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# Nationalism, Religion and Tourism in Postcommunist Romania:

An examination of Church-state relations, reinvigorated Orthodox miracle cults and pilgrimage amidst global flows

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the

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**Dedication**

There are two people to whom I owe the deepest gratitude for their support and inspiration through the years: my husband, Travis Turner, and my supervisor, Jean DeBernardi.

**Abstract**

This thesis explores the role of the Orthodox religion in Romanian nation-building. It traces the relationship between religion and ethnicity historically from the premodern to the postcommunist period to contextualize the intensification of grassroots religious participation after the 1989 Revolution. By analyzing ethnographic data gathered in 2004, it highlights the interactions and tensions between informal miracle cults and accompanying veneration practices, such as pilgrimage. The Church attempts to manage believers' experience of the sacred through the creation of pilgrimage offices and promotion of nationalized saint cults. The thesis also explores the role of religious tourism as a nation-building strategy and the Church and state's attempts to mobilize Orthodox mythologies to gain legitimacy. By promoting this image jointly with the Church internationally through tourism campaigns, the state is also crafting Romania's place in the European Union as a New Jerusalem.

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## List of Terms and Abbreviations

### Romanian Words

*Duhovnic* Spiritual leader. *Duh* means spirit.

*Har* God's essences that can be imparted on people, objects, places through the Holy Spirit's work. The English equivalent of *har* is grace. The Romanian word comes from the Greek χάρις.

*Hram* Anniversary of a monastery of church. The Holy Spirit is believed to descend on the site on its *hram*, thereby increasing its *har* and one's ability to access it.

*Parastas* Anniversary of a death is marked by commemoration rites of giving away *pomana* (food, drink, clothes).

*Pomana* The offering given away in commemoration of the dead or as alms.

*Pomeneste* To remember or commemorate.

*Voievod* Ruler of a principality during the premodern period.

**Important Names and Abbreviations**

*PSD* - The Social Democrat Party headed by Ion Iliescu. Held power from 1989-1996, and 2000-2004.

*CDR* - Democratic Convention Party headed by Emil Constantinescu. It brought together the Christian-Democrat, Liberal, Social-Democrat and Environmental parties. Held power from 1996-2000.

*Constantinescu, Emil* - President of Romania (1996-2000) and leader of the CDR.

*Ceausescu, Nicolae* - Communist leader of Romania from 1965-1989. Executed during the December 1989 Revolution with his wife Elena.

*Iliescu, Ion* - President of Romania (1989-1996, 2000-2004) and leader of the PSD (Social Democrats Party).

*Patriarch Teoctist* - Patriarch and leader of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

# Introduction

Many of us remember the events that transpired in Eastern Europe in 1989-1990. The coming down of the Berlin wall has become a hallmark moment in world history. Along with the other revolutions in the communist bloc, this event is entrenched in our collective memory as a stride towards democracy and freedom from dictatorships. However, these poignant demonstrations of self-sacrifice and resolution to capture lost freedoms have been followed by events less celebrated. The ethnic wars of the Balkans in the 1990s, failed transitions to capitalist markets, rampant corruption throughout society, and images of Romanian orphans in state institutions are just some of the examples of media stories about the ramifications of postcommunism.

In spite of these negative images of social upheaval, poverty and ethnic conflict, I want to explore postcommunism from a perspective of national reinvigoration. I am interested in how people create meaning and construct their identities amidst changes precipitated by increasing globalization. In this thesis, I explore the reconstruction of national identity by considering the role of religious reinvigoration in the post-communist era. I am basing my analysis on ethnographic research I conducted in Romania from April until August 2004. Before delving any deeper however, I wish to briefly note some major points on Romania itself to contextualize the themes I explore in this thesis.

## *The country at a glance*

Romania is located in Southeast Europe on the Black Sea and neighbors Moldova, Ukraine, Hungary and Serbia and Montenegro, and Bulgaria. The 2002 Census showed

that Romania's population was 22,329,977. The main ethnic groups were Romanian (89.5%), Hungarian (6.6%), and Roma (2.5%). The remaining minorities are Ukrainian (0.3%), German (0.3%), Russian (0.2%), and Turkish (0.2%). Although Romanian citizenship does not depend on ethnic identity, the reality is that ethnic groups remain distinct and self-identify as such. This is reinforced by the correlation between ethnic and religious identities where 87% are Orthodox and primarily Romanian and the 6.8% of Protestants and 5.6% of Catholics are often German or Hungarian. The remaining 0.4% belongs to other denominations, mostly Muslim, and 0.2% declares itself as unaffiliated. Only 0.02% was atheist according to both the 1992 and 2002 Censuses (CIA 2005: Online).


**Figure 1 Continental view of Romania (About Romania 2005: Online)**

Contemporary Romanians claim deep historical roots in the Dacian kingdom that Rome occupied from 106-271 AD. Romanian national histories, which are widely accepted today, center on the intermixing of Romans and Dacians which resulted in a Métis population ancestral to the modern day nation. These ancestors formed the medieval principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, while inhabiting the foreign controlled Transylvania (Pucurariu 2005: Online). Turkey dominated these principalities to various extents until they united in 1859 to form Romania. In 1877 Romania proclaimed independence from Turkey, and became an independent state by the Treaty of Berlin (1878). As a kingdom under Hohenzollern Carol I (1881), the country was ruled as a constitutional monarchy (Heintz 2002: 26, 157-160).

After siding with the winners of World War I, Romania acquired Bessarabia, Bukovina, Transylvania, and Banat. In 1940, as result of its alliance with Germany, it was forced to cede Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the USSR, part of southern Dobrudja to Bulgaria, and northern Transylvania to Hungary. Soviet troops occupied the country, forced King Michael to abdicate and a People's Republic was proclaimed in 1947. This marks the beginning of communism, whose main figure was Dictator Nicolae Ceausescu (1965-1989). Ceausescu maintained an independent course in foreign affairs from the USSR, but his domestic policies were repressive, particularly during the 1980s. (Heintz 2002: 158-160, Pucurariu 2005: Online).

On December 16, 1989, security forces opened fire on antigovernment demonstrators in Timisoara, Transylvania. Ceausescu declared a state of emergency as protests spread to other cities. On December 21$^{st}$, protests began in Bucharest as well

where government forces fired on protesters. Shortly thereafter however, army units joined the rebellion and a group known as the Council of National Salvation, later the Social Democrats Party, announced that it had overthrown the government. Ceausescu and his wife were captured, found guilty of genocide, and executed on December 25, 1989. Former communist Ion Iliescu and his Social Democrats continued to dominate the government in succeeding years. The Social Democrats were swept from power in 1996, but made a comeback in 2000, only to lose in November 2004 to Traian Basescu and his Alliance Party (Heintz 2002: 26, McGeveran 2004: 829-830).

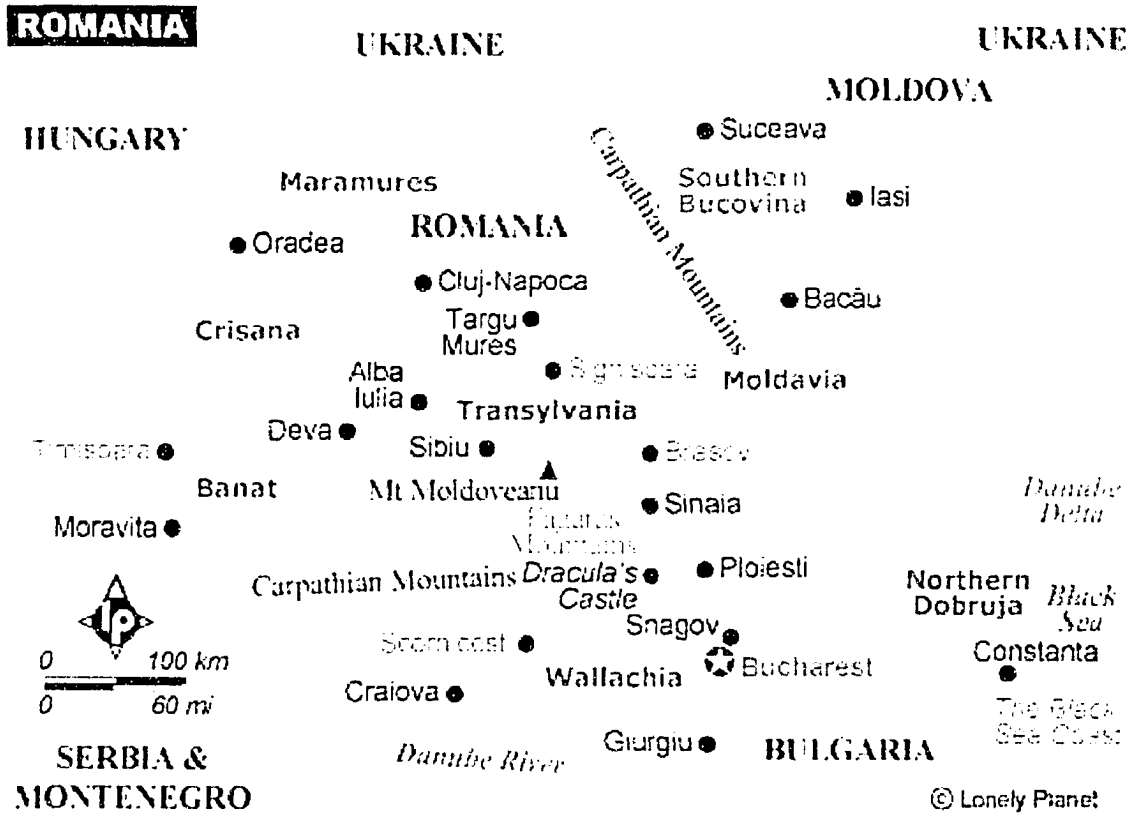


**Figure 2 Map of Romania (Lonely Planet 2005: Online)**

*Life after Ceausescu*

When I arrived in 2004, the uneven integration of Romania in the global market, ongoing corruption at all levels of society, and lagging economy continued to add stress in a very palpable way. A significant proportion of the population did not have enough resources to ensure the basic needs of food, shelter, medication, and clothing. The average net salary was 5,965,285 lei (roughly 240 Canadian dollars) (NIS 2004: Online). A study by the Institute for Public Policy demonstrated that these conditions caused feelings of frustration and anomie. 80% of Romanians considered that the rich and powerful do as they please regardless of laws. 70% believed politicians to be concerned only with themselves and that the only way to get rich is through illegal and dishonest means. More than two thirds of the population expressed nostalgia for communist times and saw it as a period in which people were more optimistic about the future (IPP 2003: 11).

*The Orthodox Church*

I have briefly sketched the context within which religious reinvigoration is thriving. As aforementioned, I am concerned with the Orthodox faith in particular, although minority religions are experiencing similar processes. In this section, I introduce Orthodoxy and the Romanian Orthodox Church for the reader, though I explore these issues in depth throughout the thesis.

Historically, Orthodoxy played a central role in medieval life, and during and after the national awakening of the Romanians. The Romanian Orthodox Church regards itself as the first national, first attested, and first apostolic church in Europe.[1] Ecclesiasts point to Saint Andrew, one of the first maryrs, as the the founder of the Church, although historians argue whether Christianity was brought by Roman occuppiers or during the late 900s (Staniloae 2003: 2-3, Pucurariu 2005: Online, Wikipedia 2005a: Online). The Romanian Orthodox Church is part of the Eastern Orthodox Church which encompasses other national jurisdictions such as Greek or Russian Orthodox Churches who claim to preserve the original teachings and practices of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church started by Jesus Christ and his Apostles. The First Christian Church prospered within the Eastern Roman Empire known later as the Byzantium. Through seven ecumenical councils dating from 324 CE to 787 CE, the Church refined its ecclesiastical and theological tenets. The Great Schism of 1054 represented the culmination of theological and political differences which split the See of Rome and the Church of the East which "adopted the name Orthodox (Correct Worshiping) to distinguish itself as the upholders of the seven ecumenical councils edicts and the preservers of apostolic and church tradition" (Wikipedia 2005b: Online).

The Romanian Metropolitanate was created in 1885 and received the status of Patriarchate in 1925. It is an autocephalous church, with its headquarters in Bucharest. Within the Romanian Patriarchate there are five metropolitanates situated within Romanian borders, two metropolitanates and three dioceses or archdioceses situated outside Romania (Pucurariu 2005: Online). While the Church had a very close

[1] The term 'Apostolic' refers to a church founded by the Apostles themselves.

relationship with political leaders during the medieval and nationalist periods, it was restricted during communism (Patriarch Teoctist 2004: 1-3). Since 1989, its hierarchy has had tremendous success reinserting the Church at the heart of politics where its traditional place had been (Barbu 1999: 250).

At the heart of Orthodox doctrine is the notion of 'sanctification' which represents the aim of every good Orthodox. According to Monica Heintz,

> It is realized by trying to resemble to God and by feeding oneself with Jesus Christ during communion. The Church's moral code is founded in the revelation of Jesus Christ, and thus the first principle for achieving sanctification is to follow the model provided by Jesus Christ. Moral norms have been given to men only in order to help them to achieve this sanctification by following Christ's model (Heintz 2002: Online).

Ascetism, monasticism, fasting, prayer, and the commemoration of the dead are some of Orthodoxy's central features. Everyday life is particularly permeated by activities and beliefs surrounding the commemoration of family dead, the saints, and Jesus. Even the ritualistic calendar that prescribes activities throughout the year recalls the death and resurrection of Christ (Ware 1997: 287). This is also the basis of miracle cults where Orthodox believers venerate relics or icons which represent or belong to a sacred person or saint bestowed with God's essence or *har*. The English equivalent of *har* is grace.[2] The cult of the saints has been paramount to the development of Orthodoxy which continually integrates informal practices into ecclesiastical structures that generalize religious beliefs and transmit them to followers. Thus, informal miracle cults

[2] The Romanian word comes from the Greek *χάρις*. Thanks to Prof. John Paul Himka for his help with the translation of the term.

surrounding a figure can become large scale followings which can culminate in Church recognition of their authenticity through canonization. Like Catholicism, Orthodoxy has a multitude of saints who are routinely venerated in official commemorative celebrations.

The afterlife, like the Trinity and the saints, is not something abstract to believers. People believe in a heaven and hell, and have complex understandings of how one can ensure the evasion of the latter option. During my fieldwork in 2004, Romanian Orthodox believers talked about afterlife as going to a different place, where their deceased family members are living. There was a perception of co-existence between the world of the living and the dead, where saints and deities also reside. By venerating saints in informal or Church prescribed ways, believers have a very real relationship with the sacred where saints can intervene in their lives or those of their deceased relatives (cf. Balan 2001, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, Cleopa 1991, 1993, 2003).

*Postcommunist Reinvigoration*

Although restricted during communism, after 1989, Orthodoxy in Romania began undergoing rapid reinvigoration. A most visible aspect of this reinvigoration has been the Orthodox Church's ability to reinsert itself at the heart of political life, where its leaders claim to represent the voice of the majority. Pictures of state leaders with the Patriarch were common news items and religious festivities would always bring out the cream of Romania's politicians. Of course, tensions between the Church and state remain quite evident, as they have done historically. However, religious reinvigoration is not limited to the prominent role the Orthodox Church has come to play in postcommunist polities, but is evident in numerous facets of everyday life. Despite the challenges of increasing

globalization, privatization, and poverty, religious reinvigoration has been a powerful force for Romanians and a way to create meaning out of shifting circumstances.

This recommitment to the faith is by no means dictated by the ecclesiastical hierarchy. In fact, for all the Church's efforts and public opinion campaigns, a 2003 survey by the Institute for Public Policy of Bucharest revealed that although 83% believed that the Church offers the right answers for spiritual needs, only 44% thought it could offer solutions to contemporary social issues. Approximately 75% saw the Church as the representative of God on earth, thus believed its laws should be followed. On the other hand, the majority of Romanians did not want the clergy to directly implicate itself in politics: 80% did not agree that priests should influence voting and 65% declared that priests should not be candidates in elections. Interestingly, 50% believed that politicians who do not believe in God should not hold office (IPP 2003: 21). The same survey revealed that although the belief in God was shared by 94% of the adult population, church attendance was less prevalent and only 45% of the interviewed went to church at least once a month.

In spite of much excitement surrounding intensifying public expressions of piety exemplified by Church hierarchy involvement in politics, mass pilgrimages and processions, and consistent statistics that show close to 87% of the population declares itself Orthodox, low Church attendance remains disconcerting to priests. Many of the priests and Patriarchy administrators I interviewed noted that the churches, being small could only host 5% of the Bucharest Orthodox population, though closer to 2.5% of churches are actually full any given Sunday. Based on these facts, some Romanian

scholars (Mungiu-Pippidi 1998, Stan & Turcescu 2000, Barbu 2004, Preda 2001) questioned whether there was a religious renewal going on at all. In an interview with prominent Romanian political scientist Daniel Barbu whose work concerns Orthodoxy and Romanian politics, he noted that "if you walk into any Church on Sunday, you see they're empty! So from my perspective, this is the same as in communism. How can we say there's a revival if no one is going to church?" As a result, "the Romanian academia is not very interested in religious issues." Barbu argues that the Romanian Orthodox Church is more concerned with whether Romanians declare themselves as belonging to the Church than whether they are practicing and adhering to its norms. He and political scientist Cristian Preda attribute this to be a direct result of its long history as a state church where faithfulness to Orthodoxy equaled adherence to the state and nation (or the premodern *ethnie*)[3] (Barbu 1999: 254, Preda 2001: 239-240).

I agree that Romania was not experiencing a religious revival since these terms indicate the bringing back to life of religion, which is quite unrepresentative of what I witnessed during fieldwork. Forty years of communism have had an impact on religious popular practice. Clergy and believers I interviewed in Bucharest noted how much more private religion was since rituals traditionally performed in the church had been transferred to believers' homes. Party members' attendance understandably decreased when threatened by loss in status or worse, persecution. Yet, religion was never erased by communism; practices, beliefs, and values were always fluid.

[3] Anthony D. Smith defines the *ethnie* as "a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of common culture, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity among at least some of its members" (1996: 6). An ethnie can become the core around which nationalism forms.

Even in the later part of Ceausescu's rule, known as the most repressive, from my experience growing up during the 1980s and my fieldwork in 2004, I can attest that most homes had Orthodox calendars, relics, and icons, and that they celebrated saints' days along with the major Christian holy days, further, priests baptized children, married couples, and buried the dead. There was definitely no strict requirement to attend church per se; nevertheless, these practices were seen as intrinsic to life. It is also futile to separate what exactly religious belief and practices entail considering their integration in cosmologies. What communism defined as religious varied, as did attempts to control it. Yet rituals, symbols, and ideologies were still transmitted through everyday private practices, even if excluded from the public stages.

Religion remained, albeit in modified forms, an integral part of life. To put a figure on Ceausescu's reign, between 1967 and 1989, 773 churches were built and 4924 were restored during communism (Patriarch Teoctist 2004: 7). The clergy I interviewed in 2004 noted the importance of continued activity of the Church in spite of constraints for the good of the people. A priest argued that:

> The Orthodox Church has been with the people since the beginning, through good and bad times. What is important is that it survived communism. And it did so very well. Show me one child that went un-baptized or a dead person lacking proper burial and commemoration. The Church did its essential work, even if it had to take the rituals into the believer's homes and out of the sacred Church.

