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THE CHURCH AS A PRESCRIPTOR OF CONSUMPTION
- AN OUTLINE FOR A SOCIOLOGY OF LUXURY

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Abstract: The present research is a historical perspective on luxury during 1781-1933. The major stake is represented by the response of the ecclesiastical authority to luxury, the rejection/blaming/damning of luxury; subsequently the acceptance of it. We notice here the church's incapacity to stop the 'illegitim' consumption, that kind of consumption which was beyond the possibilities of a common person, and the taxation of luxury - the one who had more than he/she needed had to donate to the Church, meaning to the poor. The secular authority did the same - luxury would be progressively taxed, which led to a certain synchronization between Church and State. We also analyse the link between orthodoxy and consumption from sociological perspective. The excess is perceived as being a sin. That is why the Church undertakes the role of prescriptor/controller of consumption, be it dressing, food etc. We detect here stages in the process of modernizing of the Romanian cultural space, the social changing and stratification. Luxury was a benchmark in social comparison, a reason of frustration, of indignation, of philosophical reflection. Luxury is a key for understanding the struggle between old and new, between ethics promoted by the Church and that of liberalism, about the tension between traditional consumption (home-made, predictable, swimming with the stream) and the one generated by the circulation of goods, by the industrial revolution.

Key Words: luxury, church, consumption, curse, commerce, economy, orthodoxy, Romania, social history.

Argument

The recent economic crisis that has gripped most of the world's economies offers researchers new opportunities for reflection on themes such as: consumption, the lack of balance between production and consumption and greed. Whether we place ourselves in the doctrine of consumerism, meaning excessive concern for the acquisition of goods, whether we linger in postmodernity, the consumer practices and life styles, we still characterize the social status, social stratification and competition through consumption. The present study presents a quick overview of the evolution of luxury representations, with emphasis on the attitude of the Orthodox Church towards luxury, in more general terms, with a focus on the process of modernization of the Romanian country. The social change is another concept that our study is focusing on, and for the purposes of the current paper we equate modernization and Westernization¹. That is, in fact, the first modernization of the Romanian society, seen as "a process that involves access to capital, to information, to culture. If upgrading is tied to capitalism and industrialization, then this will manifest itself in the Romanian society only after more than a century"². The link between consumer's behaviour and modernity is obvious. Incidentally, "sociologists explain the phenomenon of consumption as being a combination of envisage (comfort, safety), pleasure (hedonistic, consumer satisfaction) and meaning (differentiation, lifestyle, membership of a group or the group itself). The social actors are combining various strong reasons (...) in order to consume the goods"³.

Luxury has been a landmark in social stratification, a cause of frustration, indignation and philosophical reflection. Luxury, from the perspective of religious practice means sin, vice, excess, foolhardiness. In the present study we will analyze how the luxury is passing from the stage of being the object of the curses, to the stage of being a necessity, or even the engine of the development of industry and commerce. We will focus on the struggle between old and new, between the ethics promoted by the Church and the ones promoted by liberalism. We will also focus on the tension between traditional consumption (aborigine, predictable and conformist) and the turnover generated by the industrial revolution. Preserving the status quo, i.e. maintaining inherited inequality, maintaining the already existing status quo- this is one of the Church's obsessions. *Do not dare!* seems to be the command that can easily be noticed in many reactions of the clergy, and if you would dare to overcome the socio-economic level that you were born with, then it would be appropriate to give something back to the Church. Over time, some things that were considered to be cursed, i.e. wealth has become a gift, "the gift of wealth". And if God gave you too much, you need to give something back in return. "The gift" is an institution, after all in the New

Testament we are being told that "the one who gives to the poor lends the Lord. And He will reward his deed"⁴. Let us note here an educational dimension of the religious discourse, normative, because "education always consists in the inoculation of cultural patterns, among whom the duties of social status are included (...) the duties of the personal social status are transmissible to all religions"⁵. The normative dimension of the discourse of the Church is evident, especially in the context of the belief that living together is made possible only through the establishment of rules- "religions always present the human existence as being placed in a social context"⁶. On the other hand, what was happening in the Romanian cultural space was not altogether different from what was happening in the Western world, especially because ever since religion is known "we cannot deny the fact that it plays a major part in the construction of ethical behavior"⁷.

Curses for the Rich

In the Romanian space, one of the institutions that has the role of prescripator of consumption is the Church. Therefore, all commercial messages should be reviewed from the perspective of the Christian morals too. E.g. the admonition to thrift, the solidarity to the needy, the modesty and so forth. For instance, the priests have influenced peoples' clothing, have set the desired behaviour and even the necessary penalties. A precious document that illustrates the above is the "Book of curses against those who like luxury". The book was printed in 1781 by the Moldovan Metropolitan Church printing house and it contains, even from the front page, statements such as: "humbled clothing and good balance is the first element for equipoise and strengthening peoples' homes, and those who overcome the basic things face debts, poverty, despair and many other unrespectable and deleterious things that will happen first in their homes and then to their friends"⁸. We must notice that the lack of balance in spending money for clothing would have created problems not only at the individual level, but also at the collective level.

But what had actuated the anger of the priests in order to make them write a book of curses? It was the danger of the mixture of ranks, the fact that low-level people had begun to wear colored clothes made from pretentious toile with shiny items- embroidery with gold thread, silver, flowers, etc. Such actions were only allowed to a limited number of the representatives of the elite, like the Prince, the archbishop, the priests and the boyars. Ordinary people were allowed to taste the luxury of wearing beautiful and expensive clothing once in a lifetime: when they got married (more for the bride, and less for the groom). This is why the audacity to be fashionable should be penalised with a curse." Clothing is due to be humble, namely just consistent. Clothes communicate the social hierarchy, constituting a form of communication. In fact, "the

differentiation of costumes coincides to the differentiation of social classes". In time the characteristics of these classes is specified, and their garments gain distinct aspects"⁹, as the historian Marcel Romanescu points out. The same researcher analysed the votive documents and paintings from monasteries, that enabled him to argue that after a time in which expensive fabrics (silk, velvet, gold wire embroidery, etc.) were brought from Asia Minor, Constantinopol/ Tarigrad¹⁰ the 17th-century followed, when "all silks (for public officials-n.n.) were brought from Germany, then France. The silks used for women's clothing were either Oriental or locally produced?"¹¹ Therefore, the costume is an element of distinction, a sign of power. As it will be noticed later by sociologists - "classes depend on economic differences between groups of individuals-inequalities in terms of possession and control of material resources (...) Possession of property, together with the occupation is the main basis of the class differences"¹².

