



BRIEF APPRAISALS ABOUT THE ODOBESCU QUESTIONNAIRE, ESPECIALLY REGARDING THE ANSWERS FROM GORJ COUNTY¹

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Abstract:

Unknown to the general public, although there are bibliographic references in the specialized literature, the manuscript no. 226 – XIX Century (1873-1875) <Răspunsul com. din jud. Gorj la Chestionarul arheologic alcătuit de Alexandru Odobescu> (The Response of the communes from Gorj County at the Archaeological Questionnaire compiled by Alexandru Odobescu), contains a number of 240 leaves, measuring 34 x 20.5 cm and was given to the Romanian Academy by the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction in 1878.

The answers collected indirectly, from the field, through the respondents, constitute an exceptional documentary archive, not capitalized until now, which abounds in physical-geographical descriptions, archaeological, linguistic references, etc. and capture, at the same time, a multitude of spiritual and material manifestations of the rural world at the end of the nineteenth century. The inclusion and selection of questions in the questionnaire, according to the topics of interest of the initiator, illustrates Odobescu's concerns to impose methodological principles in the field of archaeological and ethnological research and to order the information according to well-defined criteria.

Keywords:

Alexandru Odobescu; national cultural heritage; history; archaeology; ethnology

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Odobescu Questionnaire

The activity carried out by Alexandru Odobescu regarding the crystallization of the disciplinary status of Romanian archaeology blurred the honorable but confusing intentions of the antiquarians, because, for them, the material vestiges were of interest more from the point of view of the novelty and less as primary historical sources (Babeș, 1981, p. 320; 1992, pp. 120-121). The offensive launched against the dilettante enthusiasts, whom the scholar reproached for the questionable manner of research, completely unsystematic, carried out under the specter of exaggerated passion for Roman civilization, a fact recognized by Bolliac himself - *Everything that could be found was Roman, and everything that could not be Roman, was barbaric, therefore good to be crushed, good to throw away* (Bolliac, 1874, apud Tocilescu 1880, p. 415, note 3), had the merit of having contributed to changing this mentality, imposing for the first time in Romanian science, the dissociation between archaeologist and antiquarian: *One, with an often only instinctive ardor, discovers and collects all the remains of the past; the other, through a extensive knowledge of facts and monuments and through a healthy criticism, chooses and judges the significance of those remains in relation to the past culture of humanity. One is the mason who gathers and symmetrically lays the layers of "stone"; the other is the artist, skilled and circumspect, who combines and elevates the edifice* (Odobescu, 1961, p. 61).

From now on, Romanian archaeology was no longer limited only to the acquisition of antiquities and, possibly, to a simple aesthetic classification of them, through Odobescu this historical discipline will consolidate its mission of knowing *the culture of the peoples of the past*, based on the comparative study *with analogous objects found in other countries* (Odobescu, 1941, p. 316). In this sense, the collection and systematization of archaeological information, as a prelude stage for future field research, became one of the scientist's permanent concerns, so that, between 1870 and 1871, on his initiative, an Archaeological Questionnaire was disseminated in the rural area.

The method of collecting historical, linguistic, archaeological, ethnographic, folkloric material, etc., by means of calls and questionnaires, in order to systematically know and scientifically capitalize on popular culture, in its entirety, was used before by George Barițiu who, in the supplement of the *Gazeta de Transilvania* entitled *Foae Literară*, published on May 7, 1838, launched an exhortation to *all the sons of understanding Romanians from all the homelands [for] signifying and gathering from the mouth and conversation with our people various kinds of ancient customs, stories that would have some historical and archaeological significance ...* (Nistor, 1997, p. 27).

On the same coordinates are inscribed the appeals launched by Ion G. Sbiera (1858), Mircea V. Stănescu Arădanul (1859) and Atanasie Marian Marienescu (1857, 1859, 1870), whose impressive results wanted to demonstrate the Latinity of the Romanian people through oral culture (Dobre, 1986, pp.46-47).

Interested in folklore and ethnography, Alexandru Odobescu stands out for several studies, of rare erudition, such as *Cântece poporane ale Europei Răsăritene mai cu seamă în raport cu țera, istoria și datinile Românilor* (1861) *Răsunete ale Pindului în Carpați: Diochiul, Năluca, Mioara, Moș Ajun* (1861), *Biserica de la Curtea de Argeș și legenda Meșterului Manole* (1879), from which emerge the scholar's preoccupations for a conception *holistic approach to oral culture, with the support of the information and scientific rigor offered by history and archaeology* (Raliade, 2016, p. 16).