As the priests I interviewed in 2004 recalled, even the most ardent atheists had Orthodox baptisms and burials "just in case". Whatever he may have professed, Ceausescu buried his own parents with full Orthodox rites.

Religious reinvigoration cannot simply be measured by church attendance. Even if statistically participation does not increase in hours spent in church, for example, there are general perspectives shared by the people I interviewed and interacted with that indicate that after the 1989 revolution, they perceived that religiosity intensified. There were changes in rituals and morality codes, alongside the opinion that people went to Church more often. For example, the Church produced and distributed an incredible number of guides to being a proper Orthodox Christian. These outlined every detail of life to the believer and were particularly concerned with directing morality. From proper sexual behavior, to fasting prescriptions, to the meaning of the sacraments and the role of the Church in politics, these works had an answer for any problem.[4] Together with the clergy in churches, schools, and other public institutions, these works were means through which the Church attempted to influence beliefs, practices, and values as well as place itself as the legitimate morality guide of the people. It was not only aiming to be the voice of the majority, but also direct what that voice said.

Yet, what one person shared with me as the right way of being a good Orthodox Christian was often countered by the next. For example, fasting was becoming increasingly important in everyday life and believers reported refraining from eating meat, milk products, and sweets on Wednesdays, Fridays, and during the traditional fasting periods or on holy days. There was even a demand for *mincare de post* (fasting food) and grocery stores began making various dairy and meat-free products available that catered to these changing eating habits. At the same time, people argued about the right procedure of fasting more often than they agreed. I was informed by many

[4] See for example the Orthodox instructional works of Cleopa 1993, Urzica 2004, Vasile 2004, Fageteanu & Stanciu 2004, Balan 2001, 2002.

participants that I was too young to fast, which was an activity for old women. Yet, priests I interviewed confirmed that "we all need to show our penitence, and fasting is crucial to our purification." Priests were also calling for confession and communion more, such that some of the church attendees I interviewed reported aiming to take communion once a week, while others maintained that they "don't need to go to Church to be a good believer."

Reinvigoration has not meant that believers are somehow forgetting their differences to bind together as cohesive whole under the leadership of the Church. In fact, the tensions between believers and Church hierarchy in this process of reinvigoration are key themes I explore. The specific cases I investigate concern the increasing participation of believers in informal miracle cults and pilgrimage and the Church's attempt to guide their veneration towards official sacred sites and modes of worship. These attempts at managing religious worship have resulted in Church pilgrimage offices organizing and leading religious tours which come to resemble secular tourism more than spiritual quests. The situations are even more complex considering the role of the state and global flows of tourism in these processes of nation forming.

*Chapters and Themes*

I begin this thesis by exploring nationalism and religion through the premodern, nationalist, and communist periods. This aims to highlight the role of the Orthodox religion in ethnic and nation forming. By considering the close relations between the Orthodox Church and Romanian state historically, I will demonstrate some of the changes this relationship has undergone since the 1989 break with communism. In

Chapter 2, I will describe the relation between the Orthodox Church and the new political regimes. Specifically, the postcommunist context and increasing globalization from the so-called West (mainly Western European nations and the United States) have meant that Church and state face considerable challenges to gaining legitimacy vis-à-vis the masses and on the international scene. While the state's push to 'join the West' as a legitimate part of Europe resounds with Romanians, Church hierarchs caution against the so-called dangers of Westernization, which include evangelical proselytism, liberal impositions of gay and minority rights, and economic neo-colonialism. These in turn have palpable repercussions which the Church, state, and masses have to account for.

Katherine Verdery (1999) made an outstanding contribution in her work on the reburial of dead bodies as a means of dealing with the changes brought about by postsocialism; my aim in Chapter 3 is to illustrate how religious reinvigoration plays out in everyday lives to add a deeper understanding of the postcommunist situation. In particular, I will highlight the complex relationship between official Church-endorsed worship of saints and the informal veneration of sacra. The media, believers, and Church hierarchs report that miracle cults that focus on relics or icons have undergone an unprecedented boost in the 1990s. Patriarchy administrators note that there are so many reports of miracles that "we can't even keep up with investigating them." Although the Church is worried about the authenticity of these miracles, historically these informal venerations can become integrated into the development of formal and nationalized saints' cults which are at the heart of Romanian Orthodoxy.

While it generally reacts with caution to informal miracle cults, the Church has also taken a proactive role in managing popular religious devotion. By recognizing the

popularity of pilgrimage and miracle cults, the Church began to directly manage the believers' experience. Bishopries and the Patriarchy lead processions and services on holy days, but since 1999, they also opened pilgrimage offices. These offer authentic spiritual rejuvenation by way of leading believers in Church-authenticated pilgrimages to well-established sacred sites in and outside Romania. This leisure activity resembles secular tourism, yet for the urban participants that it attracts, it has become a popular means of religious participation. Monasteries and churches are in turn competing to become pilgrim hot-spots and some boast hotel-like amenities, souvenir shops, and rejuvenation services.

The state has noticed that Romania's spiritual treasures are not only attracting the urban middle class, but also foreign visitors. State monies have been increasingly redirected since the later 1990s towards monastery restoration and building infrastructure to accommodate visitors, while internal and external tourism campaigns aim at attracting more tourists to these sites. The Church has benefited from this attention as well; by placing value on Romania's Orthodox monasteries, pilgrims, the state, and foreign interests recognize and reinforce the role of the Church at the heart of Romanian national identity past and present. This has bolstered the Church's political position vis-à-vis the state and internationally, but also with the believers.

To demonstrate this, in Chapter 5 I explore large scale pilgrimages to national holy sites officiated by the Church and supported by the state. I concentrate on the anniversary pilgrimage to Saint Stephen the Great's resting place at the Putna Monastery which brought together all segments of Romanian society, politicians, and Orthodox hierarchs, but also foreign tourists from Western European nations. As both a great

medieval warrior and Orthodox 'good believer,' Stephen the Great is known as Romania's quintessential national hero. His new role as a mass pilgrimage and tourism attraction for external and internal audiences demonstrates how religious reinvigoration plays out in the formation of postcommunist national identities amidst international politics and global flows.

*Methods*

I am basing this analysis on various sources including already existing research, historical documents, government publications, tourism pamphlets, websites, and newspaper articles, both Romanian and Western. From April to August 2004, I obtained data from interviews and informal interactions with tourism workers and community members at various tourism and pilgrimage sites as well as from interviews with Orthodox hierarchy administrators, academicians, and government officials in Bucharest. Additionally, I participated in five Patriarchy organized pilgrimages to approximately forty monasteries all over Romania, including Putna during the July 2nd anniversary of Stephen the Great. My interactions and interviews at such sites with pilgrims, hosts, guides, clergy, tourists, residents was further complemented with my participation in two Bucharest informal miracle cults, numerous church congregations, and exchanges with their adherents. I was born in Romania and immigrated to Canada in 1992, thus I speak the language and could activate my family's network of relations to gain access to Patriarchy administrators and priests for interviews I would otherwise have been unable to obtain. I lived with immediate family in Bucharest, and this immersion in everyday life

gave me valuable insights into the experience of religious reinvigoration on the personal level.

## CHAPTER 1 - SACRED RESOURCES AND NATION BUILDING:

### ORTHODOXY AND NATIONALISM FROM THE PRE-MODERN TO THE POST-COMMUNIST

*Introduction*

Although I discuss Stephen the Great in this thesis, I am referring to a great Romanian national hero who never actually stepped foot in Romania per se. There was never a self-identified Romanian population in the territory claimed today until the 1800s[5]. Contemporary Romanian nationalism is rooted in the ideas of early nationalist intellectuals who aimed to establish the Romanian nation in the region occupied by the indigenous inhabitants of Ancient Dacia. They claimed that the Dacians intermixed with Roman colonizers at the turn of the first century AD. This resulting Métis population, the Romanians, did not only share a Latin language proving their Roman heritage, but were amongst the first converts to Christianity in all of Europe. These notions continue today and continually play out in everyday interactions as well as political decision-making. Therefore, in this chapter, I will discuss Romanian history, religion and nationalism in the pre-modern period, the ensuing nationalist awakening, and during communism. I am particularly concerned with demonstrating the integral relationship between religion, Orthodoxy, and ethnic or nation building which bears great relevance to a discussion of postcommunist transformations. I will also briefly outline the 1989 revolution and the ensuing nation-building attempts.

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[5] The label of "Romania," the land of the Romans, was historically used to refer to the "Byzantine Empire," which was also a later designation coined and popularized by French scholars such as Montesquieu who "revered the ancient Greeks and Romans with immoderate enthusiasm as masters of politics and culture to be emulated," so much so that they could not bear to use the term Rome and apply it to the decadence and backwardness they saw the later Eastern Roman Empire to represent (Fox 1996: Online). Nevertheless, Eastern Rome, which survived its Western counterpart until 1453, was referred to by its inhabitants as *Imperium Romanorum*, the Domain of the Romans, and even more often as "Romania" (1996: Online). The term reappears in the 1800s in reference to an Eastern European emerging nation.

*Premodern Ethnies*

What we know from Roman sources is that Emperor Trajan conquered and colonized Dacia in 106, but the province was abandoned around 271. Rome's political instability during the period was only aggravated by Dacia's increasingly threatening neighbors. After the Roman withdrawal, the area became a site traversed by various nomadic groups including the Germans (Goths and Gepids), Huns, Avars, Bulgars, Magyars, and the Mongol. These migrations become a key challenge to nationalists' claims for the continuation of a Christian Daco-Roman population and have been the cause of continuous interethnic conflict. The period was characterized by complex migrations and settlement patterns, which make it relatively impossible for anyone to make any clear-cut assertions about a Daco-Roman Christian population (Sugar 1999, Stokes 1998, Van de Vyver 1998). However, Romanian nationalists continue to claim, as their predecessors have since the later 1700s, that Dacia and the Daco-Roman population was split into three medieval principalities, namely Wallachia, Moldova, and Transylvania. As result of various historical developments, these principalities were reunited as the Romanian nation in the 1800s. This position is firmly supported by the Romanian Orthodox Church which has advanced the claim that Romanians were among the first converts to Christianity under the mission of St. Andrew in the 1$^{th}$ century A.D. and thus can claim their ancestors to belong to the age of persecution (Pucurariu 2005: Online, Romanian Orthodox Church 2004c, Patriarch Teoctist 2004: 1-5). Orthodox theologian Ioan Ica notes that "the ethnogenesis of the Romanian people (the Romanization of the Dacians) coincided with their Christianization" (Ica 2002b: 529, my

translation). Not only does the state and Church promote this view of history, but the proposition also is firmly entrenched in Romanians' self-concept. The Latinity of Romanians is not a matter of argument since it would be inconceivable to argue about whether Roman blood indeed flows through their veins or that the mission of St. Andrew did not succeed. The Romanian Academy, school system, political discourse, Orthodox Church, the press, etc. confirm these entrenched national myths inasmuch as Romanians accept them as part of their national identities.

These claims to long-standing Latinity and Christianity indicate a relationship between premodern ethnies and the Romanian nation, which begs the question, of how we can hop from the Roman colony of Dacia at the turn of the first millennium to the modern nation Romania, which is also Christian and Romance speaking. I could emphasize the invented nature of national identities, an argument that numerous theorists have proposed (cf. Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983), yet I would still give some credit to modern nationalists' claim to longer histories rooted in earlier distinct ethnies. Anthony D. Smith notes that historical ethnic communities, or ethnies, share particular features with nations including a collective proper name, a myth of common ancestry, historical memories, one or more differentiating elements of a common culture, an association with a specific homeland, and a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population (Smith 1991: 21). Unlike the nation however, the ethnie is not necessarily in possession and control of a territory, and can therefore continue to exist in the diaspora. Thus, we must examine the durability, dissolution and rise of ethnies, furthermore the ongoing transformations that they undergo (Smith 1996: 7).

A key clue to the premodern precedent of Romanians is the Vlach ethnic, a Romance speaking population in the Balkans who entered the historical record in the 12th century.[6] Some of the first evidence of a distinct ethnic can be found in the records of the 1186 revolt led by the Vlach Asen brothers against the Bulgarian kingdom (Ross 2003: Online) for the autonomy of what later became Wallachia. Around 1350, the Vlach elite founded the Moldovan state (named after the Moldau River) and their successors established sovereignty over territories while fighting invading tribes. In both principalities, rulers organized their own churches after the Bulgarian modes (which in turn drew on Roman Emperor Constantine's precedent) where the political leader had authority over the Church (Rouleau 2002: 345).[7]

Historians are relatively undecided about the Wallachians: whether they were an ethnic per se divided between three principalities (Wallachia, Transylvania, Moldova), or whether they were the resulting mix of various migrations without a common

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[6] The term "Vlach" seems to "be a derivative from the same Germanic word cognate to welsch in German and Welsh in English, both meaning Roman (Ross 2003: Online). Vlach also turns up in mediaeval Latin (Blachi) and Greek (Blakhoi, pronounced Vlakhi), only in reference to the Romance speakers of the Balkans (Ross 2003: Online). Perhaps 18th century nationalists had a point when they stressed the Latin connection, yet historians still puzzle over the sudden "appearance" of the regional distinct ethnies during the 1200s bound "by the massive acceptance among them of the Orthodox religion" and a Latin-based language (Gilberg 1984: 170). Ross attests that the Vlachs did not convert to Christianity en masse or in any organized way. The Orthodox faith originated under the influence of the Bulgarians, who ruled the Vlachs at the time of their conversion. The writing of the Vlach language in the Cyrillic alphabet supports this claim and the linguistic influence of Old Church Slavonic, which is the liturgical language of the Bulgarian Church. Even the Patriarch of Constantinople referred to the newly autonomous Bulgarian Church as "the Primate of all Bulgaria and Vlakhia" which together with that of Russia, were the only independent Orthodox Churches authorized by Constantinople, although it would be difficult to ascertain whether there was a distinct Vlach ethnic at this time throughout the territories claimed later as Romania and what the population actually perceived themselves as (Ross 2003: Online).

[7] When the Slav and Turkic rulers consolidated their states at this time, they followed the Eastern Roman model which entailed that a powerful ruler who was also the master of the church. This relationship between ruler and patriarch was also adopted in the case of the early ethnarchies established by newly converted Slav groups at the turn of the first millennium. Thus, when Bulgar Khan Boris accepted baptism and official conversion in 864-65, Constantinople awarded Bulgaria its own relatively autonomous archbishopric in 870. When his successor, Symeon (893-927), became the first Bulgarian tsar, he "assumed this title in 924 and to justify it changed the title of the head of the Bulgarian Church from archbishop to patriarch" (Sugar 1999:47). Symeon established a Bulgarian patriarchate in 926, which also adopted Slavonic liturgy. This principle was also applied to Serbia and the Rus' (Sugar 1999: 47).

consciousness. The fact that there are records of consecutive *voievods*, or rulers, who identified themselves as the defenders of Orthodox Wallachians and Moldovans as early as the 13th century demonstrates that at least at the elite level, a strong perception of unity and commonalities against foreign threat stimulated ongoing attempts at consolidating the ethnic (Verdery 1999: 60-61, Sugar 1999: 49). Furthermore, the Wallachian and Moldovan elite were often related and intermarried. There also seemed to be a perception of shared commonality with the Wallachians in the Transylvanian principality as intermarriage between elite attests, as well as rulers' continual attempts to incorporate parts of this region into their principalities.[8]

The third medieval principality of the ancient Dacian territory claimed by Romanian nationalists was Transylvania (the land beyond the forest). This region was, and continues to be, a very ethnically contested area. Although modern Romanians have been claiming to be its autochthonous population since time immemorial, it has always been a place of constant migrations, cultural interaction, and borrowing. Dacians, Romans, Wallachians, Slavs, Magyars, and Saxons are just some of the names of ethnies who passed through or settled the region. The groups with the greatest ramifications were the Magyars, who colonized the area during the 9th century and incorporated it into a kingdom that held power over the region until the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918. Secondly, the 12th century migrations of Saxons and their colonization resulted in the building of Transylvania's medieval towns. The Magyar and Saxon populations enjoyed elevated status and privileges, including a monopoly on trade, as the

[8] The fact that the ruling line happened to be Wallachian or Moldovan did not expulse the remaining ethnic groups from the territory and tensions of co-habitation remained. A continuing concern for rulers was the presence of the Slavs, and more so of the Hungarians, then Magyars, in the territories. The Magyars settled Moldova and Wallachia during their migration from Asia in the late 900s.

ruling classes vis-à-vis the Wallachian–speaking peasant masses (Antihi & Tescula n.d.: 3-4, Apostol et al 2003: 7-10, Praoveanu 1999: 8-9).

For all the diversity and constant migration, what was it that bound these ethnies and rendered them distinct? Smith postulates that religions in pre-modern societies often reinforced and even ignited ethnic sentiment to "form distinctive religio-ethnic communities" (Smith 1986: 35, see also Kitromildes 1996). That religion and ethnicity are often fused is particularly evident in the origin myths of the ethnie infused with religious concepts of creation (1986: 35-36). Religion was a major cohesive force among Wallachian and Moldovan masses who saw themselves as God's chosen defenders of Christendom from the Ottoman threat. Of course, ethnic election was a widespread belief preceding Christianity, receiving "canonical expression in the Old Testament" (Smith 2003: 256).

The idea of a sacred homeland was equally widespread in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, often the result of a covenant between God and his chosen peoples. Interestingly, the *voievod*s saw themselves as chosen by God as champions of the faith, whose sacrifice would ensure a place in the heavenly kingdom. Sacred territories had to be protected, and victories meant that they were favored by the higher power. Sacrifice for the ethnie, the ruler, and the faith was similarly worthy of heavenly favor. If we examine the Moldovan eschatology as depicted in medieval monastery frescoes, such as those of the Humor Monastery, there is an evident depiction that only those chosen by God are part of his kingdom. Heaven is inhabited by a hierarchy of angels, saints, martyrs, and other good believers, while hell is a place for the Turks, Jews, and other pagan groups.

This medieval period was also considered Romania's Golden Age by early nationalists, and continues to be revered as a time of glory, independence from foreign threat, and cultural creativity marked by the vast building of Orthodox monasteries and intense fervor displayed by brave warrior kings defending the ethnic and the Church (Pucurariu 2005: Online). The golden age of the medieval *voievods* ended between 1711 and 1821 when the Ottomans thwarted the resistance and the Sultan began to sell the seats of Wallachian and Moldovan rulers to Greek tax farmers. It is important to note that in these principalities, indigenous rulers held on to some power even when the Ottomans wholly conquered the region. Turkish suzerainty largely employed an indirect rule method to extract taxes from the masses.[9] In Wallachia and Moldova, Ottoman control varied in rigor and the lines of *voievod*s continued, as did their maneuvering for independence.