We need to bear in mind that what the Church condemns, i.e. "the mixture of old and new, the confusion of norms, ranks, habits", is a characteristic of Modernity¹³, as noted by Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu. On the other hand, "Romanian national identity also includes the Christian and European dimension"¹⁴, what remains to be seen in the present study. The authors of "The Book of curses..." assert that the Moldavian ruler¹⁵ and the archbishop, moved by the concern over the expansion of luxury that was going aside the Princedom, decided to create sermons for correcting clothing habits, and that measure also included editing the volume of curses. Especially since not only people, but also the towns that "went to pride and fornication (...) were perished and departed"¹⁶. The extravagance would endanger generations- "where we keep the clothing humble, there are good homes, that remain from an heir to another with full and entire clothing". Because sometimes "all year long people spend huge amounts on clothes, most of them gone on tick or paid with borrowed money or paid from the sale of moving and unmoving things (...) many down-grade families (...) are spending two hundred lei for a coat, even if with that money they could have taken the honor of dressing up the sons of other families that might not have the necessary clothes"¹⁷. Therefore the hierarchs decided: "A : all taffeta with filament and tinsel and backed with woven wire or sewn shall be stopped all year long both for men and women. B: all kinds of laces with tinsel or wire to be halted, both (...) to the vestment, as well as to the head. Any chokers would not be allowed (...) C: all sorts of fabrics from India, i.e. the ones that are called green scarfs, atlaz fabrics from Alep with flowers and expensive flowered Turkish scarfs (...) or Alep or Tarigrad, and all sorts of scarfs. European fabrics (...) with filament, tinsel, wire or sewn or woven flowered exquisite silk (...) like those pervenle both fair or any other kind shall be stopped. Except for the scarfs called shawls for body or head that are necessary to prevent the colds (...) D: Everyone will follow the normal way of dressing

out, meaning that all clothes should have the same single color without any kind of braids or other expensive laces or wires (...) or silk stockings put on clothes instead of attaching laces: taking heed and guarding the other worthless stuff, as has happened to many places where women used great expense or paid great price (...) in order to wear the jewelry, objects made from gold and other things like that"¹⁸.

The normative discourse, that we are related to, originates from the sacred texts as "The first Epistle to Timothy", 2/9, from the *New Testament* and says that: "women should pray dressed up in humble clothes, with natural bashfulness, not with braided hair or wearing gold or pearls or very expensive outfits, but with good deeds as it is properly to women that have fear of God"¹⁹. To anneal the above: "you women (...) see that your actions fear God; Whose adornment is not the outside one of the hair and the wearing of gold ornaments or clothes"²⁰ (pricey-n.n.).

The Metropolitan Church of Moldavia's recommendations regarding clothes are more generous, but the above selection is relevant for the evoked context. For the violation of the above prescriptions, the Orthodox Church had prepared an amount of curses, as specified in the documents: "and those who will dare, out of love of malice, to brake these boundaries that we have sat for this cause with the will of all and by any reason will break these decisions (...) through the power that we have been given by the Holy Spirit we should be put him under our curses both in this century and those that will come (...) their bodies after death will never stand free. They will groan and tremble on Earth like dogs. He will not see abundance all the days of his life. (...) Earth will swallow him alive (...) the blains will eat him (...) and the hangman of Judah. Flaming sword will chase the one that does not obey and he will not escape slavery. The devil will sit on his right. His days will be numbered and his fortune will be driven by others. His sons will remain poor and beggars and his woman will be a widow. In a single line his name will be put out: his remembrance will perish from Earth. He will only inherit hell and the layer of fire (...) Amen"²¹. Note that curses appertain to the man, i.e. the head of the family, and not to the woman, as we might have expected. Moreover, the political hierarchies of the moment were rather masculine.

We need to mention that in Romania around the year 1800, the Church had a very important influence on the population. Accordingly, the English diplomat William Wilkinson, evoking the period within which he was located in the Danubian principalities, in mission, he estimated that Bucharest had 80,000 inhabitants and 366 churches, that ensures an average of 218,5 inhabitants for each Church, i.e. two churches on every street²². A comparable situation was also recorded in Iași. Moreover, the backwardness of the people is amply displayed in his writings.

On the other hand, the cited document was not unique - also the French Cardinal and Chancellor René de Birague²³ gave a similar edict against décor, silk, satin, textiles with gold or silver thread, but with 209

years before his Moldavian colleague. H. Baudrillart stated that the silk industry was one of the founding elements of the industry of luxury in France and that there was an ecclesiastical authority adversity over the silk and fabrics from India, in particular²⁴.

Some contextual information is necessary. In 1782, in the Principalities, the consular regime started, which included the protection of foreign merchants by a representative of their country, based in Bucharest or Iași. In these circumstances we arrived to an acceleration of foreign goods entering the domestic markets, among them "French fashion items, which had begun to be introduced here and there into wealthy homes, furniture and other luxury items imported from France, Austria, Germany, England, Italian States, Prussia, Russia, Turkey, and the Orient. The speculation of such diverse goods, that worship the refined luxury of the boyars from both Moldavia and Wallachia was a push for foreign traders to leave their homeland ... "²⁵, as D.Z. Furnică mentions. The same author recalls that the ruler of Moldavia took severe measures "against the boyars and merchants, not to spend money on luxuries, making expensive clothes with goods brought from abroad, and start making simple clothes from the materials produced by their own country. He also stopped, even under the penalty of death, the import of the carriages and broughams sold by the counts and barons from Vienna, loaded with crowns and cupboards, punishing those who were not obeying with a 500 lei fine. Even the County Steward would have been punished if he would have allowed such luxury commodities in his county, by the order addressed to revenue officers and skippers of the region in 6 August 1796"²⁶.

These protectionist measures, to call them so, have triggered protests of the bargainers, and of the representatives of the states which have signed commercial agreements with the Principalities. The fact is that back then "the Romanian people were employed in agriculture and domestic industry only for the satisfaction of their own basic needs. The development of a permanent trade with inter-local and international relations, was made later with the custom of handcraft, with the opening of mercantile roads, with the multiplication of bear gardens, with the development of luxury, with the foundation of cities and the coagulation of peoples' political life"²⁷.