In the winter of 1870/1871, through a letter addressed to the Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, the scientist, based on his experience of *gathering knowledge about all the localities in the country which, through existing buildings or ruins or even only through traditions, may have an archaeological or historical interest*, requested financial support from the authorities *in order to draw up later an archaeological charter of Romania [...], the benefits that would result from the gathering in the files of the ministry of such sciences that would form a monumental Archive of Romania's antiquities*, on which occasion he also presented a project for a *Cestionariu* (questionnaire) or *Izvod*



(catalogue, list) written in a language as popular as possible, which, being printed at the state typography in the number of several thousand copies, could be distributed to all the teaching staff who is placed under your direction, recommending in particular to the inspectors and school inspectors to collect the sciences required by the Questionnaire from the rural communes, specifying that the answers received at the ministry will constitute an archaeological cadastre [...] and will serve both as indications for the explorations to be made, and as primary bases for a scientific classification of the ancient monuments that are scattered on the territory of Romania (Dobre, 1986, pp. 161-162).

On August 21, 1871, in a communication held at the meeting of the Historical-Archaeological Section of the Romanian Academic Society, Odobescu made an information on the launch of the Archaeological Questionnaire, as a result of the fact that last winter he proposed to the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction in Romania to distribute to the urban primary school teachers and to the rural teachers a questionnaire drafted by himself which requires the recording and description of all the ancient settlements that will be located in the communes of Romania (*1871, p. 142). At the same time, on this occasion, the academician ensures the support of his colleagues in his intervention with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, that the registers with the answers received are given to the Academic Society, in order to be centralized, capitalized and made available to the interested public.

Thus, at Odobescu's initiative, the government assumed the responsibility of coordinating the elaboration of a national history and, seven years later, on September 1, 1878, through a letter addressed to Ion Ghica, who held the position of president of the high academic forum, the scientist informed him that he was depositing in the institution's archives all the files, gradually received from the ministry, containing the answers given by the village teachers from almost all the districts of Romania, to the Archaeological Questionnaire, compiled by the undersigned and communicated to the ministry teachers [...] these files, in number of 76 sealed pieces and comprising a total of 1607 answers, according to the adjacent table. These answers, as we said last year in the bosom of our Society, can give valuable local indications for further more scientific research (*1878, Volume XI, p. 86, Appendix H. For the Gorj District, see Order Number 12 of the Table accompanying the letter; BAR, ms. rom. 223, f. 31; 36; 45; 46; 57; 58; 63; 64).

The archaeological questionnaire, conceived by the author as an *Isvod* (List) of the questions to which answers were asked regarding the ancient settlements that are located in the particular communes of Romania (Odobescu, 1989, pp. 374-375), was made up of six questions formulated in a popular language, preceded by a brief argumentation from which emerges the involvement of the executive in the realization of an older national goal: The Government, in order to prepare the drawing up of a clear history of Romania, having the need to gather, from all over the country, knowledge about all the places that will be marked, since ancient times, by buildings or other old signs touching the deeds of the ancestors of the Romanian nation, wishes to have from each commune clear answers to the following questions (BAR, ms. rom. 223, f.1).

Each question was accompanied by clear instructions on how to formulate the answers: details regarding the phrase *locuri însemnante* (significant places); *cetate veche* (old fortress, fortified castle), *cetățuie* (little fortress), *grind* (mound), *strajă veche* (ancient outpost), *tabără veche* (ancient encampment), *siliște* (former village site), *turn* (tower), *culă* (fortified house, tower house), *bașcă* (soutterain, vault, bastion), *hazna* (treasury), *capiște* (pagan place of worship, any non-Orthodox church), *mănăstire* (monastery), *biserică veche* (ancient church), *oltar* (altar), *șanț* (ditch) - *troian* (Trajan's ditch; trench excavated by Trajan's armies), *brazdă* (furrow), *val* (vallum, fortified line of retreat), *măgură veche* (ancient mound), *movilă* (mound of earth), *gorgan* (tumulus), *popină* (mound), *rovine* (a humid depressions), *gropane* (big holes), *morminte vechi* (old tombs), *gropnițe* (vaults, crypts), *bolți* (vaults), *gropi* (pits), *borte* (holes, cavities), *ocne parasite* (mines, salt mines), *băi* (mines,