*Nationalism: Awaken, Romanian!*

In Transylvania the Orthodox peasant majority continued to be under Hungarian rule. Orthodoxy was merely tolerated and never gained the same state-religion status as in Moldova and Wallachia. During their occupation of Transylvania, the Hapsburg regime also attempted to gain hegemony over the Wallachian peasants by promoting conversion to Greek Catholicism, which combined the liturgy and ritual of Orthodoxy with

[9] The Ottoman domination system resembled the Byzantine model closely and the sultan took on the title of the emperor of the conquered lands. Since the sultans were not bound by Christian dogmas and traditions, they considered the Eastern Church's clergymen as inferior members of a branch of government (Sugar 1999: 47, Stokes 1998). The resulting millet system recognized differences between the Ottomans' subjects along religious lines; thus, one of the millets was the Orthodox ecumene headed by the patriarch of Constantinople who was considered an administrative functionary by the sultans "responsible for the good behaviour of all Orthodox" regardless of ethnic divisions (Sugar 1999: 48). The millet system reinforced the Byzantium-established order of *harmonia* between political and religious leaders. By recognizing that all Orthodox had to obey a single leader whose powers clearly ranged beyond the religious, a stronger institution emerged tied to the state (Stokes 1998: 19, Mungiu-Pippidi 1998: Online).

recognition of the Catholic Pope's supremacy. When the Hapsburgs formally established the Greek Catholic Uniate Church in 1698, the Orthodox clergymen who joined "became the most privileged and best educated Romanians in Transylvania. . . demanding equal treatment for their conationals" (Sugar 1999: 49). Often these elites traveled abroad to the Western Europe, and were inspired by the emerging ideas of the Enlightenment.

During the early 1800s, the threat of being incorporated as a minority into the Hungarian state led to the increasing cooperation between Uniate and Orthodox Wallachians in Transylvania (Sugar 1999: 22: Stokes 1998: 26). Although they did not think in broader nationalist terms about possible unity with Wallachia and Moldova, the reformers, many who were ecclesiasts, continued to emphasize their struggle for equal rights and the uplifting of co-nationals from illiteracy and poverty. During this period, Uniate clergy advanced the Daco-Roman descent myth, which explained the origins of the Wallachians. The ethnogenesis myth was based on the Latin roots of the serfs' language as a strategy of affirming their higher status vis-à-vis the Hungarian ruling elite as the direct descendants of the Roman Empire (Verdery 1999: 62-63, Sugar 1999: 10, Stan & Turcescu 2000).

The implication was that those who shared this language were part of a nation conquered and subjugated on a territory inherited from their Dacian ancestors. Thus, Wallachians in all three principalities should be united in their quest for independence. The early nationalists verified their claims through a modified version of Wallachian grammar, which emphasized its Latin roots and inflections. Subsequent nationalist intellectuals sought to re-Latinize language by substituting the Latin alphabet for the Cyrillic and purging non-Latin words from use. By creating a uniform literary language,

intellectuals inspired by the French Revolution, sought a national project for Wallachians as well (Van de Vyver 1998: 89). Nonetheless, different nationalisms prevailed in the three principalities, particularly in Moldova and Transylvania, and the nobility could only agree on the desire for unity which employed nationalism as a "new, additional argument that could be used by them in a battle against their rulers, foreign or native" (Sugar 1999: 173). Since the local elite was under the domination of the Ottoman, Hapsburg, or Romanov empires, nationalism and self-determination was not a universal, but rather a class privilege, which excluded the dominated and agrarian masses. The boyars "considered participation in the political life of their countries not as a right but as a privilege based on historic-feudal documents and tradition" (Sugar 1999: 174).

*Orthodoxy and the Nation*

Smith argues that the durability of nations can be understood by exploring the collective beliefs and sentiments about the sacred foundations of the nations and how these relate to older beliefs, symbols, and rituals of traditional religions. While some (cf. Hobsbawm 1983) have stressed the invention and malleability of ethnicities as contextually created and re-created identities masking power relations, such constructionist approaches "tend to ignore the disjunction between the individual and collective levels of analysis" (Smith 2000: 100). The individual perceptions, sentiments, and beliefs must be placed within the wider historical context of "inter-generational structures and processes" of kinship networks, political and economic structures, and cultural patterns of religions, education and communication. Ethnicity is not a matter of choice, rather "it is, and it is felt to be, an ascribed boundary category as well as a historic

culture community" (Smith 2000: 100). Ethnic ties "have proved adaptable and persistent" (2000: 100), particularly because they have effectively mustered kinship ties to tie individuals and their experiences to the collective. Thus, we need to examine such resources and strategies of ethnic persistence such as history, memory, ritual, commemorations, cultural spectacles, and tradition and how they are involved in processes of ethnie formation through time (Smith 2000: 76).

Of these symbolic resources, "the most important for ethnic and national formations and persistence are myths of ethnic origin and ethnic election, traditions of homeland attachment, myth-memories of golden ages, and myths of heroic sacrifice" (Smith 2004: 197), which are often shared by ethnies and nations alike.[10] What differentiates the nation from the ethnie is rather its distinctive public culture, standardized laws and customs, shared rights and duties for its members. Nevertheless, nation-forming requires a pre-existing ethnic core, thus nationality is not a divergent break with the pre-modern and nationalism as an ideology is particularly focused on authenticity and return to traditions. Processes of nation-definition and formation need cultural resources and sacred foundations, often drawn from earlier religious belief-systems entwined with a long-standing sense of common ethnicity and an ability to propel the members of an ethnie into a reinterpretation of their community as a cultural and political nation, and into an active commitment and devotion to the ideal of nationhood.

[10] Smith outlines four major types of sacred foundations, namely the myth of ethnic election, a long-standing attachment to particular terrains regarded as sacred and as belonging to the community, a yearning to recover and realize the spirit of one or more golden ages, epochs of communal heroism and creativity, and finally a belief in the regenerative power of mass and individual sacrifice to ensure a glorious destiny, and the importance of commemorating and celebrating the community and its heroes (Smith 2003: 255).

Researchers speak of the mass national awakening of Romanians in the 1800s and how important the shared Orthodox faith in providing a core of beliefs and practices for the mobilization of the ethnic towards a common destiny and without the "sacred foundations," particularly of the Orthodoxy brand, pre-modern ethnies nationalists could not have mobilized the diverse populations.[11] In the case of Romanian early nationalism, the intellectual elite did not need to look far to find the core to their nation. Orthodox clergy had already "joined the bandwagon by positioning itself as pivotal for the very definition of 'Romanianism'" (Stan & Turcescu 2000: 1467-1468). In the process, the Church borrowed, and eventually monopolized, the Transylvanian Greek Catholics' nationalist discourse centered on the Latin character of the Romanian language and descent. This appropriation gave the Orthodox Church growing moral and political legitimacy as representing the Wallachian cause. It is important to note here that Orthodox clergy in Wallachia and Moldova had been steadily increasing during the 18th century, particularly in rural areas where they had become a "burgher" class of professionalized elites. The power of rural priests as village leaders and intellectuals was key to later mobilization of the masses (Barbu 2004: 77). Barbu suggests that it was the bourgeois aspirations of the professional clergymen united as a profession and sharing common beliefs that spurred the national awakening. Their penetrating ties in the countryside facilitated the wide spread of the nationalist-religious drive towards the modern state.

Unfortunately, we know relatively little about why and how the masses became part of these processes. Smith is particularly concerned with this issue and calls for in-

[11] See Sugar 1999, Stokes 1998, Livezeanu 1995, Kitromildes 1996, Bobango 1979, Van de Vyver 1998, Gallagher 1995, and Verdery 1999 for discussions on the role of Orthodoxy in Romanian nation building.

depth investigations into religious sentiment as a core impetus for national movements in monotheistic Christian and Judaic nations. Rather than assuming an evolution from traditional religion-focused tribal or feudal societies to one of secular nations, we should consider the "ways in which religious and national cultures underpin and reinforce each other to produce powerful" national identities (Smith 2003: 17). Thus, Romanian nationalism represents the joining of two trends: secular nationalist sentiments fortified by the hold of religion whose leaders joined their lay counterparts towards the goal of creating a nation-state (Sugar 1999: 11). This is indicated by the fact that in 1865 the Romanian Church was proclaimed an autocephaly headed by Metropolitan of Bucharest and a state church, while all services were translated into Romanian.[12] Romanian political scientist Daniel Barbu argues that during this period, Orthodoxy also began to be an essential part of the state (Barbu 1999: 250-251). Theologian Ioan Ica adds that in 1862 and 1866, new legislation "subordinated the clergy administration and material wealth to the state" (2002b: 534). This is also the beginning of the continuing practice of clergy receiving salaries from the state as well, which was not even halted during communism.

[12] For all this success, Romanian unity and independence required international support. Yet, Western perceptions of the Eastern part of the continent deemed the area as backward and barbaric, in great need for a civilizing touch. Descriptions of the Eastern part of the continent are found in travel writings from the 18th century preceding Stoker (Wolff 1994: 191, 326) demonstrating that the mystical, dangerous, and unknown East was rather an indication of reinterpreted Enlightenment conceptualizations of the 'Occident' and 'Orient '(Wolff 1994). Yet in contrast to the Slavs, the Romanian nationalists painted their nation in Latin colors which only aided their cause by inspiring French interest in their "sister nation" (Ross 2003: Online). The works of historian Nicolae Iorga written in French meant to distance Romania from its neighbors as an island of Latinity in a sea of Slavs. The Treaty of Berlin (1878) confirmed this Western European support and was further legitimized by the coronation of Hohenzollern King Carol at the helm of the new Romanian Kingdom in 1866.

*Dawn of a new Golden Age*

As the nationalist movement intensified, state apparatuses emerged to disseminate their nationalist literature, history, and symbols through newly established public institutions. The earliest nationalist elites and leaders' concern with the national cultural treasures led to the establishment of institutions that focused on preserving cultural symbols. Museums, libraries, archives, and national commissions were established after Western European models to ensure the protection of national heritage. Special laws were adopted for monument (1874) and archaeological site conservation (1892), and official structures to implement them soon followed (Opris 2001: 731-732). King Carol of Romania was an ardent supporter of these processes to ensure that sites were protected for the good of the nation (Opris 2001: 664). Not surprisingly, the cultural patrimony mainly consisted of Orthodox monasteries and churches as manifestations of Romania's golden age of spiritual and cultural height. Iorga promoted the monasteries of Moldova abroad through his French works (Bals & Iorga 1922), while efforts continued to catalogue and document their histories for conationals.[13]

After international negotiation, the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean War, Romania acquired autonomy from various foreign influences and the eventual foundation of the Romanian national state was completed during the final episode of World War I in 1914-18. The territories gained through political alliances in WWI rendered the new nation its largest ever territory, roughly the equivalent of the Dacian Empire (Heintz 2002: 26, 157-160). Romania Mare (Greater Romania), as the nation was

[13] See Bals (1926), (1928) as examples of early 20th century attempts to document Romania religious heritage by the Commission of Historical Monuments. These works concentrate on the monasteries of Moldova (1928) and specifically of Stephen the Great's (1926).

known in the interwar period, had achieved another golden age to recapture the glory days of the medieval *voievods*. It recaptured its ancient homeland, freed its people from the foreign yoke, and entrenched modernization schemes to ensure its glorious destiny amongst European nations. It was even headed by European royal blood and its Parliament was only separated by a few meters from the Patriarchy Cathedral.

The Orthodox Church was firmly linked with Romanian nationality when the Romanian Orthodox Patriarchate was founded in 1925 as a symbolic act "in a process which over several decades produced the imagined community of the Romanian nation" (Barbu 1999: 251-252, Kitromildes 1996:207; Gallagher 1995: 13-22). Since the state, "which was nothing else than organized kin," represented the Romanian people, religious denominations made no sense. In fact, divisions in religious ideology divided Romanians and thus implied perversions separating "our sons of the same country who should have the same ideals and inspirations" (Livezeanu 1995: 47). The role of the Orthodox Church in nation building was clearly integral and far reaching. Yet, the task also required modernization that would implant the peasant masses with state ideologies and fortify a nationalist consciousness. To do so, intellectuals consisting of clergy and teachers instituted a massive education program promoting the language, history, and nationalist aspirations of the Romanians to the masses in the hopes of creating an indigenous intelligentsia. Romanian nationalist historians further emphasized the importance of Orthodoxy as foundational to Romanian identity (cf. Iorga 1908, 1966, Sadoveanu 1965). At the same time, theologian Ioan Ica argues that while the clergy was immersed in the patriotism of the emerging Romanian state, the Church began to become increasingly controlled by the state dominated by liberal elites (2002b: 534).

The Church continued commemorating dead kin, leaders, saints, and even the army. This was a tradition rooted in the premodern ethnic practices of ruler and saint commemoration, but also reformatted to incorporate the collective national dead since the 1800s. Thus, at the end of the Liturgy, "the priests raised the cross from the altar's doors, and encouraged the people: 'Sing after me'" (in Staniloae 2003: 242):

Awaken thee, Romanian, shake off the deadly slumber
The scourge of inauspicious barbarian tyrannies
And now or never to a bright horizon clamber
That shall to shame put all your nocuous enemies.

It's now or never to the world we readily proclaim
In our veins throbs and ancestry of Roman
And in our hearts forever we glorify a name
Resounding of battle, the name of gallant Trajan.

Do look imperial shadows, Michael, Stephen, Corvinus
At the Romanian nation, your mighty progeny
With arms like steel and hearts of fire impetuous
It's either free or dead, that's what they all decree.

Priests, rise the cross, this Christian army's liberating
The word is freedom, no less sacred is the end

We'd rather die in battle, in elevated glory

Than live again enslaved on our ancestral land.

Note the references to references to Latinity, foreign oppression, Christianity and liberation from oppression, and of course, Stephen the Great, which were the key themes of nationalist mythologies promoted during this period. Michael the Brave and Matthias Corvinus were also exemplary leaders from the medieval period. Note that the Hungarian Corvinus is praised in the same nationalist song alongside his opponent Stephen the Great to mask historical ethnic divisions in Transylvania and emphasize Romanian unity. Interestingly, this exact hymn became the national anthem of postcommunist Romania.

Of course, this golden age had its downfall. The nationalist ideology culminated in the "generation of 1922" movement, which translated it into extreme xenophobia and maltreatment of minorities to the point of official fascism in the 1930s (Livezeanu 1995: 302-305). Again, the heroes of old were called on this time to justify the ethnic cleansing of Roma, Jews, Saxon, and Hungarian historical minority populations. Coincidentally, this was also the period of greatest restoration of Orthodox cult sites, particularly monasteries and churches (Opris 2001: 29-30). In a letter from the Metropolitan of Bucharest to the Minister of Education, he notes that "if fascism were indeed a legal form of defense of the Romanian people, the church would have little reason to be against it" (Livezeanu 1995: 305). As much as religion had been integral to Romanian national movements leading to unification, it had also been crucial in the culmination of the fascist dictatorship based on the ideology of Romanian supremacy over other ethnicities. "The League of the Archangel Michael," under the guidance of the ruling party's Iron

Guard, combined religious and nationalist fervor to justify anti-Semitic violence (Gilberg 1984: 175).

*Communism, Religion, and Nationalism*

Romania was the greatest winner as result of the carve-up of 1918-19; however the second round at the negotiations table was rather daunting. The choice to side with the fascists during the majority of the Second World War lead to excessive losses in territory. The coup-d'etat of 1944 also brought the Communist Party of Romania to power with Soviet aid. The majority of the new government leaders were of non-Romanian ethnic origin (primarily Jewish) and doctrinaire Stalinists with no nationalist aspirations that could be classified as defiance from Moscow (Gilberg 1984: 175). It was during this period in fact that Romania ceded claims to Bessarabia (eastern portion of Moldova) to Russia, a sore point with Romanians to this day. Yet, out of the internal struggles in the party, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, who many regarded as a nationalist in disguise, took control and purged the party of opposition to his notion of a Romanian road to socialism. His defiance of Moscow, partially motivated by the "rape of Bassarabia," culminated in the 1963 refusal to join the COMECON. References to the nationalist mythologies of the 1800s, including alleged links to Rome and Dacia, also increased during his rule (Crowther 1998: 192-195).

The policies of the Dej regime regarding religion and churches were repressive by most accounts: persecution of the clergy and disbanding of churches occurred while a massive atheism campaign promoted the scientific worldview. It is noteworthy that the regime utilized the most stringent policies and tactics against non-Orthodox groups,

namely Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Baptists, and other smaller Protestant organizations, whose membership often coincided with ethnic minority populations. As the regime consolidated its power, its relations with the Orthodox hierarchy gradually relaxed to the point of co-opting it as a communication tool in the dialogue between the masses and the regime (Gilberg 1984: 176-177). The national character of the Orthodox Church made explicit in the Constitutions of 1923 and 1938, which promoted the accommodation principle between Church and state, was never discarded during this period. The 1948 communist Constitution even took great pains to include a paragraph to ensure the Church's "autocephaly and unity in its organization" (Article 27, 1948 Constitution in Barbu 1999: 251).

The personal relations between Dej and Patriarch Justinian facilitated the church-state affairs resulting in a special relationship and status of the Orthodox Church (Crowther 1998: 197-198; Stan & Turcescu 2000: 1468). The Orthodox Church's collaboration with the communist authorities went beyond occasional statements, and included attempts by some of its prominent members to reconcile Orthodox theology with the country's dominant ideology. In Patriarch Justinian's *Apostolat Social*, a collection of essays and speeches spanning most of his reign, the patriarch promoted the concept of the 'social apostolate,' which blended together Marxist-Leninist social analysis and Christian Orthodox theology (Stan & Turcescu 2000: 1468-1469). This and the fact that the state's purse continued to support clergy salaries, was thus a continuation of earlier policies rather than dramatic change (Beeson 1982: 355).

Nevertheless, some of today's most respected Orthodox theologians were imprisoned in the early years of communism while other intellectuals such as religious

philosopher Mircea Eliade opted for exile. Dumitru Staniloae, Teodor Moises, and Liviu Stan, and Nae Ionescu were interned, especially because of their involvement in the *Rugul Aprins* (Burning Prayer) movement. This phenomenon was an initiative of cultural elite who gathered at Antim Monastery in Bucharest and debated political and religious issues, particularly concerning the influence of Russian secularism on Romania. Dumitru Staniloae in particular is recognized as one of the century's most important theologians and Orthodox philosophers. Interestingly, his work continued to call for the realization of the Romanian nation though cooperation between Church and state (Staniloae 2003, Barbu 1999, Preda 2001). It was the Communist Party's reluctance to include the Church in its decision-making and to efforts to expel it from its traditional role that concerned the *Rugul Aprins* group and other clergy. As nationalists, they saw Orthodoxy to be essential to the proper governing of the nation (Staniloae 2003: 43-45). Without the input of God's chosen representatives, the bishops and Patriarch, the state would lead the people astray. To this group, the communist yoke rejected the best of Romanian history and insulted the heroes of old. The Great Kings had always consulted with the Church; it was through the tight knit relations between ruler and patriarch that the nation triumphed. Betraying the spiritual guide of the people was endangering the entire future of the nation.

In 2004, this early communist period was remembered as the most damaging to the Church (Balan 2001). The government disseminated militant atheist propaganda, shut down monasteries, reintegrated nuns and monks into the workforce, and curtailed pastoral activity deemed unproductive. One priest remembers,

> If there was a priest who was more zealous, the Security would intervene immediately and marginalize you in some way they'd move you from the

congregation, they'd make threats, if they had a family and were a bit weaker in their faith, they would give up these ideas to have peace. On the other hand, this propaganda had the most success in schools and certain institutions – in the army, if you were a professor, or engineer or in the Party – you were not to step foot into a church – of course many did and were brave in spite of being followed. But you did everything in secret – baptism, wedding – the priest would come to the homes of those who were afraid to lose their positions, promotions, etc.

