention.

The same archaeologists cited above maintain that in spite of some compromises with the regime which life forced them to make (compromises described as being of no importance), they only dealt with their personal research; they did science and published valuable works, they worked with the students and formed new generations of researchers, they even had the courage to introduce in various publications archaeological arguments which were not in accord with the Party line. Their attitude should ultimately be seen as a form of resistance. Let us cite Barbu's answer to their justifications:

“The theme of resistance through culture thus became from the very first moments of post-communism a commonplace of strategic importance for the survival of the cultural elite that emerged and was promoted under the totalitarian regime. [...] He who made true culture – or science or research – could, ipso facto, be only anti-communist. [...] Therefore, all the valuable works created under communism as well as their authors should not be judged today as products of the communist epoch, but as a result of a collective movement of subtle and non-violent resistance to communism. [...] The guilt of this category of intellectuals, researchers, artists and academics, who consider that in their personal fields of competence they have created spiritual goods of value and preserved the authenticity of the national cultural tradition consists in the fact that their mode of thinking is – through the rejection of self-examination and the refusal to accept political co-responsibility – identical to that of the Nazi party” (Barbu 2004: 56-57).

“[...] the entire culture of the five decades of totalitarianism was, almost without exception, the product of ideology and of the variable but implacable mechanisms of censorship. In the final analysis, ‘to make culture’ did not constitute a form of resistance, but one of participation, participation in the dynamics of the communist public space. On the contrary, it would probably be more adequate to talk about an assent through culture” (Barbu 2004: 58).

The strategy of forgetfulness, used to efface the communist past of many members of the archaeological elite, has often been applied also to institutions, thus giving legitimacy to their maintenance without reformation. The Institute of Archaeology in Bucharest, for instance, is no longer considered to be an institution established in 1956, as we mentioned above, after a Soviet model that, consequently, should undergo reformation; it is now the heir of the Museum of Natural History and Antiquities founded in 1834 (Alexandrescu 1995; Suceveanu 2004). Thus, as a “repository of legacy,” the institute is supposed to carry its entire prestige.

As already stated, the positivist discourse in archaeology, both through its emphasis on objectivity and the refuge it seeks in the archaeological profession itself, is a tacit ally of this centralised system. This type of discourse is spread through the courses held by the representatives of the archaeological elite at the history faculties, or by means of establishing master-disciple relationships between the archaeologist and the students through the doctor's degree programme and by their annual participation in archaeological excavations. At the same time, the conception according to which archaeology is reduced to excavations represents an efficient tool of maintaining the hierarchical pyramid of Romanian archaeology. An archaeologist's skill in Romania is not valued according to his or her analytical or interpretive abilities, but exclusively on the basis of his/her "excavation experience." This assertion is confirmed by the existence of the famous *Archaeologists' Directory* (dividing the archaeologists into three hierarchical categories according to the number of excavations they took part in, the academic titles they hold, etc.), a system providing to "experts" a docile mass of "specialist" subordinates and young "beginners," therefore never ending the reproduction of the paradigm of a "scientific" archaeology.

How can the current state of Romanian archaeology be changed? At present, Romanian archaeologists propose two types of discourses as reform solutions. Firstly, there is the scientific discourse (however, as argued, reducing the interpretation of the past to cultural and chronological classifications), authoritarian (aggressively rejecting any other type of interpretation) and submissive towards the system from which it expects maintenance by the financing of the so-called "systematic excavations." Secondly, there is a managerial discourse reducing the past to the status of a commodity that must be sold by putting it into an accessible language emphasising the necessity to obtain alternative financial resources from the so-called "rescue excavations." The Romanian archaeologist is offered a "capitalist" solution: to place himself/herself in the awkward position of practising both discourses, the rescue excavations being regarded as means to get money necessary to carry on the "systematic excavations," that is the "scientific" discourse.

The goal of reforming Romanian archaeology should not be in forbidding these prevailing discourses top-down, but in breaking up bottom-up the monopoly of these discourses by allowing diversification of interpretation and by criticising the social-political context generating them. It is an illusion to think that the reform of Romanian archaeology can be reduced to a reformation of the academic/university system (by steps towards decentralisation, promoting private initiatives in archaeology, organising bids) without critically debating its theoretical bases. From this point of view, we think that we should regard a reform of archaeological practice not in itself but in a broader context, first of all in relation with the interdependent fields: the policy of conserving and restoring the monuments and the styles of presenting the past (museums). The prevailing discourses in Romanian archaeology as converted into "legitimate culture" (by the education system, scientific texts, etc.) impose specific patterns of presenting exhibitions in museums, but also criteria for selecting historic monuments "worthy" of being conserved. The changes ("reform") occurring in any of the three fields (archaeological practice, policy of conserving and restoring monuments, museums) might influence a diversification of interpretations issued by the others.