The practice of warning the population about the undesirable behaviours was quite widespread "throughout the late-18th century, the Kingship and the Church were striving to keep the people tied to the time of the Church. The measures were diverse and range from simple tips to more complex corrections. In 1783, Mihai vodă Șuțu (1783-1786), aided by the archbishop and two bishops send < the books of commandments > across the country to be read < through all towns and villages > "²⁸, reminding people about their Christian debts related to the respect for the Church, to worship and to say prayers, to respect the feast days, etc. One

of the penalties for those who do not obey the requirements was sitting on the yoke²⁹. The yoke was placed in front of every church, there also was one in front of the Orthodox Metropolis in Bucharest.

The anti-luxury speech seems to have become an obsession for the Church, if we judge after the numerous papers with respect to this matter. Accordingly, the archbishop of Moldavia, Veniamin Costache³⁰, published in 1804, a "Pastoral Book", subtitled "against the clothes' luxury". A momentuous condemnation of luxury we find in Constantin Radovici's notes (1826), the one who had traveled through many countries, allowing him the make legitimate comparisons. He asserts that "our enemy and the only enemy of the poor is the luxury" and he proposed the establishment of companies to combat the luxury, as he had seen in Vienna.

We notice that the Romanian countries have become a space of vestimentary interference, in which the tradition and novelty imports coexist. "The Romanian vestiture is (...) from the beginning under Byzantine and Western influence, double wrapping differently in between those two lands"³¹ as Marcel Romanescu considered. Therefore, "the first influence, the oldest, did not come from Byzantium, as well as through the intercession of the Bulgarians, but from the conveyance of Bulgarian and especially the Serbs. It has gone from Wallachia, Transylvania and Moldova, who had met it through the Byzantine Crimeia; then it was extended by the Greeks of Constantinople. Western influence has been propagated by the Saxons and Ragusani in Wallachia, through the Genoese and Polish people from Moldavia"³².

In time, the Church will be forced to accept that progress, including the attire/the clothes, is unstoppable. Its involvement in political life (archbishops will be at the forefront of Public Meetings, during the period of the regulations) and exaggerated number of priests, teachers, and deacons, by comparison to that of doctors and teachers, for example, makes them dependent on secular authority, even vulnerable in relation to it (not to say its accomplices)- "a village with 50-100 inhabitants had two priests, a deacon, two teachers, larger villages, up to 400 inhabitants had four priests, two deacons and two teachers (...) each priest must be given (...) a house with a garden, three jaws of ploughing, three chaps of hay, grazing ground and half ranch. The priest will take care only of the seed, the rest of the work will be done by the people. The deacon receives a house ... "³³. This is the context in which the call to cannon will relate more to hygiene, alcoholism, child education, and less to clothes. The prayers do not help in front of cholera and the plague. Therefore, the priests become, even without their own will, agents of modernization after 1830, as the scholar Constanța Vintilă Ghițulescu states.

Towards a sociology of luxury

It is difficult to know what was the effect of the Church's curses, if the capital punishment for those who loved fashion more than canons was effective or not. But what is important is that in comparison, more and more people realize that a certain social category is assigned a certain type of consumption (including clothing). Therefore, we find that society by various actors, devotes more permissive rules regarding luxury. The competition is increasingly more evident, as the industry develops, new roads are being build, the transport of goods is improved, and so on. Therefore the normative pressure weakens and the institutions become more tolerant and even concerned with the manner in which they can take advantage of the luxury adopted by more and more people.

Here it is, for example, an anonymous point of view, printed in the semi-formal newspaper *Curierul Românesc*. We are in Bucharest, after 58 years since *The Book of Curses...* was printed: "the most important dieticians recommend the following rules for fashion and luxury (...): 1. Fashion should not be: health deteriorative. 2. Vices. 3. Waste of money. 4. Against the proper forms. 5. Blocking the convenience. 6. Undoer of character. There are only six rules but they include all the necessary elements that the humble clothing is missing, and this is why all the other judgments referring to fashion should be made according to them"³⁴. We need to notice the presence of other regulatory authorities: the "dieticians", i.e. specialists in nutrition, which are no longer a clerical authority, but laymen.

Another example provided by W. Wilkinson, who lived in the Danubian Principalities during 1812-1818: "the National costume of boyars is not different from that of Turkish upper classes, with the only difference of the turban that it is replaced by some sort of unusual tall cap named *calpac*, made of grey Astrakhan fur in shape of a pear. It is empty (inside) has a large circumference of about three feet (...) It is a head covering as comic as it is ugly and it is not at all suited to the beauty and richness of the rest of the costume. The women dress entirely after the European fashion, but they combine the European models with the Oriental wealth, with plenty of ornaments. In general, there are not too beautiful, but this lack (of beauty) is offset by a lot of natural grace, a cheerful and great elegance of shapes"³⁵.

The most common references to luxury³⁶ are related to clothes and – newer – to the means of locomotion. Accordingly, traveling through Walachia in 1841, the Italian dignitary Domenico Zanelli noted that on the main street of the capital "you can see a great movement of luxurious carriages that the luxury-minded boyars from Bucharest bring from Germany or from Petersburg, a luxury that too often pass their own

powers" ³⁷. He was equally impressed by the two places of recreation - Herăstrău Park and "the garden near Dâmbovița", where "you will find very much luxury; all the people are dressing up following the European fashion; you can see the great waste of money on servants, on women's dresses and horses' harness. Extremely many carriages are made available to everyone"³⁸.

We discover that things were like we described above from a note written on the occasion of a fashionable event - a reception given in the honor of the Russian Emperor in Bucharest in December 1843: "the brilliant ballroom that was given to the Palace for the feast of the Emperor Nicholas, was even more beautiful because the women were wearing elegant expensive clothes but clothes of a noble simplicity. It would be desirable that such significant example would be followed by the other members of the society (...) the expenses above everyone's income urge people to very worthless actions that maintain some futile needs sprung by a reckless pride, and bring with them the terrible aftermath, because people get old and powerless and the luxury will become worthless. As it is known, the outside ornament adds nothing to the merit of the people; but the more simple and good-natured the clothes are, the more they gain the veneration of the community, and luxury cannot recommend one person, because the healthy-minded people cherish each after the character, wearing and virtues"³⁹.