In spite of the persecution, between 1948 and 1966, 269 new churches were built. (Patriarch Teoctist 2004: 7). Once again, the Socialist Academy for the Study of Art History praised, documented and studied Orthodox monasteries. Even more impressive was the ongoing activity of the Holy Synod, which culminated in the 1950 decision to begin investigations to confirm the canonization of 22 national saints (Act Sinodal 1992: 3). Earlier that the year, theologian Liviu Stan's published a guide to the canonization process which continued to serve as staple document outlining the process even in 2004. In it, Stan also sought to justify the Romanian Church's sanctification of national rather than universal figures in order to best incorporate local venerations into national cults.

*Ceausescuism*

When Nicolae Ceausescu succeeded Dej in 1965, his policies on religion represented a "curious mix of opportunism and the ideological preference, coupled with the individualistic peculiarities of the 'Supreme Leader'" (Gilberg 1984: 177). "Ceausescuism" was a hybrid encompassing Marxism-Leninism, traditional Romanian nationalism, and the leader's personal views, which were often contradictory, eclectic,

and "peculiarly vulnerable to the excesses of the personality cult that reached dismaying, even ludicrous, heights" (1984: 178). The government's support for Orthodoxy during a period in which other religions were persecuted was a part of the dictator's attempt to inject a strong element of nationalism, even chauvinism, based on the Romanian nationalist heritage through his "little cultural revolution" (Crowther 1998: 196). The national mythology presented the regime as a legitimate outgrowth of Romanian history with the leader being in line with the great kings of the Middle Ages. It was Ceausescu who would lead the country to international renown and recognition, a position that foreign rivals and occupiers had undermined in earlier centuries (Gallagher 1995: 196). His socialist nation would be superior as an amalgamation of minority ethnicities and Romanian cultures that cooperate to fulfill the Party's ideals (Crowther 1998: 179, Belk & Paun 1995:191-194).

Ceausescu's use of fervent nationalism was never divorced from a religious element, and the Church hierarchy strengthened their position in exchange for aiding Ceausescu to legitimate himself as a genuine national leader (Crowther 1998: 198; Beeson 1982: 321). While other religious minority groups, which were often ethnic minorities as well, were persecuted, there was an expansion of Orthodox church building and cautious upgrading of prestige of bishoprics (Gilberg 1984: 180, Barbu 2004: 252). The churches and properties of the Greek Catholic Church were turned over to the Orthodox hierarchy and the state arrested approximately 600 clergy. Interestingly, the state agreed with the Orthodox Church that Greek Catholics were essentially Orthodox who were tricked or betrayed their true faith to the foreign oppressor, the Hapsburgs (Stan & Turcescu 2000: 1470-1471; Mungiu-Pippidi 1998: Online).

During services, as Orthodox priests prayed for the nation's heroes, army, saints and family dead, the clergy and worshippers also called for God's favor on the nation's leader, Ceausescu. The Communist Party managed the Church through the Ministry of Cults and even handpicked Orthodox hierarchs. In turn, they rendered homage to Ceausescu for his devotion to "the progress of the Romanian people and fatherland" and for "securing complete freedom for all religious cults in our country to carry out their activity among the faithful" (Stan & Turcescu 2000: 1469, Barbu 2004). Many Orthodox religious leaders were also political activists long before assuming the position of patriarchs, and even partook in Communist Party assemblies, congresses, and were key members in the Party.

Yet collaboration was not total. A priest whom I interviewed in 2004 remembers that:

> there was collaboration, but not always, they did it so that they could still conduct their activities. We don't know the extent of it – the archives are not opened yet and if they are they must be carefully examined. There were priests who didn't do as much damage to the people or the church in their collaboration.

Of course, Ceausescu's contradictory ideology with respect to religion did not go unnoticed by the Romanian population. Although calling for a secularist nation, Ceausescu buried his father with full Orthodox rites under the leadership of high-ranking clergy (Gilberg 1984: 186). In spite of the need for the hierarchs to publicly support the regime and the numerous restrictions, the practices of the parishes went on. Household blessings, Christian festivals, relic production and pilgrimages were still practiced although mass public rituals were more restricted (Beeson 1982: 360-363). The state even

promoted the pilgrimage to the Putna monastery where Stephen the Great was buried (Beeson 1982: 363).

Despite his early leniency, a shift in Ceausescu's strategies occurred during the 1980s. Since power was seen as a mixture of highly personalized and discretionary authority, which consolidated personal dependence on the leader, the state was regarded by elites "as a source of personal power and enrichment" (Craiatu 2000: 171). The regime reinforced the traditional gap between elite politicians and ordinary citizens by collectivist values, paternalism, and civic apathy. Ceausescu's unrealistic goal during the 1980s to eliminate all external debts led to drastic reduction of domestic consumption. By entering a highly competitive international market with an oversized and technologically obsolete industry, inefficient agriculture, and a weak tertiary sector (Craiatu 2000: 171), Romania plummeted into economic crisis in 1980s. Trond Gilberg proposes that the downfall of communism was brought about by mass apathy, popular cynicism, and lack of legitimacy of the corrupt and exploitative political order with its incessant ideological bombardment and frustrated materialism that led to religious revival (1984).

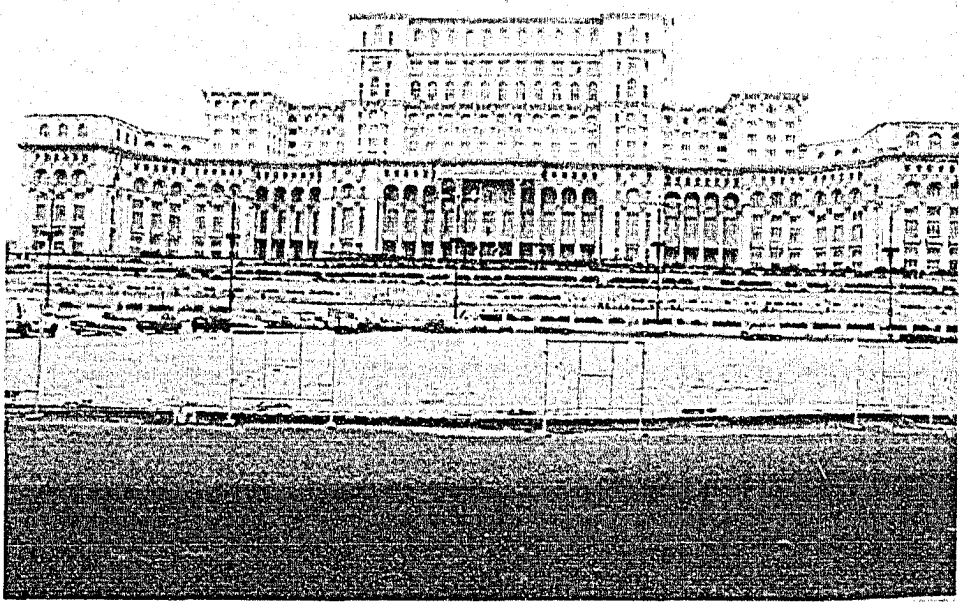

**Figure 3 Ceausescu's Palace**

Romania did not have a strong dissent movement like Poland. Because of the efforts of the Secret Police (the *Securitate*), such movements could not unify and organize resistance and thus serve as a platform for a new regime (Petrescu 2004: 202). To manage unrest, the regime stepped up the heavy promotion of Romanian nationalism whose increasingly anti-minority political rhetoric played on historical ethnic hostility to gain popular support (Crowther 1998: 1999). In turn, the strategy progressively alienated Hungarian and German groups in Transylvania. Religious minorities, which were often minority ethnic groups, were increasingly marginalized and oppressed during the 1980s since they were considered foreign and even channels of Western ideology infiltration (Crowther 1998: 198). The hard line also impacted the Orthodox Church. Ceausescu razed monasteries and churches during the 1980s, and imprisoned clergy (Petrescu 2004:

204, Patriarch Teoctist 2004: 8-9).[14] It appears that the concessions the Orthodox hierarchy had made thus far were pushed even further during this period, which would come back to haunt them shortly.

An increasing turn to religion of the disaffected masses in the later 1980s gave rise to individual Orthodox Christians who challenged Ceausescu's program of ethics and morality. Their discontent was echoed in ethnic and religious minorities' dissent who reacted to the heavy use of Romanian nationalism and rallied around their distinct faith (Gilberg 1984: 183). Interestingly enough, it was a Catholic Hungarian priest and his supporters' confrontation with Ceausescu representatives in Transylvania that actually sparked the 1989 revolution against the communist regime. It seems that Ceausescu was rightly worried about the ethnic threat as once again Transylvania became the hotbed of a national awakening.

*The 1989 Revolution*

Doug McAdam notes that the availability of master ideational frames served as links of the various democratic movements within a 'protest frame' in East Europe. Although each case must be accounted for on its own merit, there are some general statements that can be made about the 1989 revolutions. Dissent was most visible in Poland through its Solidarity movement. The Solidarity's long-standing existence as a cultural repository, coupled with a weak Gorbachevian Russia, economic crisis, and increasing contact with the West, led to an opportunity for a larger scale and regime

[14] Between 1977 and 1989, 20 churches were demolished in Bucharest (Petrescu 2004: 204) One example that remains a sore point today was the complete destruction of the Vacaresti monastery in 1984 in Bucharest to make way for Ceausescu's vision of an enormous sports complex, which was never completed (Giurescu 2004).

changing movement. Other countries followed as the system's vulnerability became clear.

In the case of Romania, the revolution began in Bucharest on December 21, 1989 where students and workers had been participating in a communist parade. This event was to congregate in the People's Plaza, where the masses would listen to one of Ceausescu's speeches. This time however, the address was prompted by the protests in Timisoara earlier that month against government violence against Hungarian pastor Laszlo Tokes and his followers. Ceausescu needed to subsume the possibility of tumult in the nation and justify the use of force by the army. He never made the speech as the parade turned into a demonstration. Slogans transformed from the formulaic praises of the leader, to protests calling for regime change. Ceausescu and his wife Elena fled as the masses filtered into the Plaza. To symbolize dissent, protestors cut a hole in the red, yellow, and blue flag replacing the emblem of the Party with a void.

The army killed an estimated 5,000 in the days between December 21 and 24, before they joined the protestors. The climax of the revolution was the capture of Ceausescu and his wife, their swift judgment, and execution by the will of the people, an event broadcast in its totality throughout the country. On December 25, 1989, a row of army officers shot Nicolae and Elena. I remember people commenting on the irony of the date, Ceausescu's name day, St. Nicholas. With the king's head cut off, the revolution had obviously succeeded and the issue of succession was a real concern. Among the new figures appearing on the liberated television sets were Petre Roman and Ion Iliescu and within days of the spark, the two declared themselves as leaders of the People's Salvation

Front. Ion Iliescu was a former propaganda minister for the Communist Party and now became the leader of the provisional party.

The immediate period following the revolution was confusing, for want of a better term. The new leaders gained momentum by frenzied public opinion, yet there were already protests regarding their suspect pasts. Then there was the question of revenge on other communist Big Men. Trials similar to Ceausescu's followed in the coming months and the wrath of the nation focused on his closest ministers and family members, though the drama of the December 25 executions was not replicated. There remained the question of restitution. Those who had been wronged had to be compensated and recognized for their suffering. Political prisoners became the new heroes and exiles were returning to tell the nation of their resistance to the communist yoke. It seemed that everyone had something for which to fault the regime.

*Breaking the Past*

The revolution itself was a powerful event upon which new and revised could draw. Thus, the martyrs of 1989 were revered sons and daughters who sacrificed themselves for the nation's freedom. Of course, the notion of the martyr was not only tied to sacrifice for the nation, but was commemorated in religious ritual and rhetoric. Revolution Plaza was marked with graffiti, shrines for the victims, and the site of numerous commemoration rituals led by Orthodox priests. The displays contained crosses, flowers, faces of Jesus and canonical phrases which were drawn from Orthodox funeral and commemoration rites. Furthermore, at the burial sites of the heroes of the revolution, crosses were wrapped in the tri-colour banner to clearly symbolize the link

between religion and nationalism reinvigorated by the break with communism. Even Ceausescu was buried underneath a cross in the Bucharest military cemetery while sympathizers continue to commemorate him, hoping to alleviate his sins.

Numerous cultural reforms aimed to re-claim Romanian-ness from Ceausescu's communist projects also ensued shortly after the revolution. The newly instated national anthem was none other than a song sung during the early nationalist period in churches after the Liturgy called Awaken, Romanian. [15] These reforms not only demonstrated the continued focus on Latin origins and Great Kings and men's self-sacrifice against foreign oppression, but also a reinterpretation of communism as barbarian and tyrannical. [16] This inversion and purification of communist symbols and rituals was a means of signifying a break with the old regime, nonetheless, if we regard the changes closer, rather that 'inventing' traditions, these attempts have taken pre-existing cultural forms with long-standing meaning and refashioned them. The flag remained essentially the same: the meaning of the colors remained as a symbol of national sentiment since the 19th century. The landscape was purged of anti-Romanianisms, to which all things communist were re-classified, hence the demonizing and execution of the Ceausescus or the removal of statues of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin (all foreigners). The removal of statues that pertained to anything essentially Romanian never occurred. Excavated graves and decapitated statues signified the break with the communist past as reconsiderations of social relations and worlds of meaning (Verdery 1999: 35). The anti-communist attitudes reinterpreted

[15] Today's national anthem is an old folk song called "Desteapta-te Romane" ("Awaken, Romanian") written in the 19th century, which was sung during Orthodox services.
[16] Another issue was the 1953 orthographic replacement of the letter â with the Cyrillic equivalent î abandoned in 1860 which some nationalists saw as humiliating since it forced the spelling of the word români and România into a Slavicized form which symbolically denied Roman ancestry (Van de Vyver 1998: 96). The character î was replaced by â after the revolution, symbolizing the purging of Soviet oppression.

the regime as betraying the national interest. Thus, the Communist Party was another form of foreign invasion in line with Romania's historical oppression by occupying empires.

*Conclusion*

As Marshal Sahlins argues, structures of the long run have continued to shape modes of thinking about the present and the reinterpretation of the past (Sahlins 1994). The 1989 revolution was placed within a pre-existing historical frame of the early nationalist revolutions against foreign oppression. Thus, 1989 was associated with the liberation of the collective Romanian people from the external foreign threat, this time Ceausescu and Soviet imperialism. Yet, as I have argued throughout this chapter, similar mythologies can be traced historically to premodern, nationalist, and communist periods, particularly if we examine the role of Orthodoxy in Romanian ethnic and nation building. I have emphasized some of the key ideas and transformations in Romanian national and Orthodox histories and mythologies which continue to play key roles in postcommunist nation building that emphasize the Golden Ages and heroes. Not surprisingly, when we examine the postcommunist period in more detail in the following chapter, such issues come to the fore once again.

## CHAPTER 2 -THE COMMUNIST PAST AND GLOBAL FLOWS IN QUESTS FOR LEGITIMACY:

## CHALLENGES FACING THE STATE AND CHURCH AFTER COMMUNISM

*Introduction*

Some interpreted the events of 1989 in Romania and throughout Eastern Europe to be the fight to capture lost freedoms, establish democracies, and enjoy all those luxuries that come with capitalist markets. Politicians and scholars even began to analyze how best these countries should undertake modernization and Westernization to catch up with the First World. However, what we saw instead during the 1990s was the re-emergence of ethnic conflict, increasing poverty, corruption scandals, images of orphans projected in the global media, and generally failed market transitions that challenged such expectations. Onlookers began to reconsider the complete break with the past. They tried to explain the extreme nationalisms that seemed to show a regression rather than progress towards Western democratic systems and values. One of their explanations was based on the long-standing divide between Eastern and Western Christianity, or Orthodoxy and Catholicism, from which Protestant groups later split. The church-state separation and Protestant work ethic have been credited with the economic progress of the West.[17] Meanwhile, those following the Orthodox model constantly lagged since the Church seemed to work in harmonious concert with political leaders and often appeared subservient to the state rendering the nation stuck in superstition and backwardness, divided by ethnic cleavages coinciding with religious divisions. The fact that the Orthodox Church is known to have collaborated as spies with communist regimes would support this argument.

[17] See Wolff (1994) and Todorova (1997) on the West's Orientalization of Eastern Europe.

In Romania, the Church's desire after communism to have a say in secular matters such as abortion, sexuality, education, etc. is also seen as impediment to the country's ability to adopt Western political systems. In reasoning this way however, these scholars sometimes contributed to the already existing knowledge and literature that orientalized Eastern Europe as an underdeveloped, second world, Other. It is true that the Church as an institution has mobilized and gained impressive grounds by regaining state-confiscated property, resuming missionary activity, and making religious education part of the public school system, while getting 70% of its funding from the state (Tancau 2002: Online). They could not however ban Western proselytism or make their bishops senators. Nonetheless, we may ask where they get the legitimacy to even take public political stances at times against the state's directions considering that only 15 years ago they were suppressed by the regime.

In this chapter I explore the emergence of new political regimes and the Orthodox Church's attempt to resume its traditional role as morality guide for the nation and state after 1989. I will also address the challenges the political regimes and the Church face in the postcommunist context. I am concerned in particularly with the relation between the church and state as both strive to increase their legitimacy vis-à-vis Romanians, at times conflicting or supporting each others' aims. The challenges they face are partially caused by the opening of Romania to global flows. International political pressure on the state to ensure minority religious freedoms is one such challenge straining church-state relations. Yet, challenges also come from within Romania as groups question regime and church legitimacy and protest their close alignment to the communist regime. I will explore two

cases which demonstrate that Romanians are by no means complacent or easily duped by either Church or political elites.

*Contesting Leadership*

Although Iliescu claimed the country's leadership only until emerging parties could compete in a truly democratic process, he still decided to run in the 1990 spring elections (Gallagher 1995: 3). He had an overwhelming victory, yet his position was by no means secure due to his known close association with the communist regime. In fact, university students led major protests against the new government in Bucharest. I remember attending the rallies with my father and listening to the students' concerns with the "betrayal of the revolution." Considering that the youth of the nation had sacrificed themselves for liberty, it seemed altogether profane that a communist would reap the benefits of their deaths in order to subjugate the nation once more. At the same time, another issue surfaced. Ethnic violence between the Hungarian minority and Romanian majority broke out in Transylvanian cities. More disconcerting was the newly elected regime's use of ethnic scapegoating to muster support and gain legitimacy.

In a very communist manner, President Iliescu solved the problem by killing two birds with one stone: he called on the mine workers to take care of the anti-Romanian student protestors in Bucharest whom he called sympathizers of Hungarian separationists in Transylvania. Trainloads of workers violently swept University Plaza (Craiatu 2000: 173-174). Thus by emphasizing foreign threats to unity just as his predecessors had done, Iliescu was able to distract public attention from the issue at hand.

To deal with his dirty past, Iliescu joined forces with others plagued by the same conundrum, namely the Orthodox Church. Considering the Church's literal blessing of Ceausescu's name during communism, Patriarch Teoctist felt compelled to publicly apologize to the nation for his long and open support of the communist regime. After leaving the revolutionary scene to retreat to a monastery for a month-long regimen of meditation and prayer, he re-emerged to join the new president in 1990 to bless the newborn democratic government, new Day of the Nation, and national anthem (Mungiu-Pippidi 1998: Online).