quarries), *ziduri surpate* (ruined walls), *stâlpi sau căpătâie de piatră* (pillars or their extremities), *cărămidă sau lemn ale podurilor vechi* (brick or wood of ancient bridges), *cruci mari de piatră* (large stone crosses), *pietroaie mari aşezate de oameni* (large stones placed by people), *peşteri scobite în stâncă sau maluri* (caves carved into the rock or banks), *vase ceramice - oale, ulcioare, urloaie* (ceramic vessels – clay pots, earthenware jugs, pipes/tubes), *hârburi* (debris), *arme* (weapons), *ornamente* (ornaments), *idoli* (idols), *lespezi de piatră săpate cu chipuri sau slove* (inscribed stone slabs carved with figures or letters), *bani vechi* (ancient coins), *pietre de inele* (gemstones) (first question), the geographical location of these vestiges in relation to the commune of residence, their extent (size) and shape, the age known from tradition (questions 2-4), the enumeration of objects ever discovered *in the land of that commune or in its vicinity, some old things such as: pottery, weapons, tools, small coins, idols, faces, inscribed slabs, or other kinds of items from ancient times* (sixth question) (BAR, ms. rom. 223, f. 1, 2).

The fifth question, which made direct reference to popular culture, *will show in detail what kind of sayings and stories that have been preserved from ancient times about those important places of whatever kind they will be, gathering those old sayings from the elders in the villages, from the priests, from the priests to the teachers, from the border guards, from the villages and from the men and women who also heard them from their parents as ancestors, touching the old settlements that were in the vicinity of the commune*. In the same folkloric register is also inscribed the eighth sub-point of the first question, which asked for possible answers about *some collapsed walls, which bear the name that they are from the times when with the Giants, the Jews, the Tatars or other pagan and foreign languages of antiquity* (BAR, ms. rom. 223, f. 1, 2).

The insertion in the questionnaire of a question for the collection of data, information and popular texts, denotes Odobescu's concerns for the documentary-scientific valorization of traditional culture, as an integral part of archaeology, considering that these elements perpetuated over time in the collective mind can offer, along with the material traces, a comprehensive image of the national history.

Expected to be a large-scale project, through the active involvement of the villages' intellectuals in the collection of historical, archaeological, linguistic, popular culture data, etc., the results were not as expected, so that, in some cases, due to *the naïve relationships of the village schoolteachers*, the archaeological profile of the area in question could not be properly outlined, which prevented Odobescu from making the expected map and the archaeological dictionary national. However, on the basis of the 1600 responses received, the scholar was able to group only those that referred to the former Dorohoi and Romanați counties, drawing up two regional archaeological monographs: *Rămășițe antice din județul Dorohoiu* (Odobescu, 1887, pp. 157-232; 1908, pp. 118-166), respectively *Antichitățile județului Romanați* (Odobescu, 1908, pp. 215-262), whose documentary value still retains its relevance.

The popular archaeology questionnaire is considered a reference point in the field of archaeological and ethnological sciences in Romania, and the comparative method used by Odobescu in the research and interpretation of traditional culture, which, in turn, Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu, Nicolae Densușianu and Grigore Tocilescu applied in the indirect collection of data from the field, through the respondents, denotes the theoretical contribution of the scholar towards encyclopedic, interdisciplinary approaches, we could say, at a time when the interest in studying Greco-Roman antiquity dominated the spirit of the time.

Answers to the Odobescu Questionnaire for Gorj County. Brief considerations.

Until the date of the answers, the only archaeological field investigations were undertaken by Caesar Bolliac together with Petre Danilescu, on the occasion of a *Archaeological excursions* since



1869, at which time were identified Roman and medieval vestiges on the estate of Mr. Constantin Danielescu, situated near Târgu Jiu².

In an attempt to gather elements of archaeological statistics and to establish a criterion, according to which the *ancient monuments located on the territory of the country could be classified, roughly speaking*, Alexandru Odobescu conceived a kind of *Isvod* in the vernacular language, an *Archaeological Questionnaire* (Odobescu, 1908, p. 185)³ and, as the author himself confessed, it was drafted in *a style and form that I found most accessible for the comprehension and understanding of our rural population* (Odobescu, 1878, p. I).