Therefore, it was not behooved in any way to "surrender" to luxury, because the luxury has no limits, as your income has, as the pressman is saying. Luxury is seen as a form of illegitimate consumption - in dissonance with the social rank, with the financial possibilities, etc.- this is a subject of debate in our country and other countries. Fashion, the changing of clothes, seems to be the expression of competition and identity. Highlighting at first the double function of fashion, which allows both satisfying the desire to comfort, and to be different, G. Simmel proposed a "vertical diffusion model of fashion goods, conceived as a result of a competition between the social classes. The upper classes are the first to adopt a new style or behavior as a sign of membership of the elite and abandons it once they have been imitated by the other social classes"⁴⁰.

Accepted or blamed, the luxury exists, therefore it should be taxed. The State could not miss such an opportunity, so at the end of 1862 the State enacted the "Law on patents"⁴¹ that set out a tax of 5% of the sales for "luxury objects, fine porcelain, crystals, hunting objects (...) several items of luxury items brought from abroad"⁴². The end of the paragraph: "all kinds" leaves us to understand that luxury products were far more numerous.

Within the same semantic field, where luxury resides, we find the civilization. For example, around 1868, people considered that most evils were generated by progress, by civilization: "the causes of the countless

ailments, of the various flaws, of the slow weakening with no apparent reason, suffered by people seemingly healthy and able to walk on their own feet and the cause of the premature death, [all those causes] are following on the footsteps of the civilization. The early humans were spared of the attacks of the ailments by the unspoiled power of their instinct and by the fact that they did not lead any other way of life, but the one according to nature. As civilization widened, humans tried to multiply their material treasure gathered for the earthly life, while the happiness of the soul had remained disregarded. Thus arises, within the earthly paradise, a boundless propensity towards pleasures and comfort – the snake of all evil. People, instead of staying close to simple foods and beverages, towards which nature was enticing us, they have sought to satisfy their hunger through artificially cooked meals, with all kinds of flavours and dressings, and to quench their thirst with wine, beer, teas, brandy and other beverages. The cleaning of the body using fresh water for washing or bathing had been done unilaterally, while, were water was used, only warmed water was applied. Thus, people have indulged more and more in an unnatural life, while a prejudice had emerged against the natural life, just as it emerges today against fresh water. “I cannot stand it in my boots, let alone in my body”, are saying those who claim to be called as people representing the civilized lot⁴³. No matter how exaggerated it would seem to us, it is a physician’s point of view – dr. Pavel Vasici.

“The snake of all evil”, whether it was called luxury, fashion, comfort etc., had generated a lot of proverbs. Here are some of them, as they were used around 1900: “The tastes, the pleasures and the luxury – are the ruin of mankind, of happiness, of health and are the ending of life”; “The smartness and skillfulness of the craftsmen had given birth to our grand luxury and the luxury had left us naked”; “Where luxury misses, this is where wealth increases”; “Once you indulge in luxury, you hardly relinquish it, because fashions come and go just as snowflakes flow”; “Luxury is kept with someone else’s work, not with the work of the one which uses the luxury”; “You should stay away from luxury, if you don’t want to impoverish yourself⁴⁴.”

The excesses have been condemned also by important personalities, among which was the poet, diplomat and politician Dimitrie Bolintineanu. He laments, in 1869, about the state in which the country had come to, because of luxury, saying: “the luxury kills a nation, unless measures are taken in order to stop its perishing. The lustful greed for gold that each one indulges, in order to please his or her propensity and weakness for material goods, is hitting the entire community. It suffers from this vice (...) The conscience is sold for this luxury, for this ailment. A journalist praises the one which hands him gold, a judge condemns the one which submits to him; an honest man becomes servile, sells his vote, which is the motherland’s precious gift, he sells his opinion, he sells his pals, he sells

his freedom, he would even sell his motherland if anyone would buy it (...) Everything is for sale, everything can be bought"⁴⁵.

But under which forms could luxury be encountered? In 1887, Bucharest had four large stores which advertised a luxury offer: D.& I. Alesiu (Victoriei Street, no. 28), Eugenie Darnet (Victoriei no. 51 bis), A. Lizambert (Victoriei, no.20) și C.H. Müller (Victoriei, no. 39). The number of such stores increases from one year to another and the Year-Books of Bucharest prove this. For example, in 1895, the year-book mentions producers and sellers of luxury cardboards, lamps, « foot plates » (a traditional footwear which is made of leather tied around the foot with strings and was initially worn by peasants), cookers, wheat flour, soap, horses, dogs, sheepskin winter coats, guns, terracottas, carriages, corn flour, all of them as luxury goods. The “de luxe” variants of the « foot plates » were produced by T.N. Brumărescu and by Nicolae Costovici. The corn flour, the wheat flour and the maize were produced by D. Marinescu Bragadiru, and so on. "The boundaries of luxury are constantly pushed further, along with the progress, and this is a good thing for mankind" ⁴⁶, was writing Prof. Dr. August Laurian in a political economics handbook, published in 1897. And he continues his conciliating discourse, stating that “the economic progresses have lead to the moving into common use of a sum of objects which were once considered as luxury items. The gas lamps, the window glasses have reached the villages ; the clothing items, the furniture, the kitchen objects etc. have spread everywhere (...) We shouldn't rush to condemn luxury ; it has its roots in human nature and its conditions in the inequality between people's wealth ; it is one of the significant agents of progress"⁴⁷.

A study dedicated to luxury was written by Constantin Stamati-Ciurea, the archbishop of Bucovina and Dalmatia, in 1895. Vain gloriousness, this is one of significances of luxury. But let's follow some of his thesis: “What does the word luxury express? The exposure and unravelling of the human vain gloriousness, in which the partisans of sensualism seek bodily delectation, believing that inside it are residing all our ideas against idealism. However it might be, luxury still is the most attractive, the most contagious vice, from which are born all the calamities that not only lead the individuality of mankind to its perish, but it knocks over and extinguishes entire nations. As soon as man is infected by this demon of temptation, he stops being contented of what his own labour gives him. There is no matter more grandiose and more important to discuss than the matter of luxury"⁴⁸.

Stamati- Ciurea believed that luxury can be favourable to the development of national wealth, in the measure in which “it is proportional with the industry and products that the earth is giving to the country. The luxury should have only so many superfluous objects, as the country's wealth, the entire peoples' wealth and, in particular, the individual man's wealth, are able to use. It is necessary that the fulfillment

of the bodily gratifications is corresponding to the means of getting them; because the unrestrained luxury will knock itself over, drawing along with it, in its own dissolution, those who are bearing its cult inside them, without calculation and reason”⁴⁹.