The revolution's aftermath proved to be a structural opportunity for the Orthodox hierarchy to reinsert themselves, as during the nationalist period, at the heart of politics and national debates. 87% of Romanians who declared themselves Orthodox in 1990 also saw religion as way of separating themselves from atheist communism; this in turn legitimized the Church (Mungiu-Pippidi 1998: Online). To counter accusations of opportunism, Orthodox theologians justified collaboration by resorting to the Byzantine concept of *symphonia*, or the cooperation between Church and state in the fulfillment of their goals, each supporting the other and neither being subordinated (Petrescu 2004: 206-207, Stan & Turcescu 2000: 1470, Mungiu-Pippidi 1998: Online, Rouleau 2002: 344). In a 2004 speech, Patriarch Teoctist emphasized that the concessions made in collaborations with the state were in fact sacrifices for the preservation of the faith rather than the hierarchy's self-serving moves to ensure their positions (2004: 8). Thus, by making concessions to the state, the Church claimed that it was able to survive the time of trial for the benefit of the nation.

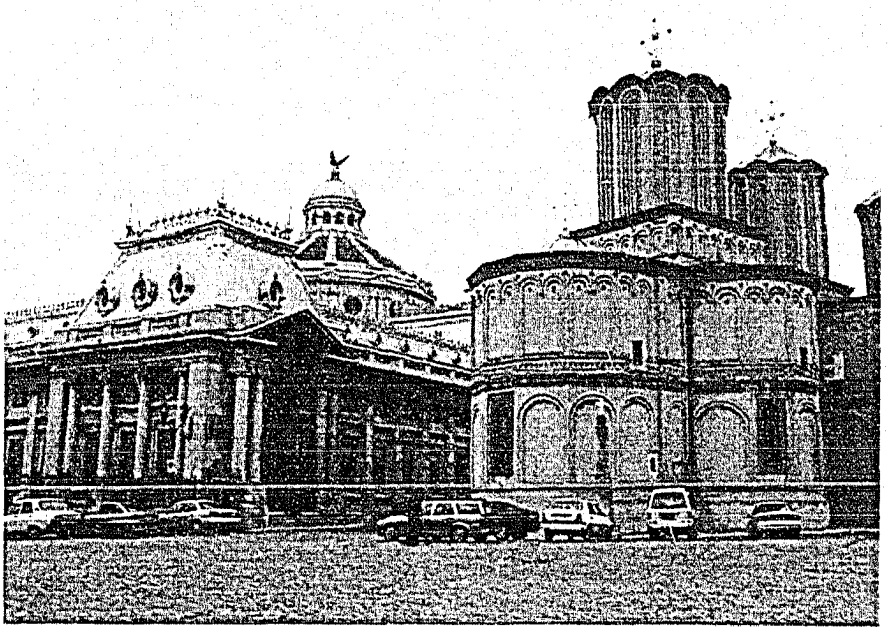

**Figure 4 The Patriarchy in Bucharest**

*Old Heroes, New Clothes*

As soon as the protests settled and enough communist statues were decapitated in the early 1990s, Iliescu and Teoctist realized that new heroes had to replace them. At this point, both Church and state began competing to reclaim their rights as the legitimate conferrers of the nation's heroes. Of course, the martyrs of the revolution would have been a clear choice, but Iliescu chose to continue on his ethnic scapegoating campaign to self-legitimize his regime. He focused in on the Hungarian minority and the regime began sponsoring commemorations that highlighted the 1940-44 Hungarian occupation of Transylvania to remind Romanians of their past suffering. Efforts were also made to portray the communist era as anti-nationalistic with minorities profiting from special privileges (Gallagher 1995: 204- 205). Even the 1989 revolution was interpreted as an opportune moment at which the enemies of the nation could strike while Romania was at

its weakest, hence the ethnic strife instigated by Hungarians in Transylvania in the early 1990s.

In the meantime, the Orthodox Church Synod's Canonization Commission also began its own search for heroes and mythmaking. The Synod approved a commission to begin investigations into potential figures for canonization. Rather than starting from scratch, they evaluated the same 30 candidates put forward in 1950 and found that indeed, their cults had not only survived communism, but also "shown immense growth and elation" (Romanian Orthodox Church Synod Act 1992: 7). And so in 1992, the Holy Synod canonized over 30 martyr saints who suffered for the nation and the "true faith." The canonization celebrations guaranteed that all eyes would be on the Church: believers headed to monasteries and churches in processions or pilgrimages to celebrate the new feast days while the media transmitted the events to the masses. Interestingly, one of the new saints was also St. Stephen the Great, the same medieval king promoted during communism as a national hero. Yet, the fact that he was now Church-approved distanced him from the old regime as a "martyr of the faith and people."

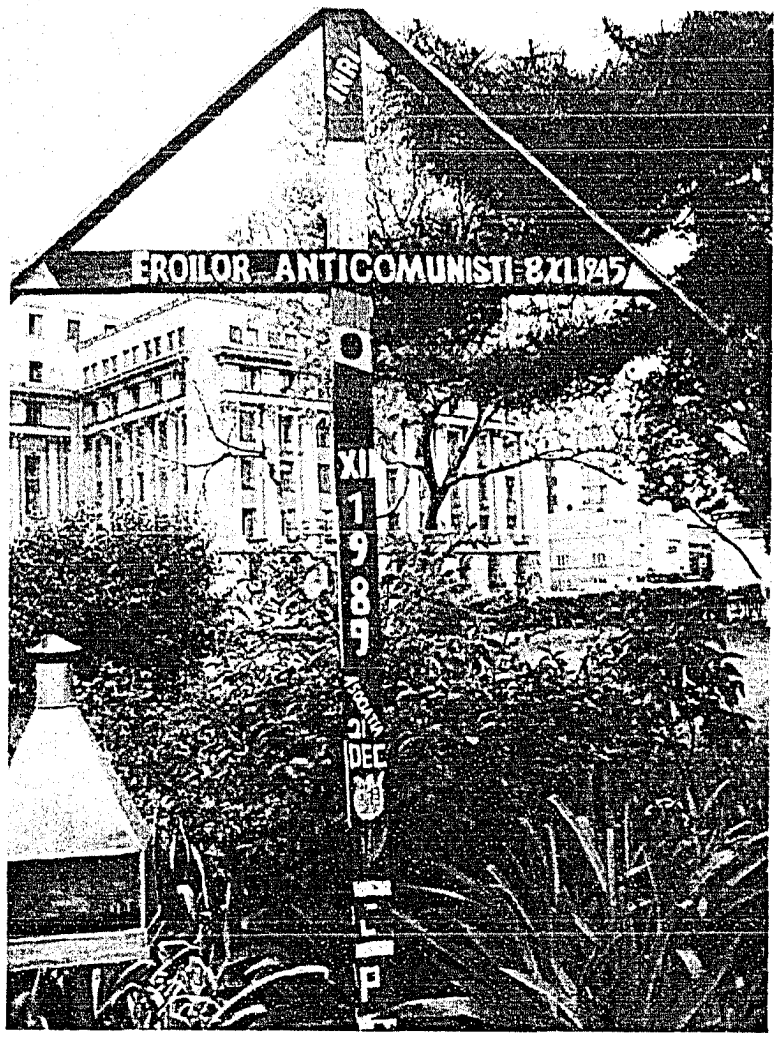


**Figure 5 In Commemoration of the 1989 Revolution**

*Conversion and Protection*

For all this success and attention, the Church and state were beginning to realize that new freedoms came with certain obligations and challenges. The opening of Romania to intensified global flows after 1989 aided the religious reinvigoration of minority groups, which in turn placed external political pressure on the state to respect their freedoms. Because the international gaze was fixed on the ethnic turmoil of Eastern Europe, the Romanian state could not outwardly ban Western proselytizers or persecute their followers. They were also unable to thwart minority religious groups' claims to the

property the communist regime had confiscated pre-1989 (Ionescu 1990: 29-30, Ionescu 1991: 29-34).

The Greek Catholics, who experienced persecution during communism, were now demanding that the properties the regime confiscated and returned by the Orthodox Church (Talos 1998: 26)[18]. These claims further reaffirmed the Church's implication with the communist state adding to its "credibility problem" with the population (Verdery 1999: 71). The freedom of religious expression that came with a democracy had not only been the Orthodox Church's opportunity to re-emerge on the public scene and demand recognition from the state, but also the chance for challenges to its monopoly (Pope 1999: Online, Bria 1999: Online). The Church was worried by the reinvigoration of minority historical religious groups and the intensifying proselytizing efforts of missionaries and after four decades of favored status (Barbu 2004: 254).

Since Romanians consider themselves to be born to their Orthodox belief, the Church and their supporters interpreted conversion as a betrayal of the nation.

The 1992 census was instrumental in the Church's ability to call for restraint on such groups. Because it showed that 87% of the population was Orthodox, it became a factual means of supporting the Church's position as representing the majority, as one Patriarchy administrator remembers in 2004. According to the Director of the Patriarchy's department of Press Relations, the Church established the offices of Press Relations and of Relations with Missionary Work during the early 1990s to

> protect the rights of the majority, and to deal with the provocations of the neo-Protestants. Because a tradition was severed for 50 years, only in the last 14 and

[18] See also Bria 1999, Botica 1999, Romoncea 2003 for discussions on the Greek Catholic Church after communism.

15 years of liberty could the Church reclaim its role in the centre of the fortress bit-by-bit in a communitarian spirit.

In my interviews with Church administrators and Bucharest priests in 2004, they expressed concern with Western proselytizers' conversion strategies of offering English classes or promises of aiding immigration to the West to attract members. It was the Church's role to protect the people from such "temptations from the Devil."

The out-migration of Romanians was becoming a matter began impacting everyday lives of believers, government, and Church in the early 1990s.[19] It was caused by numerous factors, the main being the deteriorating living conditions and the perception that nothing changed, referring to the fact that power holders were recycled from the communist regime. The transition period after 1989 was characterized by increasing poverty, general anomie vis-à-vis the publicized corruption of the political sphere and even romanticizing of the communist past. Although the Church was quite focused on resuming its place in the political sphere, the clergy also realized the need to address believers' practical frustrations, which they did by re-establishing the Church's missionary role and offering essential social services to fill the gap left by rapid regime change. Interestingly, clergy and Patriarchy administrators whom I interviewed in 2004 agreed that much of the inspiration for the Church's reinvigorations came from the West

[19] My family was among this new wave of economic immigrants into Western European nations. This was the beginning of a disconcerting trend in Europe. As borders relaxed, flows of migrants from poor Eastern nations invaded the West, gradually becoming its (often illegal) working underclass. At the same time, as Eastern countries recovered from the economic turmoil and regime change after the revolutions, the *nouveau riche* who profited from the privatization of state owned industry and property and a recovering middle classes began to enjoy travel to the West as well. Romanians could now walk through the capitals of the West, which made Bucharest pale in comparison. Of course, the traveler's disillusionment with the communist past was even more amplified as an interviewee notes remembering her travels to Western Europe after 1989: "it was amazing how much they brainwashed us . . . they made it seem like the West was corrupt, the enemy. But it was us who were behind."

where the majority of newly appointed hierarchs had studied. In an interview, a Patriarchy member noted of these priests:

> Of course they picked up certain things. They came with extraordinary things and they knew how to modernize the Church, visually and regarding missionary activity. The restoration of pilgrimage, cultural and social programs came from there. Like a youth centre for social programs, having a library, audio for church music, art and craft, internet and computers so they have a place to go. The Patriarchy transmitted that we need to address youth issues and get day programs going, address the alcoholics.

Aside from this inspiration from the West, the Church's use of the media also proved to be a great means to reach the masses. Their collaboration with magazines, newspapers, television channels and radio programs increased their ability to efficiently transmit a unified message. Ecclesiastical publications and clergy both sought to re-educate the masses on proper behavior and morality and Teoctist called on the state to make religious education part of the public school system and curtail the "erosion of globalization" and the "lack of morality" left behind by communism and the revolution's aftermath. Impressively, close to nine hundred new churches began construction by mid-nineties (Verdery 1999: 71). Teoctist also proposed the creation of the Nation's Salvation, a 10,000 place massive cathedral in the middle of Bucharest to represent this new initiative (Romanian Orthodox Church 2004b: Online). As one Patriarchy administrator put it in 2004, the Cathedral would be "a concrete means of curtailing the erosion of globalization on Romanian morality." The hierarchy also proposed that "good intellectual Christian politicians" should take care of the politics in closer collaboration

with the Church, who could best advise the regime on the nation's spiritual needs. Yet, this perspective was not met with its due enthusiasm by the Iliescu regime. It was however the main platform of the 1996 elections of their main competition.

*Morality Makeover*

Since its election to office in 1990, the Social Democrats (PSD) under Iliescu collected an impressive track record of corruption scandals and accompanying poor public image to the extent that they were voted out in 1996. The party that replaced them, the Romanian Democratic Convention (CDR), brought together the Christian-Democrat, Liberal, Social-Democrat and Environmental parties. The new president, Emil Constantinescu, won the election with a clever campaign: while Iliescu and the PSD came to be associated with the communist past, ethnic nationalism, oppressing protests, rampant corruption, and caution regarding the West and liberalism, Constantinescu presented comprehensive plans to effectively reform Romania towards European integration. To address the prevalence of corruption throughout levels of society, the party called for a morality reform and aligned itself with the growing influence of the Orthodox Church. It was Christian morality which would lead Romania on a liberal, though Orthodox, path toward EU integration.

The campaign brought together a curious mix of ideologies, with equally interesting results. On the one hand Constantinescu sought to impress the West with Romania's liberality and shared Western values, while on the other, his party's close ties to the Orthodox Church led to nothing short of discrimination against religious minorities. Thus, when an international congress of Jehovah's Witnesses was scheduled

to take place in Bucharest in 1996, the new government officially declared that it considered "thoroughly inopportune the attempt to improvise such a meeting in Bucharest in July or at any time in the future." Radio Free Europe reported that the announcement came in response to a strongly worded communiqué issued by Patriarch Teoctist in which he "expressed concern over the planned meeting and accused the sect of 'irresponsibly contributing to growing violence and hatred in the world'" (Ionescu 1996: Online).[20] Clergy also spoke out using the media against the general Westernization of Romanian values noting that "Europe asks us to accept sex, homosexuality, vices, drugs, abortions, and genetic engineering, including cloning" (Archbishop Anania in Stan & Turcescu 2000: 1480). According to Archbishop Anania, this Europe is nowhere Romania wants to be, considering its impoverishment "lacking any trace of spirituality, culture or religion" (2001: 1480).

The CDR leniency towards religious morality was a great opportunity for the Church to press its agenda. Perhaps its main success during this period was the incorporation of religious classes into public schools (Mungiu-Pippidi 1998: Online). The Church was able to gain the state's support for the initiative by highlighting the need for a morality renewal after the rupture with the totalitarian regime and its atheistic humanism. The proposition fit all too well with the new CDR's political program which called for "steps towards the moral reconstruction founded upon three key institutions: the family, school, and church" (in Barbu 2004: 259, my translation). Religion courses became mandatory in elementary schools and were mostly taught by Orthodox priests (Stan & Turcescu 2000, Mungiu-Pippidi 1998).

[20] See Preda (2004: 344-350) for a discussion of religious freedom in Romania specific to Jehovah's Witnesses.

If we only examine facts and figures, it is clear that the Church had an impressive reinvigoration since 1989. By 1997, 8,400 parishes employed more than 8,000 priests, while 367 monasteries and convents housed over 5,200 monks and nuns, all mainly sustained by state operational funds. The Church also had 150 full-time hospital and prison chaplains, as well as a network of military chaplains while a total of 2,000 lay catechists who were teaching compulsory religion classes in Romanian schools, a first in post-communist Eastern Europe (E.N.I. 1995: Online). Nevertheless, on other matters the cozy alliance between the Church and state faced international pressure.

Nevertheless, international pressure shifted the state's stance on other issues as well. In 1998, Patriarch Teoctist made a failed attempt to grant Holy Synod members senate seats and asked the state to endorse the political involvement of clergy as electoral advisers to the public (Mungiu-Pippidi 1998: Online). This advising would take place during church where priests would ask parishioners to vote for those candidates the Church deemed as trustworthy (Stan & Turcescu 2000: 1476). The Orthodox clergy supported this initiative since the majority saw Church political involvement as natural. As one clergyman put it, "the church was never separated from the state" (Stan & Turcescu 2000: 1477). International bodies expressed concern with the country's fragile democracy and thereby strengthened the government's opposition to the Synod cum senate proposal. Since Church leaders were chosen for life, the 27 new senate seats would represent an unparalleled majority with penetrating ties in the countryside and towns, especially when coming head-to-head with political leaders whose inability to facilitate a successful transition from communism damaged their popular support.

The state also ceded to minority churches' lobbying for property restitution, especially when accompanied by the Western clout of the European Union and the Catholic Pope. Since Romanian politicians and public opinion generally favored Romania's entrance into the European Union and NATO, the state recognized that the country had to construct their national identities in "terms of liberal, plural, and democratic ideals based on the Western model" (Light 2001: 1056). In order to be granted membership in the EU and NATO, they had to account for the minority problem as well (2001: 1058).

The *New Social Democrats*

Although they preached a new morality and corruption cleanout, the Christian Democrat regime had been embezzling public moneys so much so that in 2004 people remembered their re-election of Iliescu in 2000 as choosing the lesser of two evils. Iliescu had also learned from his mistakes. He replaced his previous cautionary position towards the West and became a main proponent for integration with the EU and NATO. Like Constantinescu, he upped Romania's international image makeover abroad as well. To rectify international critiques and attract the economic benefits of EU integration, the Romanian government began preparing annual reports to the EU itemizing improvements seeking to address complaints against their membership.[21] The Ministry of European Integration utilized Western discourses on human rights, economic progress, and democratic government to promote the nation as sharing the European values. This was

[21] The Romanian government's official website presents a list of publications which are plans for reform and progress reports. They include social, economic, health, legislative, etc. changes (Romanian Government 2004: Online). See www.gov.ro (Romanian Government) and www.mie.ro. (Ministry of European Integration) for examples of such initiatives.

particularly relevant to continued objections against Romania's integration on the grounds of poor treatment of Roma, Hungarian and German minorities, the lagging economy, and political corruption. In turn, since the mid-1990s the EU[22] continued to support such initiatives through development moneys to restore medieval castles and monasteries, build up tourism and supporting infrastructure, and preserve natural environments (Ministry of Integration 2003).

By this time however, the Orthodox Church had already become a key political player, especially after four years of directly participating in the CDR's morality makeover and gaining popular support. And so, the Patriarch continued to join the Iliescu in national celebrations, while political leaders assumed the best seats during holy days' services, pilgrimages and processions. "The president attends all masses important enough to be broadcast live by public television; and, by slip of the tongue, the Council of national Defense...called the Orthodox Church a 'state institution'" (Mungiu-Pippidi 1998: Online). Further, when Patriarch Teoctist was accused by a Catholic newspaper "of being a member of the fascist Iron Guard, a Securitate informant, and a homosexual," President Ion Iliescu responded to the allegations as being both "irrelevant" and displaying "a lack of decency." The Culture and Religious Affairs Minister protested against the "shameless campaign based on uncontrolled and partial information."