To the first question, by which Odobescu explained in detail what was meant by a *significant place* and asked for direct answers, the respondents mentioned a series of vestiges whose exhaustive presentation would have exceeded the scope of this introductory study; for this reason, we have limited ourselves to illustrating a few examples: *fortress*: Măru, Vără, Broșteni, Murgești, Bumbești-Jiu etc; *mound*: Celei, Godinești, Piștești, Poiana (Rovinari) etc; *ancient encampment*: Novaci, Albeni, Bucureasa etc; *monastery/church*: Arcani, Lainici, Tismana, Pocruiua etc; *altar*: Broșteni, Curtișoara, Sofrăceni; *idols*: Magherești, Rugi, Stroiești; *ditch*: Ionești, Hurezani, Schela, Timișeni etc; *tumulus*: Bârzeiu de Pădure, Cartiu, Rovinari, Hurezanii de Sus, Viersani, Plopșoru etc; *tombs*: Aninișu, Rovinari, Arcani, Mușetești, Curtișoara, Lelești, Pocruiua, Runcu, Celei, Hurezani de Jos etc; *mines, quarries*: Baia de Fier, Bumbești-Jiu; *caves*: Frătești, Pocruiua, Costeni, Baia de Fier; *weapons/tools*: Peștișani, Fărcășești, Dobrița, Musculești, Broșteni etc⁴. In certain cases, historical vestiges existing at the end of the 19th century were validated by archaeological research undertaken throughout the following centuries⁵.

The answers to the following Questionnaire items provide details regarding the geographical location of the communes in relation to neighboring areas, the characteristics of the relief forms found within their confines, the significant sites and the popular names by which they are known, as well as the respondents' efforts to describe the mass and geometric characteristics of these historical points of interest⁶.

The ethnographic and folkloric material, collected as a result of Alexandru Odobescu's investigation, did not benefit from the same scientific interest as the data inventoried by Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu through the legal questionnaire (1877) and the linguistic questionnaire (1884) (Mușlea, Bîrlea, 1970; 2010). However, the information in the *Odobescu Questionnaire* was the basis for the elaboration, at the end of the nineteenth century, of some works regarding the presence of the Jew in various Romanian folklore productions (Şăineanu, 1896, pp. 191-215). Researching materials, *mostly from the answers of rural teachers to Mr. Odobescu's Archaeological Questionnaire*, Lazar Șăineanu strove to illustrate some imagological landmarks of the Jews, whom he identified with the *Giants*, but also with the *anthropophagous Tatars* who, according to popular tradition, were associated with the *Ogres* (Şăineanu, 1896, pp. 180-186).

Considered to be a fabulous tribe, the *Giants* were called *Jewish* in Romanian folk legends (Pamfile, 1913, p. 157; 2006, p. 115; Fochi, 1976, p. 167), *Novăcești* (Fochi, 1976, pp. 216; 220),

² For further details, see Bolliac, 1869, pp. 62-64.

³ Along with the obsolete term *isvod* / *izvod* (copy, list, catalogue), which was mentioned in Frédéric Damé, *Nouveau dictionnaire roumain-français*, Bucarest, Imprimerie de l'État, 1893. Odobescu also used the *questionnaire* neologism, precisely to promote this new lexical innovation, as an alternative to a traditional model of expression, but also to avoid the confusions that might have been created among the respondents, considering that many of them were professionally unprepared.

⁴ Regarding the geographical location of the reported historical vestiges and for a general assessment of the responses provided to the first question of the Archaeological Questionnaire, see Rădoescu, 2025, pp. 35-37.

⁵ See Rădoescu, Hortopan, 2021, *passim*.

⁶ For further details, refer to Rădoescu, Chepeneag, Rădoescu, 2025, *passim*.



Dacian (Taloș, 2001, p. 177), Arapi (Şăineanu, 1896, p. 194), which is why the descriptions and references regarding their gigantism and origin have generated an ample mythical register, often found in various local folkloric creations (Oișteanu, 1998, pp. 218-219; 2012, pp. 427-432). The popular imagination endowed the giants with human attributes that went beyond the usual frames: *they would put polenta like in our village and go after the sieve in the Hungarian country, taking only four or five steps* (Pamfile, 2006, p. 115), and on account of their gigantism there is a mythology referring to the meeting of a girl from this nation [of the Jews] with some ordinary ploughmen, *like those of now*, whom she took on her lap, with plough and oxen, to show her parents *what she found by digging the earth* (Fochi, 1976, p. 169)⁷.

If in some variants *the Giants*, who were *sometimes called Jidovi (Jew) [...] settled in these parts [...] after the goats fled [and] lived before our time, so that today they are no longer to be found* (Pamfile, 1913, pp. 157-158), in others the explicit difference between the two mythical characters is noted: *the giants came after the Jews* (Pamfile, 2006, p. 115); *the giants were larger than the Jews* (Fochi, 1976, p. 167), or it is stated that they were even servants of the Jews. The traditional imaginary has attributed grotesque qualities to those people *of old [who] were Jews, that is, some terribly big people: heads like those five-eyed hogs, eyes like thalers, hands like little [...] nails like sickles, teeth in the mouth like plows* (Şăineanu, 1896, p. 196), thus highlighting the physical disproportions of this pre-human species, but, at the same time, he also established the mythical context in which the characters acted: the times before the flood (Pamfile, 1913, p. 138; Fochi, 1976, pp. 179-171; 340; Oișteanu, 1998, p. 219; 2012, pp. 429-430).