In order to be more convincing, the author quoted above makes prophecies regarding the social cohesion, the number and gravity of misdemeanors and even regarding revolutions. The most dangerous was, of course, the prophecy about communism: “those desperate folks with little thinking and little patience, while enduring the suffering of their daily difficulties, are indulging in and committing crimes, gathering in societies, raising their own liberty flag, demanding, “with the *topuz* raised”, the instauration of communism and the equality, not in terms of brotherhood, but of wealth, meaning the worker should share his earnings with the parasite vagabond, and this is how they reach further to the fight between brothers and even to revolutions in which brotherly blood is shed and where parents fighting on barricades are killing children and children are killing parents”⁵⁰.

One understands that the character that is missing from the above equation is the owner of the capital, the employer or boss, as we might call him today – because the (imaginary) fight is led between “the worker” and “the vagabond”, the second one being a disobedient worker, discontented about the state of things, the rebel. In order to provide some consolation, the author tells us that luxury is by no means something new, that “the Romans were accustomed and dominated by such a luxury rage during the republic and monarchy, that the scholar gets dizzy by just browsing the old archives and, willy-nilly, he asks himself where would have reached the luxury fantasy if it wasn’t to be suddenly disbanded by the wild hoards of the barbarians which, like a storm, had struck right in the middle of the lazy Romans, which were lying on Persian carpets, surrounded by legions of beautiful women with naked backs and breasts”⁵¹.

The association of luxury with eroticism was a new formula meant to discourage the adepts of easy living, while this occasion was used to condemn and curse (again) the persevering dissidents that is: the adepts of luxury.

Luxury is the subject of the articles published by newspapers and magazines, of the leaflets and books that were printed, of the public conferences that were organized⁵² but, judging by the evolution of consumption, we might deduce that it was without significant effects. More than that, luxury becomes an object of scientific interest – as the opinion poll initiated by the ASTRA association (the Transylvanian Association for the Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People), with the purpose of making a statistic regarding the situation of the Romanians which were living in the Ardeal region of Transylvania, had included, also, “questions regarding luxury”⁵³. Out of all the reactions of the economic newspapers and magazines, let’s highlight the point of view

expressed by the journalist N. Idieru: "Luxury is the form under which human vanity is manifesting itself and whose purpose is always obvious (...) the political economics only blames it when it means an exaggerated taste of pomposity or when it is obtained by unproductive expenses which are bound to lead to ruin. With regards to the latter meaning, one can say that luxury is relatively clean (...) science does not condemn luxury in an absolute manner (...) the economists have conceded and approved the idea that, instead of becoming perverted, the instinct of luxury becomes nobler and is purified through the effect of the civilization's advancement"⁵⁴. By trying to be clearer, the journalist quoted above was also saying that "but the excessive luxury and the waste must be condemned (...) wanting to limit our personal consumption to the things that are just of strict necessity means to want the industrial mediocrity, the discrowning of the state of civilization, the sacrifice of the most legitimate and noble enjoyments"⁵⁵.

And, as we were not coming off looking good out of the comparisons between our economy and the economies of the countries that are more developed than ours, here is an occasion to publish various xenophobe spurts. The next example is relevant – in just three lines of text, there are seven times in which foreigners are found guilty: "The foreign entrepreneurs, the renters to which the lands are leased, the manufacturers from the industries, the foreign traffickers (...) the foreign luxury, vanities, debaucheries; the whores, the foreign beverages, just as the taste of wandering among foreigners, just as other foreign habits and foreign dastards, are squeezing out all our vigor, all our work and all our swelter"⁵⁶. This is the appraisal made by F.R. Attila, in a book published in Bucharest, in 1909.

Let's not forget that the idea of the redeeming virtue of poverty is common throughout all Eastern Christianity. So much so that even priests will not be spared of blame assigning – here is a fragment from the lectures held by the theologian dr. Badea Cireșeanu, which finds, as a guilty party, the clergy which doesn't keep up with the sartorial canons or tenets: "some of our priests, especially those from the villages, are serving the sacred liturgy while wearing clothing which are torn, tight on the body, short or made with a worldly and profane tailoring. This carelessness brings a lot of guilt upon the priest who holds the liturgy"⁵⁷. From the quoted document results a grave guilt from the adaptation of the "worldly" tailoring, meaning tight, modern, unlike the clothing inspired by the divine, that is: wide and loose ...

The tensions caused by the conflict between modernization and the preservation of the old consumption habits were not manifested, understandably, just in the Romanian space. It is worthy to mention, from among the theoreticians of luxury, the sociologist Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929), the one to whom we owe "The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study in the Evolution of Institutions"⁵⁸, a work published in

1899, through which he establishes the notion of “conspicuous consumption”. According to Verblen, the social prestige is closely related to the modern bourgeois consumption, to the waste of money and time. The possession of riches or power, in itself, is not enough, it should be accompanied by showing them off, which means this is where the manifestation of the luxury and conspicuous consumption are appearing. Besides, “the conspicuous consumption” is a concept advanced by the Canadian economist J. Rae and taken over by T. Verblen, “the basic idea being that the goods are not sought for their specific usefulness, but for being consumed in a visible manner, which displays the consumer’s social status”⁵⁹. More specific, “the meaning which is given to the objects that are consumed comes from the social differentiation and consumption represents the social status one holds in the view of the others”⁶⁰.

As for the religious institution, we must notice that “churches, as a place for the manifestation of the sacred, had to adapt to the secularization of the urban space”⁶¹, as we will point further.