In spite of concessions to the Church, the Iliescu regime continued its quest of joining the EU and even gained membership in NATO in 2002. At the same time, the Church became increasingly concerned with the negative impacts of Westernization. Bishops often blamed Western influence for eroding the nation and threatening the Romanian way of life. As Steve Bruce argues, societies often react to the so-called West

as the root of a complex conspiracy to bring another society into decadence through varying strategies and manifestations of a generalized evil (Bruce 2000: 110-111). In the case of the Church, many hierarchs saw "democratization as a threat to their Byzantine view of church-state relations" (Mungiu-Pippidi 1998: Online) and the Romanian way of life. The reaction to the West is obviously complex: although the state was greatly involved in modernization and inclusion in the European Union, the demands of such undertakings have not been homogenously accepted, even within its own leadership. The traditionalist stance of the Church successfully impedes the whole-scale application of Western ideals by mobilizing a nationalist discourse placing it at the heart of the Romanian nation. In 2004, a priest remarked that,

> liberty is good but it doesn't come without repercussions. Now there is a discrepancy between those who accumulated and those who became poorer and the social relations were damaged. For those who became anchored in material issues, they forgot about God and the spiritual, and their fellow man who may be suffering. Then, there is a phobia of newness and of change. The societal transformations have marked people's consciences, and there appeared phenomenon like corruption, violence, evil. People did evil things to one another. Jealousy, pride – these are the repercussions of today's society and the transformations that occurred so rapidly that people couldn't fully or adequately adapt to them.

Clearly, the impact of global flows and internal politics were having an impact throughout society. The priest I quoted above was also one of the first to set up a youth

centre to address what he perceived to be a breakdown of morality as result of corrupt political leadership and globalization.

*New Directions towards the Nation's Salvation*

Self-legitimization is no easy feat for either regime or Church. By the time I began fieldwork in 2004, the challenges and issues I have described still dominated the media and everyday conversations. In fact, 2004 proved to be a turning point for Church and state relations because it was an election year speckled with full-blown corruption scandals implicating the PSD's highest members. One of the main whistle blowers was Traian Basescu, leader of the National Liberal and Democratic Party Alliance, who incidentally won the title of mayor's chair of Bucharest in June of 2004. The threat of the new alliance party, which was evidently gaining popular support, intensified the PSD's needs to gain the Church's support. Because public opinion surveys consistently demonstrated that the population had confidence in the Church at a rate of 80% and in the government only at 20% (Mungiu-Pippidi 1998), the PSD sought a closer association with the Orthodox Church to muster popular support. They pumped large sums of money into the restoration of monasteries and churches, supported the costs of mass pilgrimages, and their leaders appeared on the side of the Church hierarchs during holy days and services. To ensure their alliance with the Church, Iliescu advertised his support for the building of the new Nation's Salvation Orthodox Cathedral in Carol Park, Bucharest. The Orthodox Church's proposal had long been dominating the media, political debates, even day-to-day conversations, and of course concerned groups' protests. Patriarch Teoctist had first made his corporeal vision for the Nation's Salvation known in 1990

when he proposed the 10,000 place massive cathedral in the middle of Bucharest. The Cathedral would be "a concrete means of curtailing the erosion of globalization on Romanian morality," as one Patriarchy administrator put it.

The so far immaterialized Cathedral has had an intriguing career, with inaugurated foundations speckled all over Bucharest's city center blessed by politicians and priests, on at least five different locations. Arguments over feasibility, funding, and structural concerns were just practicalities entwined with longer debates with deep historical roots. At the crux of the matter are questions over the legitimacy of the Orthodox Church as the Romanians' "morality compass": its special status and accompanying privileges vis-à-vis the state and the nation. More exactly, in the postcommunist situation, the Church's bid to ensure the nation's salvation is meant to fortify its status as legitimacy conferrers of rulers as the keepers of traditions and protectors of Romanian integral values. Yet the ensuing debates demonstrate that such attempts are by no means undisputed; in fact, numerous locations where the Church proposed to erect the cathedral also happened to be already long-disputed sites of ownership with other groups.

The Orthodox Church was in heated dispute with the Greek Catholic minority regarding one particular site. The latter were seeking property restitution after more than forty years of intense state persecution. Yet on the same site also lies a massive communist mausoleum dedicated to the Unknown Soldier. When the razing of the edifice was announced, protest ensued opposing the desecration of the nation's heroes by the Church. In June 2004, a coalition of various intellectuals and professionals announced that although the communist past had severe negative consequences for many, it was still

"our past – we need to deal with it, not erase it." The Carol Park bears the name of the Hohenzollern King Carol, its builder. Not surprisingly, the nationalist bend of zealous communists attempted to raze the symbol of foreign rule, King Carol, from their landscape and instead erected their own heroes in a new pantheon. Interestingly, the Church is defending its takeover of the communist monument dedicated to the Unknown Soldier with the premise that if anyone has the authority to care for the nation's dead, it is the Orthodox Church. Further, although careful at times, the state has hardly had a neutral stance: high ranking leaders often speak out in support of the Cathedral and there is no doubt that the special status of the Orthodox Church is continuing (as it did during communism).

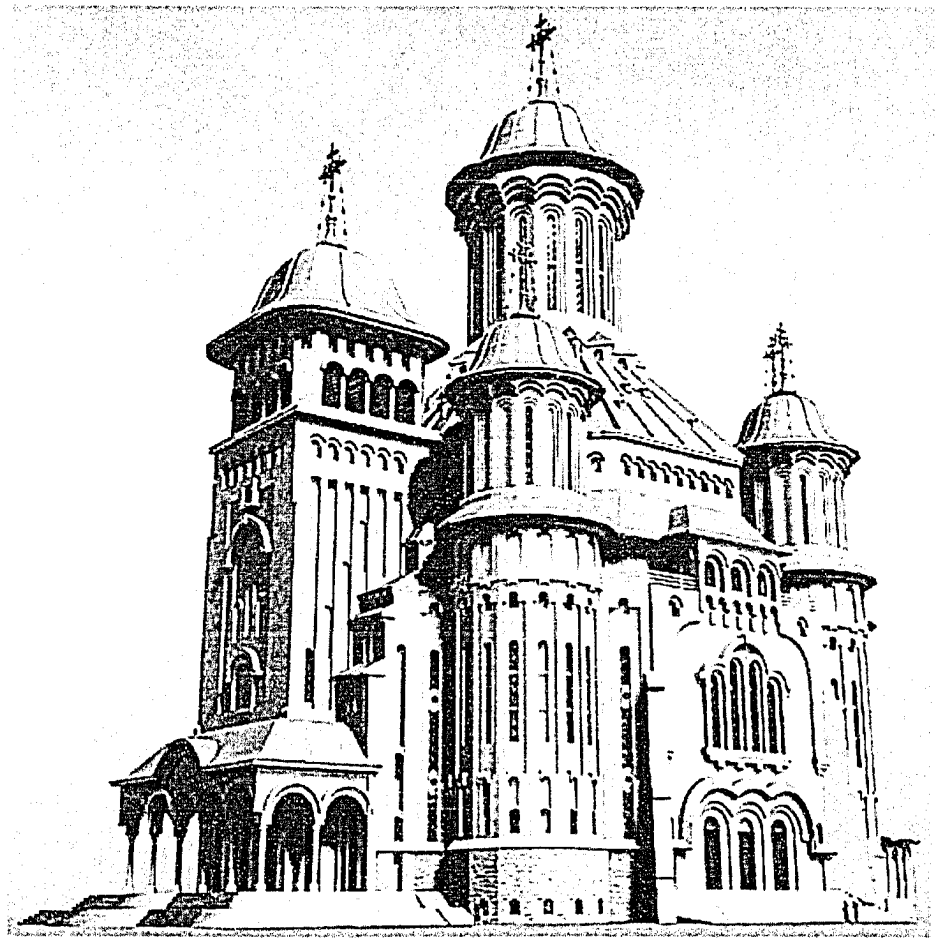

**Figure 6 Proposed Nation's Salvation Cathedral (Wikipedia 2005c: Online)**

The Cathedral issue has been called a political game by media and those it involves. During my fieldwork period, it was a hot topic in the media and several Orthodox publications were entirely dedicated to the issue.[23] Although the church has the right to build on restituted land, it nevertheless requires the Municipality's approval. The elected mayor of Bucharest in 2004, Traian Basescu, had considerable influence over the outcome of the proposed edifice. According to the former Minister of Cults and Culture, "the Patriarch shot himself in the foot because he thought that if he was hand in hand with the state he could do whatever, but as it turned out you can't ignore the wishes of the elected mayor in a democratic system. He has to resume a dialogue with Basescu." Unfortunately for Teoctist, Basescu ousted the PSD later that year leaving the Cathedral's realization yet undetermined. Clearly, the relationship between the postcommunist state and the Orthodox Church is by no means a settled issue.

The issue's pre-eminence in protests, regularly syndicated columns and TV spots, public debates, election platforms, and corruption scandals calls assumptions regarding the Church's uncanny ability to dupe the masses. If postcommunism created such an ideology gap that religious fervor could easily slide in and win over a population lost and devoid of direction after the "epochal shift," as some (Romanian) scholars presume (Mungiu-Pippidi 1998, Barbu 2004, Preda 2001), then why the seemingly never-ending contestation over the building of a new cathedral? Along with the shared Romance language, myth of ethnic origin, claimed territory, and common cultural aspects, the Orthodox faith is absolutely central to national identity. So why debate building a

[23] See for example Romanian Orthodox Church (2004b) website dedicated to the cause, *Vestitorul Ortodoxiei* April 2004, *Lumea Credintei* May 2004, Al Cornescu's column D'ale Catedralei [Of the Cathedral] in *Romania Libera*.

cathedral to express this belief in the regenerative power of the national community through shared ritual? I would firstly point to the transformations Romanians experienced since the fall of the communist regime and add that such contradictions are symptomatic of the drastic experience that left an ideology gap not yet filled by legitimized authorities. Clearly, postcommunist political regimes have not had the same success in their mystification of authority as the Orthodox Church had, but neither has the Church duped the masses into voting for its political favorites. If anything, challenging the Church is the norm at all levels by all individuals I interacted with. There are even new movements of Orthodox sects which call for the removal of Patriarch Teoctist, whom many regard as a "traitor to the people," for his implication with the communist state. This direct challenge to the Church is even expressed in the interruption of services at the Patriarchy and media interviews by such groups. I witnessed a direct challenge to the Church by sect members who interrupted services at the Patriarchy. In the next section I will outline this direct challenge in more detail.

*Direct Challenges to Church Legitimacy: The Case of Vacaresti*

On Friday May 21, 2004 Orthodox Romanian celebrated the Day of Saints Constantine and his mother Elena. Both are believed to be great protectors and promoters of the faith, and should therefore be commemorated with a special liturgy. A priest advised me that if I "really want to experience the *har*, which is more powerful on special days," I should attend the service at the Patriarchy Cathedral whose protectors were Saints Constantine and Elena. On the morning in question I squeezed my way into an impossibly crowded and hot Patriarchy cathedral, where sardined bodies added to the

stifling ambiance. Despite the crowds, little old women, children, people from all social classes and ages were lining up to venerate the relics of Saint Dimitru the New, shifting and pushing their ways to the front of the altar, and stepping in and out of the church to light candles. The smallness of the place was an obvious recipe for pushing, grunting, overall sweating and discomfort, and no chance for actually being able to hear the service. A group of women beside me became so focused on getting closer to the altar that they even started punching each other. It was not this race to altar that was the highlight of my day however.

There is a portion of the service where the priest calls for God to bless the leaders, army, nation, and the Patriarch, in this case the "*prea-fericitul* ('very content') Teoctist." As the bishop called for the blessing of the Patriarch, out of the crowds came a shriek from a woman dressed in black who had managed to position herself in front of the altar alongside a few other companions dressed in similar garb. She had screamed "*Nu este pre-fericit! Nu este vrednic*" "[Teoctist) is not very content [blessed], he is not worthy." Immediately, the crowds started to hit and push her and I could hear her screaming and arguing until she was finally rescued by gendarmes who dragged her out into the courtyard. Her companions hurried behind while being stricken and pushed out of the church by the angry crowds. Outside, groups of middle aged and senior women encircled the *pacatoasele* (sinners), began swearing and shoving them. "You interrupted the holy service with your stupidities! It's not up to you to challenge Teoctist, only God judges!" In conversations with the bystanders, I tried to understand who these women were and what motivated their actions.

Some thought that the women were in fact witches that Satan had sent to disturb the Christian prayer on such a Holy Day. Others were saying they were neo-Protestant sectarians, another Devil-sent tribulation. In other conversations with the bystanders, I found out that they did belong to a sect, but an Orthodox one. Their main concern was with Teoctist's legitimacy as rightful leader of the nation's church. The group's members had made their views known on national TV and one of their main tactics of protest was the disturbance of rituals, especially during holy days and in Teoctist's presence. In interviews with clergy, they noted that the group believed it was their duty to save the 'lost' nation from such a dreadful spiritual leader. They formed in the early 1990s and are apparently called Vacarestii, after a locality near Bucharest, but more so, the Vacaresti Monastery which was destroyed by the communists with Teoctist's apparent approval in the 1980s. Ceausescu made the decision to demolish the Vacaresti Monastery in 1973, though the destruction actually began in December 1984. After the complete demolition of the 1712 built edifice, he ordered the construction of an enormous foundation for a sports complex. Yet, the revolution only found a "forest of cranes laid out over hectares of asphalt" (Giurescu 2004: Online).

Clearly, the hierarchy's past is by no means forgotten. The Church's cooperation with the state was not easily swept under the rug after the revolution. While groups such as Vacaresti demonstrate a direct and undeniable challenge to the legitimacy of the Patriarch, they are not alone. Liberal intellectuals such as Cristian Preda and Daniel Barbu are part of another faction which questions the role of the Church in communism as leading to Romania's failed democracy. Sympathizers of the Carol Park communist mausoleum are yet other groups whose interests conflict with those of the Church. In fact,

conversations I had with lay believers about the Church's implications with the communist regime revealed similar reactions to those I witnessed in the Patriarchy cathedral when the Vacaresti group interrupted the service. While believers generally disapproved of the Church's conduct, they defended it also. "What were they supposed to do? I know what would've happened to me if I had said anything! So I don't blame them," one believer remarked. Another noted that "it's really up to God to judge the priests. Plus, there were many good ones, and a few bad ones, so you can't just lump them."

I find it interesting that when I mentioned the Vacaresti group's protest tactics, all believers expressed disapproval. One bystander to the event remarked:

> Why should they ruin it for everyone else? If they want to say something about Teoctist, why ruin the liturgy? That's sacred, and that hurts the people who came there to pray.

The Vacaresti case clearly demonstrate that the Church is not wholly in control of how they define their relationship with the past, nor what the opportunities and challenges of postcommunist society represent with regards to the masses and new regimes. The fact that 87% of Romanians declare themselves Orthodox does not equate blind adherence to hierarchy direction and although outright rejection of the Church is not common, people often divert from official dogma and praxis in everyday lives.

*Conclusion*

Postcommunism has brought about changes which pose challenges and opportunities for both Church and state. The religious freedom the state strives to ensure

in order to mend relations with the West means that the Church's position may be challenged. The state's intention to join the European Union and NATO has also meant that the Church and the population face new ideas and freedoms regarding sexuality, migration, labor, proper practice and morality, and so on. Yet, close relations between Patriarch and president point to a continuation of historical favoritism for the National Church exemplified by the religious education in the public school system. I have noted that the church was able to mobilize quite efficiently as an institution to address the challenges of global flows and internal politics while meeting the needs of believers. However, legitimacy is by no means unchallenged. The Vacaresti case is however a direct challenge and symbolic violation of the Church's authority by Romanian Orthodox believers. The group is essentially marginalized lacking political or symbolic power and legitimacy. As we saw, their attempts to raise consciousness further alienate them from the masses that see their actions as evil.

In this chapter I have demonstrated the various strategies the church and state have used to increase their legitimacy, their relations to one another, Romanians, and the internal and international pressures they faced in the postcommunist period. What is evident is that postcommunist political regimes have not had the same success in their mystification of authority as the Orthodox Church has, but neither has the Church duped the masses. Daniel Barbu argued that the Church has historically been and continues to be under the control of the state and acts as a means of managing the masses. I hope that the cases I explored also demonstrate that this is by no means the case; if anything, the Church has proved to be a tremendous political player at times countering the state Barbu claims to be its keeper (1999: 255).

There is an assumption that postcommunism replicated the pre-1989 regime under a banner of democracy and that Romanians are somehow willing to comply placidly with whatever political elites decide. What I would argue however is that if anything, all of the people I interacted with are challenging the Church and state at some level. Movements of Orthodox sects such as Vacaresti which call for the removal of Patriarch Teoctist for his implication with the communist state and the strong opposition to the building of the Nation's Cathedral are perfect examples of this point. Yet aside from outward challenges to Church promoted beliefs, many individuals did not always identify themselves as challenging the Church or the state although they were at times acting against Church dogma and even criticized hierarchs. Whether participants were priests or elderly widows, their interfaces with the Church authority showcase the fragility of the latter's ability to manage diverse experiences with the sacred and thus their ability to harness it to confer legitimacy. Nowhere is this more evident than in believers' participation in informal miracle cults regardless of Church approval, which is the topic of the next chapter.

# Chapter 3 – Crying Icons and Cemetery Saints:

## Miracle Cults and Church Management of Informal Veneration

*Introduction*

On my second day in Bucharest during fieldwork in 2004, I met with the priest who was to become a major influence on the shape of my research as a main sponsor and gate-keeper to the Patriarchy administrators I later interviewed. After explaining that I was interested in studying Orthodoxy after communism, he proceeded to explain that he noticed a return to the Church. I asked him why he believed this to be the case and he replied that:

> You don't have to look far to see the work of God...of course, there is the Church and the services where the Holy Spirit descends, but we are also reminded of the miracle working icons of our Holy Church in Moldovan monasteries, but that is not all. Just yesterday a colleague brought me this vial of holy water from the crying icon of the Mother of God from Letca. It helps with prayer, and people have said that the icon has performed a variety of miracles. I'm actually planning to see the priest myself and enquire into the details of the miracle.

I was intrigued. Of all the reinvigorated popular practices I witnessed in 2004, none struck me as much as the miracle cults surrounding icons and relics. I was not alone: aside from the thousands of believers venerating already known miracle-working sacra, new figures and objects sprang up in rural villages, and even Bucharest cemeteries. Yet the popular devotional practices focused on directly witnessing such signs from God were

not met with equal enthusiasm by the Patriarchy. According to Church administrators, miracle cults were "popping up like mushrooms" in cemeteries and desolate villages, deeply disconcerting the hierarchy. Church administrators and Bucharest priests I interviewed in 2004 often referred to "religiously uneducated" masses who were misguidedly displaying their allegiance to the Church; their superstition was a clear sign that intervention was necessary. Forty years of communist atheism rendered their flock lost and disoriented running mad after miracles, authentic or not. The Church was nevertheless impressed by the population's tenacity. By interpreting religious practice as popular support for the Church during the 1990s and 2000s, the hierarchy gained momentum to push for larger goals vis-à-vis the state.