The synonymy *Jidovi (Jews)* or *Giants* existing in the Romanian folk tradition – *The Giants are synonymous with Jews in the language of the people* (Aricescu, 1855, p. 13), was interpreted as an interference of the biblical data about giants with the myths of Greco-Roman antiquity about titans (Cartojan, 1974, II, pp. 59-60), and these fabulous characters, also found in the collective mind of other European peoples, suggests the possibility of the action of a law of *popular psychology*: *whatever we are ancient and pagan (according to the Christian conception) is identified by the people's imagination with the giant past, to which the origin of all the monuments of primitive architecture has been attributed. By virtue of this law Jews, Greeks and Latins become representatives of an old generation of giants; then, through an analogous process of the popular spirit (for which the historical memory does not pass over 3-4 centuries), the Huns, Avars, Genoense and Tatars acquire the same fantastic proportions and they in turn become the starting point of a distant chronology* (Şăineanu, 1896, p. 215).

The presence of these gigantic figures in the collective imagination of the place is suggested by a series of *old sayings and stories*, which refer to certain morphological peculiarities of them: *in the hamlet of Dolcești [...] a fragment of a giant's leg of a rare size was allegedly found, [...] a head was also found, again of a giant from ancient times* (BAR, ms. rom. 226, f. 8v); *In Rădinesci hill, to the south-west of the commune there are found bones of Giants as well as whole skeletons in a ravine* (BAR, ms. rom. 226, f. 188), or mention of *giants, of Jews who had idols with them on the Rugi hill* (BAR, ms. rom. 226, f. 39v).

In other situations, tombs are mentioned, such as those in the Lelești Plain (Câmpia Lelești) – *In the center of this plain there is a place called Gropnițile where it is said that the Giants would be buried by the ancient people often call them at the tombs of the Giants* (BAR, ms. rom. 226, f. 122), dwellings in the commune of Hurezani de Sus - *People say that here there were huts from ancient times, [...] others say that there were Jewish tombs* (BAR, ms. rom. 226, f. 107v), *Jewish vineyards*,

⁷ On this leitmotif, see Şăineanu, 1896, p. 196 and Oișteanu's clarifications, 1998, pp. 218-219; 2012, p. 429.



such as those from commune of Plopșoru (BAR, ms. rom. 226, f. 121v), on the Glodeni Hill, in the commune of Bălănești (BAR, ms. rom. 226, f. 136) or *the ploughs of the Jews*, in the commune of Cărpinișu (BAR, ms. rom. 226, f. 174v).

Also, the giants are also present in the legends of the founding of many localities, as is the case of the *Morminți* Commune in Gorj County: *The former village site, in the commune of Ceauru, neighboring commune of Cârbești, is located on the plain. Above a small stream called Iazul Morii, there is a settlement called Morminți. Asking the people of that commune, they told me that it was called Morminți because there were buried (...) some very large people, at whose graves it was found some time before [...] and all those who are believed to have been carried on their fingers but fit on the hand* (Coatu, 1980, p. 47).

Another mythical motif, often found in popular legends and which is attributed to the Jews, refers to the megalithism of the constructions erected by them: large fortresses, mounds, etc., which tradition has recorded by the toponym *Jidova* or *Jidovina*, meaning the *Fortress of the Jews* (Oîșteanu, 2012, p. 429). About the existence of such structures, we find out from the answers given by the teacher T. Popescu from Timișeni, who pointed out the existence on *Dealu Jidovi*, two ditches that are said to be made by the *Jidovi* (Jews) (BAR, ms. rom. 226, f. 33v), from the accounts of N. Tătaranu from Bălești regarding the fact that *it was told by the elders that in the northern part of the commune towards the Slobozia Commune there were found about three mounds that he said were made by Jidovi or Giants* (BAR, ms. rom. 226, f. 183v), as well as from the records of Ion Negomireanu about *a hill between two valleys, his name is called the Jews' citadel*, located in the commune of *Dănești* (BAR, ms. rom. 226, f. 184-184v).

Also, the priest Demetru Georgescu recorded that *on the hill of Busuioci Commune, towards the east, at the border of Hurezanii de Jos Commune, there is a small hillock, which bears the name of Măgura Jidovului* (BAR, ms. rom. 226, f. 223v), and above the hill located in the commune of Crasna, *there is a large clearing where it is believed that it was the fortress of a great giant who had made to escape the floods* (BAR, ms. rom. 226, f. 191).