The luxury as object of the debate

Teachers, publicists, philosophers, priests and so on considered that they must participate to the nuanced public debate about luxury. In 1910 it was believed that “the moral issue of luxury” was being abandoned. Once he finds out what forms of luxury can be found at the rich, the author recalls that “the young female farmers are spending milk or 20-30 eggs in order to buy a flower that they attach to the head. Many peasants spent for smoking and drinking more than for food. The members of the bourgeoisie were spending on the wedding a good part of the bride's dowry.” Then, the luxury generates jobs, therefore there would be good luxury and bad luxury, as the author implies. The bad luxury “consists of consuming unhealthy things. The bad luxury is considered a waste, that is, an inequality between the amount of social work and the individual satisfaction obtained. Thus, bad luxury is what makes an English Lord to turn a vast field that could have been used to produce food for hundreds of families into a hunting park. We also convict the luxury of jewelry. Diamond extraction, besides being dangerous, “kidnaps” an enormous number of workers from the coal mines (...). In summary, from the standpoint of the individual, the luxury is always bad being a folly or immoderacy. From the social point of view it is only when the satisfaction that the individual obtains cannot be compared to the suffering that had cost the others who produced it; in other cases, the luxury can be good, for it is stimulant, it encourages the progress of industry and it improves living”⁶². In other words, when we talk about luxury we talk about illegitimate desires. The debates about the effects of luxury include even Queen Elizabeth. For example, in a review published by the “*Noua Revistă Română*” (1912), the editors note that “in Munich a League against luxury

was founded, made up of distinguished ladies from the Bavarian capital", but also from other countries. Leadership of the League has sent an adhesion invitation to our Queen, Carmen Silva, who responded quickly, stating that: "I reckon an undeniable fact that the decline of a nation begins with the luxury. However, you cannot apply the same rule to all nations. So for example, the climate has a great leaven regarding luxury (...) Luxury means one thing for an ordinary man and another thing for other people, according to their material condition, the luxury can be considered as something abstemious (...) A man of status, who spends on various luxury items, gives a certain number of persons something to do and therefore he offers them bread"⁶³.

Such a judgment about luxury had many adherents. Among them, Julius G. Pascu, who sees luxury as "a social phenomenon- its origin is in the social inequality, its evolution is the evolution of wealth (...) Formerly it was thought that the State could stave off the luxury by taxes, penalties and laws. But they have not yielded any results. Nor did anything else - as they had taken the illusion as reality, and the effect as cause (...) Today the State's activity against luxury is much more complex. Distinguished scholars and chosen souls, think that the State must have the role of censor- or ranger- for morals and public activities"⁶⁴.

We end this sequence of points of view on luxury with a certified voice- the one of the engineer and Professor of Economics Mihai Manoilescu. In 1933 in a Conference he stated that we need "a new social morality," especially in the context of the global economic crisis that had begun in 1928. But morality without the Orthodox Church was not possible. Therefore, the role of the Church is "to give a high sense of social life; to give a spiritual support to the ruling classes; to alleviate the suffering and to calm down the material aspirations of popular classes. One important aspect for achieving this is the battle against luxury"⁶⁵. However, the Church was one of the institutions that cultivated the luxury, therefore the luxury of decorations, architecture, etc. should be forgiven- is the only luxury "that Christianity has not convicted, the wonderful ornaments remain as proof..."⁶⁶. However, "in any luxury we find vanity, a sad useless vanity. The reduction of the material life, about which we have also spoken on other occasions, is mainly related to clothing. In this respect the Christian Church has never been deprived of admonitions"⁶⁷. Finally, "in the lower grades of the society, the materialistic exaltation can only be stopped by the Christian Church..."⁶⁸. If these lower classes learn the taste of luxury, they will rise against the rich, they can start asking questions about the great fortunes and so on. That is why it was good to calm down the illegitimate "materialistic exaltation".

What was the Church saying in 1929? What it is always saying. God wants you poor: "let us not to be greedy and not enrich but let us send our wealth in heaven (...) let us show the Lord Christ that wealth is deceptive,

because it disappears. There is no need to have hope in something that perishes so fast. Because the wealth lies in three things: in money, vestments and jewelry, this is why the Lord shows and says that the money end in time; the clothes are damaged by moths, the expensive jewelry can be stolen by burglars. Therefore the man should not wish to be rich, but only to have enough food and clothing, and the rest he must give to the poor, the churches, the priests, in order to encounter wealth in heaven⁶⁹.

What exceeds the immediate needs, the people should offer to the poor and priests, in order to ensure themselves the proper reception in heaven. This is how the Church faced the world economic crisis. As the theologians say, it is appropriate "to hand in ourselves to God and to his service. And not only the flesh, but also the wealth and it is appropriate to cut down the material abundance as God says: «if you have two coats you should give one to those who do not have!»"⁷⁰ Incidentally, "in the modern States, the religious communities are recognized as spiritual, socio-educational and charitable institutions, but they also have the status of factors of social peace"⁷¹.

Conclusions

The discursive - argumentative fluctuation recorded between 1781 and 1933 appear not to have affected the role of the Church as an institution of social control. As we can notice, the concern for the manner in which individuals dress remains constant. Even a personality such as Mihail Manoilescu required the religious authority to readjust clothing, in a more general sense to limit the consumption of luxury goods, which amount to an intrusion into the economic logics. Even him, the doctrinaire economist.⁷² On the other hand, what the Church used to curse with so much passion, the State will tax.⁷³ The fiscal sin is part of the economic formula. As for taxonomies- bag luxury- good luxury, the lower and the upper vanities, the inferior and superior ones would deserve a separate study, that should take into account not only the prestige of the source, but also its economic interests. It is certain that from a legitimate flush - the desire to protect the poor, those who could not buy high quality goods - the Church, called by the State, by various personalities, or even without being called had to intervene in the area of consumption and it managed to become a "brake" on the economic development of the country. The rhetoric of humility and solidarity regarding consumption was in disagreement with the evolution of the society, increasingly more polarized and more consumer-centered.

Notes

¹ Bernard Valade, "Schimbarea socială" [The Social Change], in *Tratat de Sociologie [Treatise on Sociology]*, ed. Raymond Boudon, translated by Delia Vasiliu, Anca Ene, (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1997), 360.

² Constanța Ghițulescu-Vintilă, Evgheniți, ciocoi, mojici. Despre obrazyele primei modernități românești. 1755-1860 (București: Humanitas, 2013), 106.

³ Simon Langlois, "Consum" [Consumption], *Dicționar al gândirii sociologice [Dictionary of sociological thinking]*, in Massimo Borlandi et al, (Iași: Polirom, 2009), 161.

⁴ "Proverbele lui Solomon" [Proverbs of Solomon], in *Noul Testament al Domnului și Mântuitorului Nostru Isus Christos [The New Testament of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ]*, N. Nitzulescu edition, (București, 1908), 544.

⁵ Jean Baecheler, "Religia" [Religion], in *Tratat de Sociologie (Treatise on Sociology)*, Raymond Boudon, ed., translated by Delia Vasiliu, Anca Ene, (București; Humanitas, 1997), 506.