At the same time, we think that one of the main solutions of breaking up the monopoly maintained by the prevailing discourses is a deep involvement of archaeology in contemporary Romanian society. An archaeology of the recent past would imply shifting the focus from chronology to an interpretation of material culture. The archaeological "complexes" would not any longer be treated only as "closed complexes," useful only for dating the finds, but as contexts which have significance and offer meanings to the artefacts. An archaeology of the recent past could offer information regarding the mode in which the significance of the artefacts changes depending on the contexts in which they appear – the centres of production, who is producing and who is consuming material culture, the influence of ideology on material culture and the environment, etc. Ceasing to be an appendix of history, archaeology can be helped by it, but also by sociology, anthropology, philosophy, literature, history of arts, architecture, theatre and performance, in the understanding of contexts in which material culture is manipulated. Without claiming to be able to create valid generalizations for archaeological situations of the past through formal analogies, an archaeology of the communist period could contribute to understanding our contemporary history from an alternative perspective. Put otherwise, archaeology would become an instrument of knowledge but also of criticism of the society in which we live.

## Epilogue

Romanian archaeologists have been among the main providers of symbolic capital for the national ideology (during the pre-communist period), and for the “Marxist-Leninist” and the nationalist discourses (during the communist period). The positivist discourse elaborated during the latter period to many archaeologists gave the illusion of withdrawing into an ivory tower, far from the compromises inherent when issuing the two types of discourses mentioned above. But by keeping silent, they did nothing else but legitimate them. On the whole, Romanian archaeologists did not have any kind of attitude, were not socially implicated, and did not take on any civic responsibility during the communist regime; by their obedience they contributed to the strengthening and maintenance of a totalitarian system.

Many of them pose now as the most loyal defenders of democracy, as supporters of the West, using a new language – the language of European integration – because this is the only prospective (European projects, grants etc.). During the communist period, Romanian archaeologists have been accustomed to adopt a double language. Now they continue to practice an archaeology anchored in the positivist paradigm and at the same time enthusiastically and obediently participate (with texts, projects and exhibitions) in the formulation of new myths necessary to the construction of a European identity (about the EU and archaeology, see Renfrew 1994; Rowlands 1994; Pluciennik 1998; Vulpe 1999-2000: 14-15). That is why we don't expect such persons to be critical of the capitalist system Romania is craving for.

What is the lesson (if any) offered by the example of Romanian archaeology? In a country where everything we experience today is the work of the communist elite, “converted” after 1989 to democracy and liberalism (a diffuse mixture of authoritarian practices and aggressive liberalism), also the archaeological field bears the same stamp: that of an authoritarian centralised system intolerant to those who think “otherwise,” aside of the so-called “reformation” attempts. The Romanian academic system continues to maintain/promote the myths of “objectivity,” “scientist” or “politically uninvolved.” This alleged neutrality tacitly supports only the ideology of those who are in power. The supporters of the ivory tower of uninfluenced objective science in fact justify passivity, cowardice and compromise, which nourishes all domination. From our point of view, archaeologists should stress criticism and reflexiveness/introspection and give up the search for certainty. We have to engage in debate with the other “professional colleagues” and be critical not only of ourselves, but also of the operating strategies of any institution relating to archaeological practice directly or indirectly. Archaeology not only means excavations, artefacts or publishing “scientific” works. It also involves struggling for social prestige, social rise, and material advantages, in short – struggling for power. Although we are all involved, in one form or another, more or less, in the competition for earning symbolic capital, few archaeologists have the courage to admit it, where most are preferring to present themselves as doctor, university professor, academician, researcher, site manager, grant leader, etc. All these micro-policies in which those involved have something to gain or lose have to undergo analyses.

In conclusion, we think that archaeology – regarded as long-term history – may contribute to counteracting and unmasking those discourses generated at the top, by which an attempt is made at presenting social projects as “natural,” “customary,” as “the only possibility” (imbuing the idea that there are no alternatives), or as “this is how it should happen.” Our message is that archaeology is not a means of escaping everyday life, but a means by which we might try to understand both the past and the present. It is a matter of knowledge and self-knowledge. Archaeologists should be responsible from both points of view.

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