Placed in a mythical past, outside the usual existential frameworks, these grotesque creatures, personifications of the evil, came to represent threats to the worldly order and to become embodiments of *the foreigner, of people of another nation* (Jews, pagans, Tatars, etc.), a fact that also generated confusion between the real Jew (Jew), with whom the rural communities cohabited relatively well, and the imaginary, mythical Jew (*Jidov/Giant*), on whom all the vices and misfortunes that befall the community are attributed (Oîșteanu, 1998, pp. 184-216; 2012, pp. 435-514).

Another category of fantastic characters mentioned in the Odobescu Questionnaire, the *Ogres* (Căpcăuni), - in the variants *Căpcani, Căpcâni, Cătcăuni*, complete the register of Romanian popular beliefs regarding those primordial people (Șăineanu, 1896, pp. 175-190; Niculită-Voronca, 1998, p. 45; Pamfile, 2006, p. 130), *rebelled against the divine order established in anthropogeny on earth, because they ate each other and devastated forests, fields and animals out of malice* (Vulcănescu, 1985, p. 426). They lived, either before the giants (Vulcănescu, 1985, pp. 254, 255; Ghinoiu, 2001, p. 40), or behind them (Fochi, 1976, p. 340), but, due to the fact that they were located in the same mythical reality, they were sometimes identified with each other – *they were still great people like the Jews* (Pamfile, 2006, 120), even if the latter were endowed with *three eyes: two on the forehead and one on the back of the neck* (Fochi, 1976, p. 167). The grotesque of physical features, however, particularizes the ogres in the gallery of bizarre figures: *they had a dog's head with one eye on the forehead and another on the back of the neck and three, five or seven legs* (Pamfile, 2006, p. 121), *they did not feed on as much as a human being* (Șăineanu, 1896, p. 182), *they ate carrion, even children*



(Fochi, 1976, p. 54) etc. In other accounts, they had *two heads, one of a dog and the other of a man* (Cartojan, 1974, I, p. 279).

Derived from the etymon *κυνοκέφαλος*, the phrase *dog head* was attributed to the *căpcâni* (Şăineanu, 1896, p. 178; Pamfile, 2006, p. 131), those *anthropophagous monsters*, which popular tradition assimilated with the cannibal Tatars, *who invaded the Romanians, whom they chased away with their dogs, enslaved and ate them* (Fochi, 1976, p. 340)⁸. Recorded since antiquity, along with other populations of the Indian continent (Boia, 2011, pp. 42-43), the *Ogres* (*cynocephalii*) appear not only in Slavic mythology – *psoglavi*, but also in Romanian folklore, in connection with the eponymous hero of the popular novel *Alexandria* (Şăineanu, 1896, p. 182). Like the giants, *if they were allowed to go out, they would destroy the world in two or three days* (Pamfile, 2006, p. 120), the goats *will come out in the end times* (Muşlea, Bîrlea, 1970, p. 196) and will kill the people according to an eschatological scenario that the popular tradition has recorded over time (Prohin, 2014, pp. 220-225).

Thus, tradition reminds us that in the southern part of Broşteni Commune, on the border with Brăneşti Commune, *according to some old sayings, they were inhabited by Căp-Câni (Unguri) (Câtcauni) [...] By Câtcauni are named those people who ate children and whose food came out through the nape of their neck* (BAR, ms. rom. 226, f. 61), and from the notes of teacher Ioan Bărbulescu from Rădineşti Commune, we learn that the elders tell stories about *Căpcâni* (*Cătu Câuni*) (BAR, ms. rom. 226, f. 188).

The *Giant-Ogres-Tatar* correspondence⁹ represents in the collective mind the image of the *Other*, a distant and strange character, with an uncertain existence, who generates an imbalance in the status of the community by violating the norms imposed by the human condition. Radical otherness presupposes the existence of human species, different from the usual one, which were born as a result of man's confrontations with the gods and with nature for the perfection/restoration of creation, so that the *Other* can be considered a product of the Promethean nature of man (Boia, 2011, pp. 7-9).

Also in the category of beings who lived in mythical times are the *Novăceştii* (Fochi, 1976, pp. 216; 220), a name attributed to characters similar to strong and strong people, who entered Romanian folklore by contaminating them with the epithets of *Giants* and *Jidovi* (Iordan, 1963, p. 342). In addition to the existence of the famous Balkan outlaw Novac/Baba Novac, a close collaborator of Prince Michael the Brave, an active participant in the anti-Ottoman struggle and confused by the people with several real/imaginary characters, the oral tradition also recalls the exceptional deeds of a local hero, who was given the epithet of *novac* (giant): *Novac or Ostrea-Novac, the emperor of the Jews, who according to legends fought with the dragon and pulled the big furrow, is a prehistoric personality, quite distinct from the "Novac the old man" celebrated so much in our heroic songs...* (Densușianu, 2002, p. 159, note 1)¹⁰.