⁶ Wilson Muoha Marina, "Public Ethical Discourses and the Diversity of Cultures, Religions, and Subjectivity in History: Can we agree on anything?", *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 11, issue 32 (Summer 2012): 18-36.

⁷ Wilson Muoha Marina, 31.

⁸ *Book of curses against those who like luxury* (Iași: Tipografia Sfintei Mitropolii, 1781), 1. Assigination: the translation of the text in Latin has undergone some interventions likely to make reading possible.

⁹ Marcel Romanescu, "Introducere în istoria costumului românesc" [Introduction to the Romanian history of costume], *Revista Istorică Română [Romanian Historical Magazine]*, vol. XIV, (MCMXLII): 473.

¹⁰ Țarigrad, old denomination Constantinople (the city of the kings).

¹¹ Marcel Romanescu, 469.

¹² Anthony Giddens, *Sociologie [Sociology]*, translated by Radu Săndulescu and Vivia Săndulescu, (București: All, 2000), 267.

¹³ Constanța Ghițulescu-Vintilă, 58.

¹⁴ Constantin Schifirnet, "Orthodoxy, Church, State, and National Identity in the Context of Tendential Modernity", *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 12, issue 34 (Spring 2013): 173-208.

¹⁵ *The book* was printed during the time that Gavril Callimachi was the Metropolitan of Moldavia and the Prince was Constantin Moruz. G. Callimachi (c. 1710-1786) was a clergyman of the Orthodox, Metropolitan of Salonic and Metropolitan of Moldavia (1760-1786). Founder of St. George Cathedral from Iași, where he is also buried. Constantin Moruzi was the Prince of Moldavia between 1777-1783, he participated to the assassination of Prince Grigore Ghica the III rd, in order to take its place. He was a Turkish Agent.

¹⁶ *The Book of curses...*, 1.

¹⁷ *The Book of curses...*, 8.

¹⁸ *The Book of curses...*, 31.

¹⁹ "First Epistle to Timothy", 2/9, in *The New Testament of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*, N. Nitzulescu edition, (Bucharest,1908), 185.

²⁰ "First Epistle of Peter", 3/1-5, in *The New Testament of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*, N. Nitzulescu edition, (Bucharest, 1908), 206.

²¹ *The Book of curses...*, 31.

²² See *Călători străini în Țările Române în secolul al XIX-lea*, [Foreign Travellers in the Romanian Countries in 19th century] vol. 1, 1801-1821, new series, edited by Georgeta Filitti et al (București: Academia Română Publishing House, 2002), 625. It is about the Orthodox churches.

²³ René De Birague (1506-1583). The document we are referring to was published in 1572.

²⁴ H. Baudrillart, *Histoire de luxe privé et public depuis l'antiquité jusqu'à nos jours*, (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1881), 6.

²⁵ D. Z. Furnică, *Industria și dezvoltarea ei în Țările Românești* [*The industry and its development in the Romanian States*], (București: "Tiparul Românesc" Institute, 1926), 41.

²⁶ D. Z. Furnică, 51.

²⁷ N. George Leon, *Istoria economică la români* [*Romanian economic history*], (București: Cultura Națională, 1924), 73.

²⁸ Constanța Ghițulescu-Vintilă, 188.

²⁹ Yoke – wooden and metal device, for torture; yoke could be stuck in your head and hands or legs and head, sometimes the punished man being forced to also bear heavy scents. The yoke was similar to the beam of infamy of the Catholic and Protestant world. Accordingly the beam of infamy from the Big Square of Sibiu, installed in 1550, will be removed in 1783, for example-see Emil Sigerus, *The Chronicle of the city of Sibiu*, 1100-1929, (Sibiu: Honterus, 2006), 17.

³⁰ Veniamin Costache (1768-1846), Metropolitan of Moldavia, Deputy of the Ruler in the years 1807 and 1821.

³¹ Marcel Romanescu, 479.

³² Marcel Romanescu, 479.

³³ Constanța Ghițulescu-Vintilă, 174.

³⁴ *Curierul Românesc*, year X, no. 144, 15 September 1839, București, 502.

³⁵ *Foreign Travellers in the Romanian Countries in 19th century*, vol. 1, 1801-1821, new series, edited by Georgeta Filitti et al, (București: Academia Română Publishing House, 2007), 641.

³⁶ The history of the term luxury deserves a separate research. The Universal dictionary of the Romanian language (1930) devotes a short definition of luxury: "1. majesty, splendour in the clothing, food, travelling (...). 3. rich ornament: edited book edited of luxury". Minerva Romanian Encyclopedia dictionary (Cluj, 1930) does not give any definition of luxury. Explanatory dictionary of the Romanian language, (1998 Edition) contains a definition out of which we learn that the term has entered the Romanian language from French, it has a plural and it means: "excessive costly standard of living; elegance, sumptuousness, splendour (...) extremely comfortable; something that is not a work of first necessity; elegant, sumptuous. Of high quality; of first rank; select (...) to get dressed extremely elegant and expensive" (s.n.).

³⁷ *Foreign Travellers in the Romanian Countries in 19th century*, vol. 1, 1801-1821, new series, edited by Georgeta Filitti et al (București: Editura Academia Române, 2002), 47.

³⁸ *Foreign Travellers in the Romanian Countries in 19th century*, 47.

³⁹ Unsigned Text, in *Supliment la Vestitorul românesc*, year VI, No. 98, December 10th 1843, 4.

⁴⁰ G. Simmel, *Philosophie der Mode*, (Berlin: Pan Verlag, 1905), apud Besnard Phillipe, "Modă" [Fashion], in *Dicționar al gândirii sociologice [Dictionary of sociological thinking]*, in Massimo Borlandi et al, (Iași: Polirom, 2009), 524-526.

⁴¹ Law on patents, March 27 1863, modified in 1887, in *Călăuza agentului fiscal*. Culegere de Theodor A. Myller [Guide for the fiscal agent. Collection of Theodor A. Myller], second edition, (Bucharest: Socec & Co, 1885), 324.

⁴² Law on patents, 338.

⁴³ Pavel Vasici, "Despre medicina cu respect la poporul român" [About medicine with respect to the Romanian people], II, *Transilvania*, year I, no. 25, Brașov, (15 december 1868): 606.

⁴⁴ A. Iuliu Zanne, *Proverbele românilor din România, Basarabia, Bucovina (...)*, [Romanian Proverbs from Romania, Basarabia, Bucovina], vol. 8, (București: Socec & Co. 1900), 181.