I have already sketched the historical relation between Orthodoxy and nationalism, the challenges the Church and new regimes are faced with after the fall of communism. By concentrating this chapter on miracle cults I aim to challenge Daniel Barbu argument that "Romanian Orthodoxy is more of a tradition without belief than a tradition of belief" (2004: 121, my translation). Orthodoxy is by no means an empty set of rituals which legitimize the authority of the Church and state. In fact, the tension between popular and formal beliefs is most evident in the recent intensification of grassroots informal miracle cults and the processes through which these are incorporated and standardized by ecclesiastical orders into official Orthodoxy. These processes have historical precedents traceable to the premodern period, yet they have undergone considerable transformations as models in the national and communist institutionalization of martyr cults.

In this chapter I will illustrate the Church's management of informal miracle cults, the conditions under which they arise, and participants' perspectives on their experiences, and the tension between official and popular devotion (Binns 2002: 135). Although the Church continued to be concerned with their inability to manage the proliferation of new miracle cults, Binns argues that Orthodoxy is in fact characterized by the biographies of holy men and the reverberation of the cults centered on them (2002: 140). Although the miracle cults of Bucharest in 2004 are not replicas of past practices, there remain continuities in their transformation. For example, the tradition through which the Holy Synod justifies the management of informal cults draws from earlier practices reformatted to fit present contexts and interests. The processes through which these movements become mitigated by the ecclesiastical structure showcase the Church's ability to incorporate the local, diverse, and individual experiences of the sacred by reformulating its own praxis and dogma. Nonetheless, we cannot assume that through such strategies the Church is able to control diversity: the miracle working crying icons of Letca and the body of Ilie Lacatus found lacking decomposition demonstrate this point quite succinctly while illustrating the role of the dead in postcommunist nation building.

*Some Notes on Sacredness, Relics, and Saints*

To begin understanding the reinvigoration of miracle cults and pilgrimage, we must first examine popular understandings of the sacred. Of course, these beliefs were what I encountered in Bucharest during my 2004 visit, although believers and clergy noted that they were grounded in a long tradition of saint cults traceable to the beginning of Christianity. Orthodox believers see God as a source of power or the essence of power

itself (Balan 2003a: 7-8, Balan 2003b: 11). Mircea Eliade's work *The Sacred and the Profane* is also useful here. He defines the sacred as "the opposite of the profane" (1987: 10), and *hierophany* as "the manifestation of something of a wholly different order" (1987: 11) from the ordinary profane world. When I asked a priest to describe the idea of *har*, he remarked that the Holy Spirit has the ability to impart 'God's essence' into things and people. God's *har* can enter "each of us, our bodies and souls have to be purified for its reception," hence confession and fasting. Thus, you can "feel the spirit enter your body. You get shivers down your spine," as one believer attested. Another priest described the Holy Ghost as "water flowing and resting in our bellies - thus our bodies are containers for the spirit." Believers agreed that certain persons and things have *har*, hence the term *harismatic*, which renders them more or less connected to or possessing of this transcendental power source. This allowed them to perform miracles while living and postmortem, perhaps becoming the focus of miracle cults.[24] Their relics can become miracle working by virtue of being the remnants of those who were richly endowed with *har*. The belief in the transferability of *har* to people and objects renders a distinct tangibility of the sacred in Orthodoxy.

Evidence from the 2nd century points to a continuing Christian tradition of icon and relic veneration. The first Christians gathered at the graves of their martyrs to commemorate them believing in the holiness and miracle working powers of their

[24] It is important to highlight that having and recognizing *har* are subjective and debated matters. Groups of believers can focus their veneration of relics and leaders which they believe to have *har*, with or without Church approbation. Even in official contexts, as one group of believers praise the local priest's *har* resulting in their healing, being an ordained priest was also no guarantee of being regarded as an "authentic" miracle worker. "If they are lying then time will prove them to be false. If they were priests or monks they will be revoked by the Patriarchy as well." On the other hand, the priests I interviewed noted that all of the ecclesiasts had *har* and the ability to communicate with God: "as long as the rites are performed appropriately, that is the only thing that matters in reaching God not whether you hold extra service and for longer periods with more *har*, it doesn't really matter."

remains (Binns 2002: 63; Patrinacos 1984: 77).[25] Although Eliade makes a distinction between the premodern religious man and modern, he adds that the secularized world is still permeated by the sacred. Contemporary Orthodox Christians are by no means living in a "desacralised cosmos" (Eliade 1987: 13, 23-24); they greatly uphold the belief in the transferability of God's essence, or *har*, to people and objects.

This is particularly evident in believers' use icons or relics to gain a "window" to the sacred and to better "focus their prayers" and often kiss or touch icons and relics to gain some of this sacredness (Binns 2002: 98-99, 103). These relics often have long histories of worship, although as aforementioned, they can be newly discovered as well. The long standing saint cults of today are often traced by the Church to the period of persecution of Early Christians, when believers catalogued martyrs' deeds, miracles, sufferings, teachings, and dates of death. These catalogues, or Martyrologies, were present in each church to record the persecutions. Later, the confessors of the faith, the Apostles, the saints of the Old Testament were also added to the catalogues. Believers would gather to pray and venerate the relics, particularly on the day of the saint's death, the date of the discovery of the relics, and the day of their transportation to other holy sites, monasteries or churches. Specific canons and prayers also developed for each cult as they were locally adapted (Stan 1950: 263).[26]

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[25] Early Christians were buried in family plots and "pagan" cemeteries, though with the persecutions, martyrs were buried in catacombs and other secret sites upon which tombs were erected. Other followers would commemorate them and honor them by celebrating the Eucharist at the sites. Consequently, they often also wanted to be buried near these sites particularly when their sacredness became apparent. In certain cases, the bodies of martyrs failed to decompose and people even ascribed miracles to them (Patrinacos 1984: 77). Thus, a holy man or woman could become a saint post-mortem as his or her cult continued to grow.

[26] When Christianity became the official church of the Roman Empire, the catalogues incorporated the Desert Fathers (great ascetics and miracle workers), as well as the great hierarchs and theologians of the period (Stan 1950: 262). One of the reasons for the ascetics was that since the persecutions of the martyrs ceased, "the monk was the successor of the martyr" (Binns 2002: 110). These hermits withdrew from

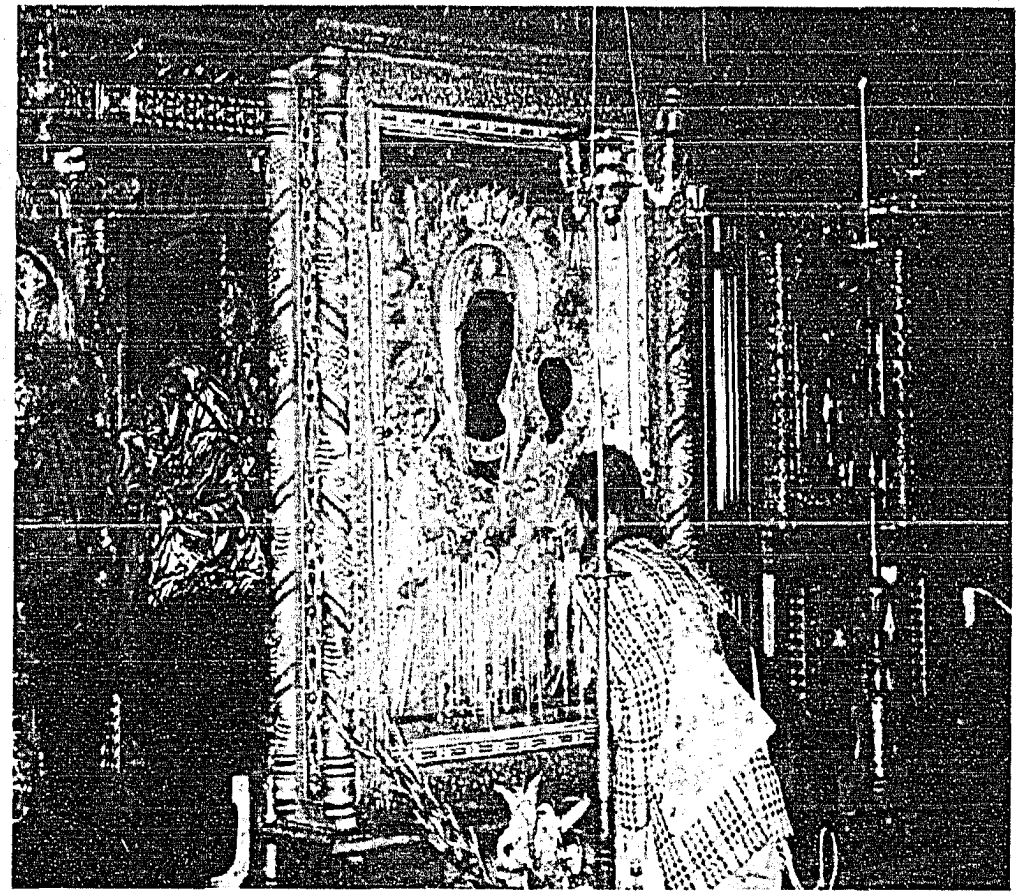

**Figure 7 Icon Veneration**

Until Constantine's move to make Christianity the official religion of the Holy Roman Empire, each community could establish their own local saints and their veneration. As the organization of the Church ensued and developed however, these local canonizations became scarcer. Since the number of venerated saints had grown, the

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society and secluded themselves in the deserts, forests, mountains, etc. while denying themselves earthly possessions and any "luxuries" that would interfere with their spiritual quest (Ware 1997). Many of Orthodoxy's saints came from this class or martyrs and their writings are considered as foundational texts. Often, they were joined by disciples (again another reference to Jesus' experience) and at times established a monastery where the following chose to reside permanently devoted to the *duhovnic*'s visions. Cults surrounding these figures also grew and centered on such sites as participants undertook pilgrimages to such sites. The extreme fasting was a means of purifying the body by "denying the needs of the flesh" to receive the *har* of the Holy Spirit. Not surprisingly, this self-imposed suffering was meant as another means of commemorating Christ and the Apostles' own experiences of trial, fasting, constant praying, and meditation in order to gain more access to the sacred (Binns 2002: 110). It was also a means of 'preserving' the 'authentic' model put forth by the Jesus' original "band of disciples bound by the ties of brotherly love and a keeping to God's ways" within the Empire (2002: 110).

Church hierarchy decided they had to be limited and eventually reduced. The Martyrologies (hagiographies) were kept and updated in the Apostolic Churches of Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, and Constantinople yet as the church centers grew into metropolitanates, archiepiscopates, primates, and patriarchies, canonization was moved from local to provincial episcopes, to metropolitanates, and finally to the patriarchate synods. For the conferred saints' commemoration dates, the Church developed particular rituals, hymns, and prayers, which were implemented throughout parishes eventually becoming the Canon for the particular saint's service. The records of saints' lives replaced those of local churches as hierarchical centers consolidated a general compilation shared by Christianity as a whole in order to maintain a unity throughout the Church (Stan 1950: 264-7; Patrinacos 1984: 68-69). In turn, these consolidated dates became the basis of the Orthodox calendar that primarily focuses on ritually commemorating such personalities and events at official sites of pilgrimage, churches and monasteries thereby recreating sacred time (Eliade 1991: 5-6).

Alongside the institutionalization of the veneration of saints, the canonization process was also increasingly standardized. Complex procedures guided the investigation into the potential candidates, the examination of their relics, their transportation and keeping. Relics were to be venerated in proper places, churches and monasteries not simply the graves or sites at which they happened to be found. Consequently, it became a class privilege to be buried at sacred sites for kings, emperors, and the founders of monasteries and churches (Patrinacos 1984: 77) while others were designated to burials outside the church in cemeteries. The rituals of commemoration became more intricate yet consolidated, as was the record keeping in the Martyrologies. In contrast to the early

church where canonization was a spontaneous and informal act, as the authority of the Church grew, so did its attempt to regulate religious practice and ascertain the ecclesiastical order as sole legitimate mediator with the sacred. The Church's close relations with political leaders also had implications as kings and emperors advocated for the generalization of certain cults which the Church implemented to believers as early as the 800s. Martyrologies even began including emperors, kings, princes, and even soldiers among its saints who were martyrs for the defense of the faith during the medieval period. The hierarchy's role in canonization became increasingly active as it eventually crystallized in accepted procedures throughout Orthodoxy (Stan 1950: 269).

In spite of an established tradition of Church controlled relic and icon veneration that complemented official saint cults, the Church has had to constantly deal with informal grassroots miracle cults. Many clergy and participants attest that even during communism, the veneration of informal and official miracle working icons and relics continued. Miracles were reported (Balan 2002: 45) and new saints were also discovered and worshiped, although more privately. In 2004, a priest remembered that,

> Believers never lost their ties with the monasteries, with the places of worship, with the holy relics, with the miracle working icons. They did go on pilgrimage, but each individually or in small groups, families or communities. There was no institution that was developed and organized structurally or institutionally.

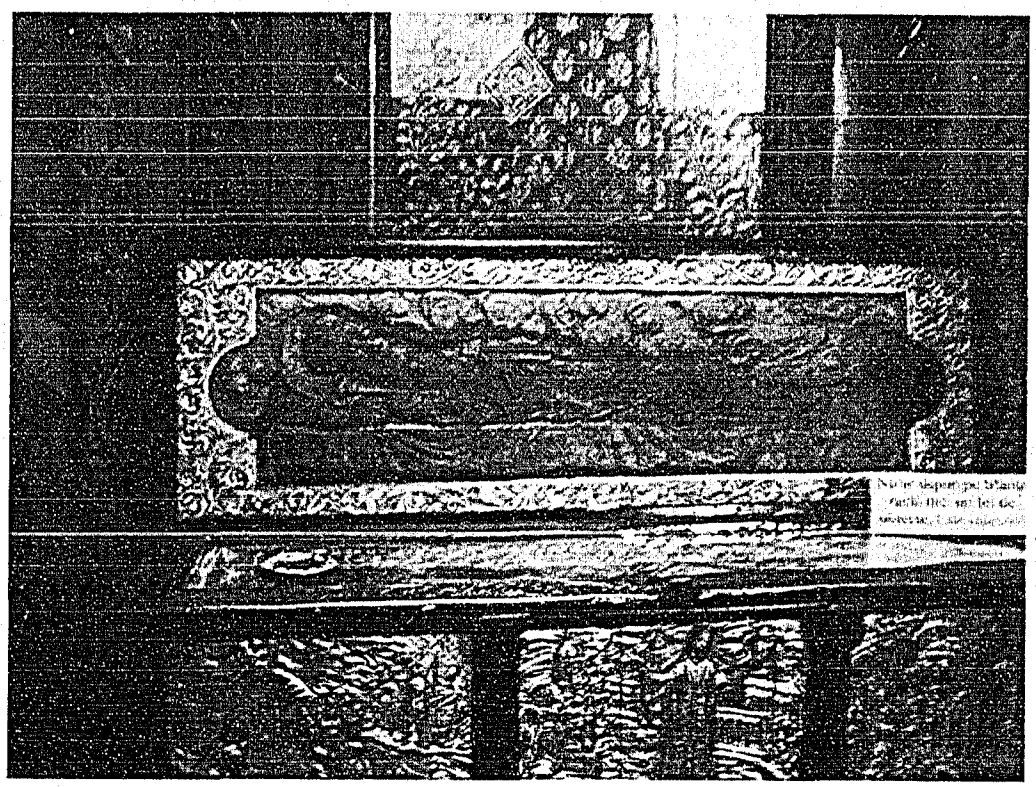

**Figure 8 St. Calinic's relics**

After 1989, the mushrooming informal cults once again challenged the Church's authority as intermediary to the sacred and coexisted with the official saint cults. Yet official cults also reinvigorated as the canonizations of 1992 and 2003 demonstrate, along with an increasing number of official Church-led celebrations of holy days, pilgrimages, and processions. Yet we cannot assume that a direct experience of the sacred by the believer necessarily damages the Church's position. I would argue that as much as the hierarchy was concerned with what one Patriarchy administrator called "inauthentic trickeries," they were also committed to recognizing the "true work of God." They are referring to the experience of believers with miracles, which in turn "only strengthen the Church – it reinvigorates us, our belief in His power and the people have a palpable experience of His work." The cases of the miracle cults of Letea and Lacatus are poignant

examples of the tension and negotiation between informal and official veneration in Orthodoxy.

*The Crying Icons of Letca*

Letca is a small and destitute village 40km from Bucharest where on November 3, 2002 the newly installed priest made a discovery: the church's icon of the Holy Mother was crying myrrh. "That afternoon," the priest recounted,

> when I was cleaning the table where people bring gifts in from of the icon, the woman in charge of selling candles remarked that something oily was coming out of the icon of the Mother of God. On November 8th, right before the service we noticed the left and right eye and from the mouth region there was a trail of myrrh that reached to the bottom of the icon. The curious thing was that it never touched the wooden frame. Simply, it disappeared back into the icon. This repeated itself everyday for the first three days, then weekly, and monthly. Then, on February 2, 2004 myrrh started to pour out the Baby Jesus' eyes!

That same month, "God gave us another gift," which was discovered by altar boy Stephen. The boy dreamt that he left to buy bread and somewhere behind the church, there was an abandoned homestead where he met an old man who was glowing so much that Stephen had to cover his eyes when looked at him. This radiating light is a reference to icons representation of holy figures as if glowing with God's *har*. The old man told him of an icon that was there "waiting for the worthy" and allowed Stephen to find it in the brush.

He picked it up and took it to the old man, and he brought him closer with his right hand and kissed him on the forehead, he blessed him with the right hand, he put his right hand on the top of his head and Stefan said "We too have such a holy icon that's crying in the Holy Church." "I know about the crying icon in the holy church" said the old man. "How do you know?" "I am always in the Holy Church." Stephen asked, "Where are you? Because I've never seen you there." The old man said, "Why don't you look up when you enter because I am the Heavenly Father" – and that's how the dream ended. Up to now you can say it's a beautiful dream, Stephen woke up happy, but when he went that morning to the place where he found the icon in the dream, he found it there exactly: the icon of the Lord's Resurrection. He took it to the church and he told me about it. We did a prayer to the Holy Mother and placed the holy icon on the sacred altar table. I left it there and went home at around 1:30 in the morning with some Christians. So in the morning I found Stephen very worrisome. "What happened?" I asked. "Father, the Holy Icon isn't there anymore." My mind went to the place where we found it, so we went there and in the same place exactly, we found it again. We called the bishop and he told us to do a service in the place where we found it and then take it to the church, so I went and did the Lord's Resurrection prayer, used incense, holy water, then took it to the church and together with all the people who gathered there. I took it through the main doors and placed it on the holy altar. The reason it returned to the field was because it wanted to be welcomed appropriately...with *har*, prayer, fervor.

I asked how the news about the icon spread and the priest noted that the bishop advised not "to go the press about it anymore, and leave it be" after he advertised the miracle for three days in the press. Shortly, believers began coming primarily from Bucharest as well as surrounding villages and asking to venerate the crying icon: "We want to kiss it, we want, want, and want!" he recounted.

The local following had risen to several thousands by 2004 and was particularly aided by the priest's use of the mass-media to not only gain exposure and following, but also Patriarchy and donor's attention to his church.