Following the answers received from the village teachers, Odobescu concluded regarding the effort made by a *local man* to carry out a work of gigantic dimensions: *The popular tradition expresses itself in this way about this ditch, called Novac's Furrow: Novac's Furrow comes precisely from where the sun sets and ends at sunrise. Novac pulled this furrow with the plough, having yoked two white buffaloes, which pulled the furrow right on the Olt [...]. By whom was this furrow made, and why does*

⁸ Reminiscences about the *Tatars who ate children* are found in the answers of Bardan Lazăr from the hamlet of Rugi (BAR, ms. 226, f. 39v), and the inhabitants of the hamlet of Bucureasa used to relate that the Tatars had also lived there, for the name of Tatar is known to all the inhabitants of Gorj county, and the women remained fearful of the Kalmyks (catcauni, căpcâni) who ate small children (*Ibid.*, f. 42). L. Şăineanu claimed about the Kalmyks that they represented another *Tatar nation [which] really fed on human flesh* (Şăineanu, 1896, p. 179).

⁹ Regarding the association of the *Tatar* of the synonymous series, see the study of L. Şăineanu, *Jidovii sau Tătarii sau Uriașii*, in *op. cit.*, p. 197; 203.

¹⁰ For more details on the *patriarchal family of the Novacs*, see Fochi, 1975, p. 65.



it bear the enigmatic name of *Novac*, which, in Lesser Romania, has been preserved as a geographical name in the District of *Novaci*, in the north of Gorj County, and among Romanians seems to be synonymous with the epithet of *Giant*...? (Odobescu, 1908, pp. 223-224).

Thus, the name of such a *founding hero* is also linked to the foundation of the village of *Novaci Români*, as explained by the teacher I. Dumitrescu (BAR, ms. rom. 226, f. 5), and in the commune of Aninișu, the old sayings remind us of a *Novac* who came from the Transylvanian Country, who destroyed the Jews who walked on the paths of Mount Rădeiu and killed the dragon that terrorized the inhabitants (BAR, ms. rom. 226, f. 83v-84). In its displacement, the monster left a trace (trail) that the popular mind, as a thank you for the victory of the local giant, called *Novac's Furrow* (Fochi, 1975, p. 259; Croitoru, 2005, pp. 289-290), and the gesture of *pulling the furrow* was symbolically capitalized, as a founding act of a settlement.

In other records, such as those from the respondents from the communes of Ciuperceni and Pocrui, respectively, the fight with the dragon was fought by another giant, named *Iorgovan*, who chased the monster from the village of *Novaci* (Mount Oslea in the case of the respondent from village of Pocrui) to the area of the Cerna river where he answered it (BAR, ms. rom. 226, f.112v; 123v),¹¹ and in his memory, in some places in Mehedinți County, there is talk of *Iorgovan's Furrow* (Spineanu, 1894, pp. 46-47; 112-113; 159).

The dragon, the chthonic monster, a degraded reminiscence of the *Chaos Principle*¹², is killed by a demiurge hero (the principle of Order), with mytho-ritual means, who enters the *uncivilized* space ruled by the fearful beast and restores the temporarily disturbed cosmic order. These mythical principles, which are the basis of an archaic thought, are found in legends and folkloric creations under various *allegorical hypostases*, which is why it is necessary to centralize and group them in an organic structure, which would allow the reconstruction of the evolution of an entire socio-cultural phenomenon.

About Emperor Trajan and his municipal action, the collective memory has kept alive the memory of the conqueror of Dacia, attributing his name to some localities (Iordan, 1963, p. 311), the Roman defensive system north of the Danube - *Trajan's Vallum*¹³ and the military roads (*viae militaris*) that crossed the province of Dacia - *Trajan's Way*, *Trajan's Road*, *the Trojan* and so on¹⁴. The presence in the Romanian lexicon and toponymy of the name *Trajan*, but also of the form *Troian* (Trojan)¹⁵, terms that coexisted in Roman Antiquity, illustrates the major contribution played by the military infrastructure built by *Optimus princeps* in preserving the emperor's denomination along with that element – *Trajan's Vallum*, *Trajan's Ditch*, *Trajan's Bridge*, etc.