⁴⁵ Dimitrie Bolintineanu, *Nepăsarea de religie, de patrie și de dreptate la români* [Neglect of religion, homeland and justice to the Romanian people], (Bucharest, s.e., 1869), 117.

⁴⁶ D. Aug. Laurian, *Elemente de economie politică*, [Elements of political economy]. School textbook, (București: Editura Socec, 1897), 300.

⁴⁷ D. Aug. Laurian, *Elemente de economie politică*, 300.

⁴⁸ Constantin Stamati-Ciurea, "Luxul" [Luxury], *Caleidoscop literar*, Cernăuți, 1895, in <http://ro.wikisource.org/wiki/Luxul>., accessed 12 august 2013.

⁴⁹ Constantin Stamati-Ciurea, "Luxul".

⁵⁰ Constantin Stamati-Ciurea, "Luxul".

⁵¹ Constantin Stamati-Ciurea, "Luxul".

⁵² *Contemporanul*, year IV, no. 6-7, 1885, Iași, 267 – reference to the conference "Despre lux" held by prof. Irimescu.

⁵³ "Monografii și statistică" [Monographs and statistics], *Revista economică* [The Economic Journal], year V, no. 29, (18 July 1903): 245.

⁵⁴ *Revista economică* [The Economic Journal], anul V, no. 29, (18 July 1903) : 248. Article taken from *Studii de economie politică și finanțe* (the number of the magazine's issue is not specified).

⁵⁵ *Revista economică*, 248.

⁵⁶ F.R.Atila, *Anarchie*, vol. I, Bucharest, s.e., (1909), 301. At p. 338, in this volume it is said that Bucharest had 282.071 inhabitants.

⁵⁷ *Tezaur liturgic al Sfintei Biserici Creștine Ortodoxe de Răsărit*. [The liturgical treasure of the Holy Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches]. University lectures held by Badea Cireșeanu, doctor in theology. Approved by the Holy synod from Bucharest of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 23rd of October 1909, tome II (București: Editura Gutenberg/J. Göbl, 1912), 168.

⁵⁸ Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study in the Evolution of Institutions*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1899). A recent analysis of his work was published by Maria Lafortune, "L'oeuvre-phare de Veble: source et guide de la sociologie du loisir", *Interventions economiques*, no. 36, (Quebec, 2007), see <http://interventionseconomiques.revues.org/537>.

⁵⁹ Philippe Steiner, "Veblen Thorstein Bunde", in *Dicționar al gândirii sociologice* [Dictionary of sociological thinking], Massimo Borlandi et al (Iași: Polirom, 2009), 837-839.

⁶⁰ Simon Langlois, "Consum" [Consumerism], in *Dictionary of sociological thinking*, Massimo Borlandi et al, (Iași: Polirom, 2009), 159-162.

⁶¹ Daniel Dumitran, “Church-Bulding as Proof of Social Prestige. The ‘Church of the Greeks’ in Alba Iulia”, *European Journal of Science and Theology*, 1, (2014): 261-269.

⁶² Daniel Dumitran, “Church-Bulding as Proof of Social Prestige. The ‘Church of the Greeks’ in Alba Iulia”, 261-269.

⁶³ Z. Z., “Carmen Silva și luxul” [Carmen Silva and the luxury], *Noua Revistă Română* [The New Romanian Journal], year XI, no. 10, (1 January 1912) : 159. Note: Carmen Sylva (in Latin, Cântecul pădurii [the song of the forest]) is the literary pen name of Queen Elisabeth of Romania (1843-1916).

⁶⁴ Julius Grigore Pascu, “Moralizarea și socializarea luxului” [Haranguing and socialization of luxury], *Arhiva Societății științifice și literare din Iași* [Archive of scientific and literary Society of Iasi], year XXVII, no. 1-3, (January-March 1916): 15.

⁶⁵ Mihail Manoilescu, “Lupta ortodoxiei împotriva materialismului. Conferință susținută în ziua de 31 Ianuarie 1933” [Battle of Orthodoxy against materialism. Conference held on January 31, 1933], in *The Church and its social problems. Conference held at The Dalles Foundation*, January 24-April 8 1933 under the auspices of the Central Church Council, (București: Editura Cărților Bisericești, 1933), 60.

⁶⁶ Mihai Manoilescu, 61.

⁶⁷ Mihai Manoilescu, 61.

⁶⁸ Mihai Manoilescu, 61.

⁶⁹ *Cazanii ce cuprind în sine Evangheliile tâlcuite ale Duminicilor de preste an și cu Cazanii Sinaxarului praznicilor împărătești și ale sfinților celor mai mari de preste an*. Printed in the days of his Majesty Mihai I (...) Third Edition, (București: Editura Cărților Bisericești, 1929), 368.

⁷⁰ *Cazanii ce cuprind în sine Evangheliile (...)*, 539. Not only in Christianity we find such prophecies, but also in the Islamic world. In the Coran, Sura II, verse 195 there is the text “Spend your possessions for God's way! Do you throw yourself to perdition. Do good, because God loves peacemakers”. Or Sura III, verse 14: “People love adornments for the: women, children, heavy piles of gold and silver, race horses, herds and orgoare sown. They are a joy for the present life, but God is the best place in which you will return”. See the translation of prof. George Grigore, second edition, (Bucharest: Kriterion Publishing House, 2002).

⁷¹ Ionel Bostan, Carmen Costuleanu, “Implications of Accounting and Tax Regulations in the Activity of Religious Establishments”, *European Journal of Science and Theology*, 6, 3 (2010): 23.

⁷² Mihail Manoilescu (1891-1950) was an economist, engineer, journalist, and politician. He published "Theory of protectionism and international trade" in 1929 in Paris. His ideas about economy were spread in several countries, including Italy, Portugal, Brazil. Minister of Foreign Affairs (1940). Militant of the legionary movement, he financed the legionnaire magazine *Buna Vestire*.

⁷³ See, for example, the increasing taxes on luxury in times of crisis. To replenish the Fund of National Defense, luxury tax grew from 2 to 8 % in April 1, 1938. The law of luxury tax from April 1, 1943 (Official Gazette (*Monitorul Oficial*), no. 77/1943), as well as other regulations are evidence of the transformation of this excess, blamed in all eras, into a source of income for the fiscal authorities.

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