In addition to constructive activities, popular tradition also recognizes this historical character as the founder of rural settlements. From the perspective of the traditional mentality, the establishment of a human settlement represents a process of *reconstruction of the world* (Eliade, 1992, p. 342), and the founder/founding hero establishes the morphological model of the new socio-cultural reality. The legends of the foundation of the habitats reflect the reality of the initial kinship, clarifying the issue of descent from one or more dismounter ancestors (Cosma, 2000, p. 241).

¹¹ Details on the Romanian ballads of the type *Iovan Iorgovan* or *Şarpele* (The Snake) in Oișteanu, 2004, pp. 292, 296, 302-303. See also the legend of *Iorgovan* in Spineanu, 1894, pp. 159-162.

¹² Regarding the etymology of the word *dragon* (balaur), see Ionescu, 1985, pp. 37-41; Radu, 2010, pp. 20-25.

¹³ On these toponyms, in Croitoru, 2007, pp. 47-140; idem, 2014, pp. 99-110.

¹⁴ Data regarding the toponyms that certify the presence of some Roman roads during Trajan's reign, in Fodorean, 2006, pp. 141-146.

¹⁵ The *Trojan* variant, epigraphically attested in various areas of the Roman Empire, was used, especially, among the military, as a form of popular pronunciation of the emperor's name. On the origin of this variant, which generated polemics among philologists, see Talos, 2020, pp. 275-279.



In Oltenia and Muntenia, the prototype of the founder is represented by Traian (Toşa, 1986, p. 240) or Negru Vodă (Coatu, 1980, pp. 32; 74; 86-88)¹⁶. The dismounter turns into an eponymous hero, who, over time, will become the ancestor of the nation, and the direct descendants will play an essential role in the management of land ownership, as is the one related in the legend about the establishment of the villages of Radoși, Cărpiniș and Aniniș (Cosma, 2000, 242). About the foundation of the Arcani Commune, due to the emperor Trajan, the teacher C. Pușcu recorded the following facts: *The inhabitants of the Arcani Commune are of Romanian nationality and descend from those brought to Dacia by the emperor Trajan. They were accustomed to shooting with a bow, and they believe the name of the commune of Arcani, derives from this* (BAR, ms. rom. 226, f. 94v). According to popular beliefs, the foundation of villages was carried out according to a ceremonial in which the fixing of boundary signs was an operation that involved certain ritual gestures, such as pulling a plough furrow. In some localities, including Albeni, it was believed that this custom dates back to the time of Trajan, who would have *bypassed this country with a plough furrow that was called Trajan's Furrow* (Toşa, 1986, p. 346).

Another folkloric theme regarding the foundation of a settlement is that of the donating origin of the village, through the ownership by the ruler of some of his subjects. In another legend about the foundation of the village of Albeni, Negru Vodă (the prototype of the donor) gives Dragu his estate in this area, and from the physical particularities of his son, Mihai, who had half the hair of his head white and half black, a white eyebrow and a black eyebrow, people called *him Albu*, and his children *Albeni* (Coatu, 1980, p. 53). In the case of this legend, but also of others with a similar subject (Coatu, 1980, p. 77), we find that the founding gestures are not simple historical evocations, and *the donating origin of the village satisfies the needs of popular affective memory* (Cosma, 2000, p. 250).

The traditions regarding Negru Vodă or Radu Negru refer not only to the status of founder/founder of the country, of architectural monuments, etc., but also to the battles against the Tatars, which ended with their expulsion (Cosma, 2000, pp. 327-331, 335-337)¹⁷. About such an episode, the respondent from the commune of Bumbești-Jiu pointed out the following aspects: *The Bumbești-Jiu Commune [...] currently comprises 250 inhabitants of Romanian nationality, and they have been settled here since the time of Radu Negru, because until then this place had been inhabited by other residents known under the name of Tartars* (BAR, ms. rom. 226, f. 99).

Without claiming to have made a brief analysis of the historical, archaeological and ethnological information revealed by *the Archaeological Questionnaire*, we consider that its publication represents a generous contribution to the recovery of a part of the national cultural heritage which, in terms of originality, will become an important working tool for various specialists in the humanities and will open the way to transdisciplinary approaches and reformulations Synthetic.

¹⁶ ...the legendary Negru vodă was a well-known character in the Oltenian village environment in the seventeenth century, at least in Gorj County (Stoicescu, 1980, p. 146).

¹⁷ Regarding the overlap of the legendary Negru Vodă with Radu I, the real ruler, and the emergence of the Radu-Negru tandem, see Stoicescu, 1980, pp. 150-153.



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