> Pilgrims always come, but mostly Friday, Saturday and Sunday because there is more *har*. They find out through word of mouth mainly, but the press also came too. I find that there is a cycle and at one time there's no interest in the press, then again it picks up after there's an interview. It fluctuates and they all come and people. It's still the work of God. I know that it's not our job to do this work, God will. People have said "Father let's call the press here." And I said, you better not. If God wants it known, he will make it so.

As a result of the growing following and arriving pilgrims, the priest was in the process of finishing a welcoming house for pilgrims and renovating the church. The economic gains from donations and purchases of religious paraphernalia were evident. The Patriarchy had also provided increased funding to the small church and hired an artist to renovate its paintings. Yet, with all this success also came other clergy members' "jealousy." The priest recounted their comments: "They said 'so why you? What makes you so special?'" The benefits of having miraculous icons were too tangible not to foster

competition between churches and monasteries aiming to attract believers, prestige, and financial benefits.

> When I asked why he thought the icons were crying, the Letca priest answered: perhaps the good Lord wanted to strengthen us, because this wasn't the work of Satan, because the greater part of the dreams are from Satan and God wanted to show us that it wasn't that's why he made us take the icon in twice from the field. And since last Friday look, all the icon of the altar have began emitting myrrh.

According to other clergy and Patriarchy administrators, when icons cry, the omen is traditionally interpreted as a sign of tribulations to come, however, the Letca priest deemed it to be a "call back to the faith." He reported that people who were previously living in sin decided to have proper wedding ceremonies in the Church as an example of the miracle working of the icons. Alongside cases of barren women who became pregnant and people with ailments that were miraculously cured, he noted that the main miracles surrounded people gaining a reinvigoration of faith after venerating the icons. The priest added that these miracles are a call to *pocainta*, or 'recommitment to the faith.'

> In this region, not just this village, the entire Bucharest region, if you go south it's a desert for faith. Churches are empty on Sundays, from parishes of hundreds and thousands, you see a couple in services. And this brought people into the church, and not just from here, from all over.

The postcommunist context has clearly changed people's devotional practices.

Without the freedom of the press to publicize such religious phenomenon, the Letca icon cult would have never grown to the same extent. At the same time, the fact that participants are interpreting the crying icons to be a call back to the faith also

demonstrates their reformulation of the communist atheist past as a time of sinning. The 'return to the Church' (*intoarcera la Biserica*) and Orthodox morality in the reported miracles further supports this reinterpretation of the past. Many believers I interacted with noted that their participation in cults 'returned' them to God and to the Church (*ne-a intors la Dumnezeu si la Biserica*). The miracle working icons were tangible proof of God's existence and the 'gifts' (*cadouri*) He bestows on those who follow His call. It is interesting to note that the Letca priest was in direct contact with the Church hierarchy throughout the process and that he was concerned with the jealousy of fellow clergy. It demonstrates that even such informal cults are nevertheless within the Church's scope and reconfirm its role as the judge of authenticity.

*Mythologizing and Commemorating Saint Ilie Lacatus of Giulesti*

The second case I wish to highlight is that of Ilie Lacatus, a priest imprisoned during communism. When the ritual cleansing of the bones was performed and his body was exhumed seven years after the initial burial, his corpse lacked decomposition, which is a sign of sainthood. Immediately, people began spreading the news which was amplified by the mass media. During the later 1990s, numerous magazines and newspapers, television and radio programs had been created to explicitly report miracles, religious events, and morality. When these began publicizing the Lacatus miracle in 1999, more followers came to venerate his relics.

Because he was buried in the cemetery of Giulesti in Bucharest, he came to be referred to as St. Ilie Lacatus of Giulesti. Every Sunday, and during weekdays to a lesser extent, cult followers gathered in the cemetery to pray by the locked shed which

contained Lacatus' exhumed body. They awaited the possible arrival of his daughter to let them touch and kiss the body. In the meantime, after praying and offering flowers to his grave, the followers often either waited alone or congregated in small groups discussing various topics. I talked to several participants who reported having been helped with everyday issues like healing ailments, impotency, unemployment, and even bad grades.

Another main theme of conversation was the saint and his life, what his body looked like, and the miracles he performed. Thus, one woman who had been coming since 2000 noted that when she saw the body she prayed,

> Father Ilie if you welcome me, listen to me, talk to me then give me a sign. And the first time I thought he smiled at me. I went home and thought about it all night and I prayed to the icon of St. Ilie. And after, I was standing at the door and said to myself, I'm not going to believe what they say in the newspapers – you can only understand if you go through this experience. If you don't communicate or have this experience, you cannot understand. And I saw how he blinked and moved his hand in 2000.

**Figure 9 Waiting to venerate Lacatus**

Another participant noted that Patriarchy representatives came and agreed that "Father Ilie is not only a saint, but also communicates with people." Of course, this contradicts the Church's official position that the dead cannot communicate with the living, especially through visions or dreams, which are either the work of the Devil or people's foolishness and self deception. In fact, the Patriarchy never officially legitimated this miracle, although followers noted that "it is impossible to argue with a body that hasn't decomposed in 15 years!" Even priests, monks, and nuns I met did not feel like they needed the Patriarch's blessing to venerate Lacatus. They saw sainthood to be possible for their contemporaries. Lacatus' body was a gift from God that does not need man's approval. In interviews, Church hierarchy members even noted that they were disgusted and upset with the Patriarchy's investigation team who "seemed to be out to ignorantly disprove rather than welcome gifts from God." Clearly, with or without official

recognition, even clergy and hierarchy members chose to venerate according to their judgment and interpretation of sacred manifestations.

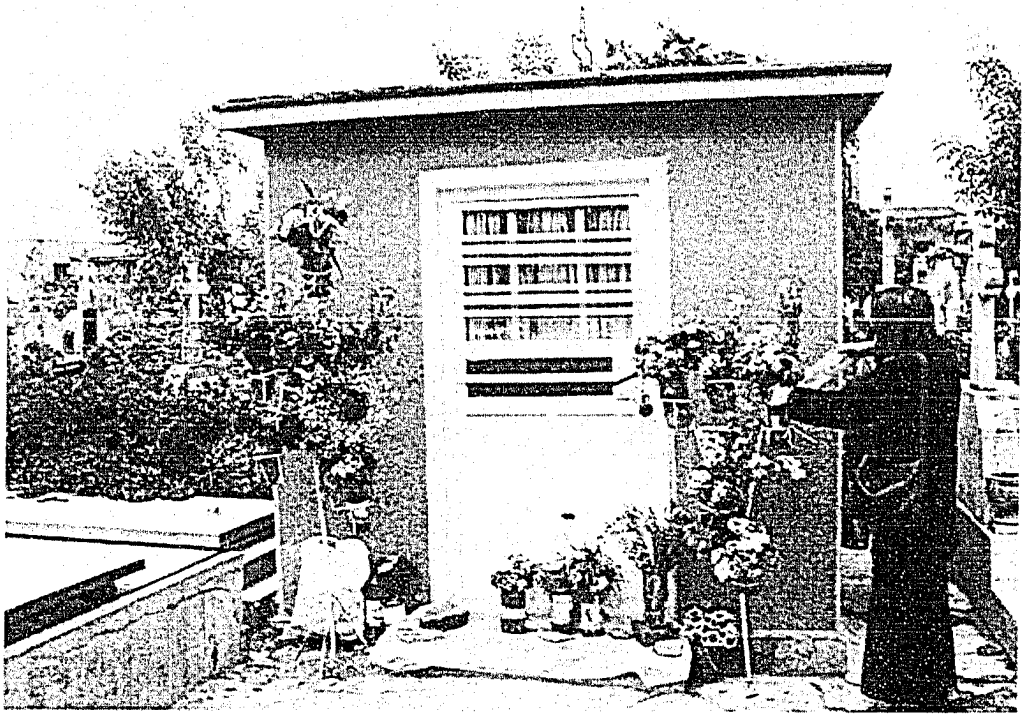

**Figure 10 Lacatus' burial site**

One of the most interesting aspects of this case was people's invention and reinvention of rites, their interactions with each other and the creation of mythologies surrounding their cult figure. Thus, conversations about Lacatus' life and his piety, his posthumous miracles and proper ritual were examples of the renegotiation of norms between followers. The media and newspapers had become important records of the true story of the miracles which in turn impacted the formation of the cult's mythology. On numerous occasions, followers quoted the newspaper as the standard of truth. "If it's in the paper, it must be so," two women agreed. The stories the media reports become a standard against which individual interpretations compared on a scale of authenticity.

At times, followers claimed to know the true story, or have been shown 'favors' (*favoare*) by the saint. This indication of being chosen by the saint was used as status vis-à-vis others, further, legitimizing their version of proper worship which drew from their understandings of Church rituals of saint veneration and popular practices of commemoration. For example, in an interview with a group of women, one participant noted that one should come nine days in a row and on the tenth you give thanks with alms of little packs of food. A second woman added that "you should also you light nine candles," while a third argued that when she asked the saint's daughter and

> she said 'Dad is not canonized by the Church yet. I don't know where you people got the idea to light nine candles. If you want to light a candle, do so in the church on the left side for the dead.' That's why we asked – to know if we should light candles on the right for the living.

The winner of the debate was the first woman who backed her version with the fact that St. Ilie had come to her in a dream explaining the ritual.

I visited the site on five occasions, and every time the proper ritual changed. On Sundays, approximately 140 to 160 people passed by the grave, prayed, perhaps engaged others in conversations, and left within three-hour periods. When the daughter let people venerate the body, people quietly moved through the small shed, knelt and prayed, rubbed pieces of prayers on which they wrote prayers on the body, and moved on. This was a similar procedure to what occurs in churches, although there is no clergy to regulate the access to the relics. Yet even in the absence of a structured space such as the church or monastery designating sacredness spatially, participants negotiated the burial site as if it was within a church. The edifice which housed the body was treated like a

case for the relics and hence the decoration of it with flowers as offerings. The lighting of candles was also a practice of veneration and offering drawn from church rituals. When the body was locked in, people rubbed the prayer sheets on the air vent, window or door cracks to still touch the air that surrounded the saint. These pieces of paper were then pushed through a window crack into the shed and the daughter collected them and brought them to a priest to be read during church services. Again, these *acatiste* were modeled after the ones believers used in church commemoration and prayer services, which are read aloud by a priest during services. Official and informal practices were bridged by believers' attempts to venerate Ilie properly. Yet beyond these immediate issues, St. Ilie, followers' interactions and negotiations point to larger issues of morality, authority, and general everyday experience in postcommunist Romania.

*Temporary Communities*

I have noted that participants' rituals and beliefs regarding the informal cult were constantly reinterpreted in interactions with others. Yet, the beliefs, practices, and experiences they shared as result of interactions at the cult site led to the forming of temporary communities of believers which brought otherwise strangers in an urban centre together. These groups' conversations were not only focused on the cult figure however. In one instance, a group of eight women were sharing information on about cures for illnesses that ranged from depression to cancer, even spells.[27] Clearly, the benefits of

[27] A lady began telling us about going to Cernica to seek the advice of a *duhovnic*, but since he died she lacked and missed his guidance. She went to a priest she knew and asked him to recommend another *duhovnic*. She went to her new spiritual guide, a monk at the Cernica Monastery near Bucharest "and the supposed *duhovnic* was telling me about the end of the world, and started *ghicit*, (the Gypsy sorcery practice of fortune telling) and about talking to the dead, since he believed he was in direct communication with the Mother of God." The lady however confronted the man and noted that his practices were sins and asked for her money back. She then asked the nun if this was indeed a sin, and the nun agreed and the

participation in miracle cults extend beyond the strictly spiritual. Miracle cults were opportunities to find meaning, connect with others, share information regarding a multitude of issues, as well as to pray to a tangible manifestation of the sacred. That these sites were spreading in urban areas is also of interest since it addresses the need for community in urban milieu of social marginalization.

In fact, the majority of informal cults followers shared certain characteristics. Clergy and participants noted that miracle cults developing in Bucharest and its rural environs coincided with poor neighborhoods and villages. During my observations at the sites, I also remarked that that the majority of participants were older women (middle aged and older). From the conversations I had with participants and my observations, I realized that most were widowed, while others had never married, or were divorced. Although high and middle class men and women also visited the sites, the extent of the devotion demonstrated by poorer, single, female followers was considerable.

This demographic is interesting when we remember that it coincides with the group that also shows the most concern with religious rituals and practice and is often seen as the most devoted. In fact, priests and believers agree that it is the older and widowed women who frequent churches most often. One priest explained that "they pray while others do their thing, they have to work." Since the "Orthodox Church is very open, it depends what people need for their souls to determine their attendance and practice, and this varies throughout life periods less when you're young and more when you're

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group discussed the corruption of many priests who practice to be fortune telling. Nevertheless, they all agreed that sorcery and spells "exist." The nun noted that "no matter what you think they are always around you." To ward off the spells, both holy water and incense help together with prayer. "If you have a clear thought when you pray, you make good decisions, so it helps with your nerves (stress) and you can focus. It also helps you not get depressed." Another woman recounted to us that she came to pray to St. Ilie because she could not find a cure for her ailment. The women instructed her proper ritual was and recommended a naturopath priest who they knew to be of renown with cures and that had also cured the nun's depression.

old." Thus, while the young worked and went about their daily activities, widows could address their issues of loneliness and extra leisure time by creating a niche that incorporated taking care of the commemoration obligations of the family to their dead with community networking and information gathering. By taking care of the dead, the elderly also reinforce kinship ties and keep the departed present in the everyday with the living. It is a means of reminding families of their obligations vis-à-vis elders and to reinforce the cycle of interdependence through generations.

*Church Management of Miracle Cults*

I have argued that in the Lacatus and Letea cases, the ecclesiastical orders were as involved as the believers in the participation of the informal cults, even if the Church had not officiated over the miracle. Nevertheless, the lay and clergy believers did not see themselves as countering the Church. In fact, they believed to be even more ardent followers than other Orthodox. They noted being inspired by the miracles, which brought them closer to God through a personal and tangible experience of His *har*. Because they experienced the Holy Spirit through a person, place, object, etc., believers noted that their faith was in fact strengthened. Yet, there was a continuous concern as to the Patriarchy's opinion in regards to the miracle working icon or relic. Often believers discussed what the ecclesiastical hierarchy decided regarding the object of their following and saw signs of approval to confirm their beliefs and the authenticity of the miracle. The fact that the support of the Church is sought and appreciated demonstrates that the hierarchy has considerable influence and authority over people's relations with the sacred even in such informal contexts. As aforementioned, the reaction of the Church with respect to the two

informal miracle cults has been "slow, but positive," as one Patriarchy administrator admits. Most of the clergy who visited the sites agreed that the Lacatus' failure to decompose is genuine, and must therefore be considered an act of God, as opposed to Letca, where tensions remained since clergy complained that the priest could have simply thrown some water on the icons.

Ilie Lacatus represents an interesting case as an Orthodox priest who was tortured during communism, while Church hierarchy continued to enjoy a strained yet clearly favored position vis-à-vis the state. His situation represents exactly the same dirty past of cooperation with Ceausescu that the Church continues to face. These persecutions of holy men during communism were a major focus of media stories, newly published literature, and daily conversation, if not outright protest as in the case of the Vacaresti sect (Chapter 2). A large amount of published memoirs outline the experiences of interned priests as martyrs of the communist period, often produced by the Orthodox Church's presses (for example Grossu 2004). These accounts also represent a clear attempt to align the Church with these martyrs whose fates were abandoned to the communist state. The Church aims to incorporate them in its repository of remarkable martyrs to reaffirm its position as protector of the people and faith through centuries of oppression and persecution. Truly, these biographies fit perfectly with the Church's cyclical view of the past as continuous trials of the faith and Golden Ages towards a Final Judgment. In a speech, Patriarch Teoctist even interpreted his predecessor Patriarch Justinian (who is considered to be the greatest cooperator with the communist regime) to be a martyr (2004: 4-8).

How will the Church incorporate these national martyrs of the people through canonization if they were complicit in their deaths? Already, the Church has proposed

new saints for their work during the secularist period (Balan 2002: 196). The Church is skillfully incorporating these martyrs of communism and has actually utilized their exemplary biographies to demonstrate its suffering during communism alongside the people. The Church has even published books in which they recognize the power of the relics of martyred priests, monks, and nuns during communism who "suffered for Christ in the country's jails between 1948 and 1964, for the faith and nation and for the defense of Orthodoxy" (Balan 2003b: 8).

By absorbing these local saints and adding them to the national pantheon, the Church continues to be open to new figures, practices, and changing definitions of miracles, piety, and morality within pre-existing notions of sacredness. The authentication of miracles reaffirms the Church's role as the rightful and legitimate intermediary with the sacred. The flexibility to reinterpret the local into larger structures also allows for the management of threatening symbols, such as Ilie Lacatus, which represent cooperation with the communist state.

The mechanisms of canonization and authentication through which the hierarchy manages long standing and informal popular miracle cults has major benefits for their legitimating and for the ongoing relevance of the cosmology to individuals' diverse and changing needs. On so many occasions I was told by believers and clergy that Orthodoxy was a very open or "the most flexible religion," which was particularly confusing to me since I felt very bound by its strict rules of morality, ritual adherence, and constant emphasis on tradition. Yet they were perhaps referring to this openness to adaptation while maintaining the notion of keeping traditions. This negotiation between believer and hierarchy "makes Orthodoxy work" according to a priest.

Another example of the Church's management of miracle cults is evident in the case of the famous monk Ilie Cleopa who gained an impressive following during communism. To escape state persecution, he secluded himself to a hermit cell where he remained from 1953 until 1963 (Binns 1002: 133-134) after which he became the main *duhovnic* of the Sihastria Monastery. Since 1990, his writings were published en masse for the Romanian public (See for example Cleopa 1991, 1993, 2003). He died in 1998 as his following continued to grow to the point where the Church began considering his canonization (Balan 2003b: 200). By proposing to canonize him, the Church effectively managed Ilie Cleopa's post-mortem reverberations and following. The Church's promotion of Cleopa's cult, pilgrimage to his burial site and publication of his books, increases the support for his canonization and generalizes his following. In turn, this figure reaffirms the role of the Church, to which he belongs, as legitimate voice of guidance after four decades of suffering with the people.

In an interview, members of the Patriarchy's commission of canonization stressed that the long process of canonization begins with a particularly holy person who gains a following locally, or with miracle working relics or icons. If the cult outlives the person and spreads, it becomes part of the Church's radar. The Church receives requests from local people and priests for consideration for canonization, these local groups must petition the Patriarchy or Metropolitanate and provide proof for their claim for sacralization. The Metropolitan or Patriarchate's commission investigates the claim, synthesizes all the studies done locally, people's testimony, the individual's biography, and miraculous sacra attributed to them. The commission passes on a recommendation to the Holy Synod which then decides to canonize or not. According to the director of

Cannon Law, often they "don't deny sanctity but say let's wait and see what happens." Of course, canonization has other benefits as well; when the Patriarchy decides to make local cult figures saints, "they gain national following through attention in the media, churches, etc. and the cult gets bigger and he gets a day of celebration as well." The corresponding official commemoration is headed by hierarchy representatives as intermediaries with the masses. The anniversary pilgrimages to relics' resting places, their veneration rituals, and corresponding trade of cult objects are all officially endorsed by the Church and consolidated through assigned canons, prayers, anniversary days, and an official biography. These ideas are reinforced by the ecclesiastical class in rituals, lectures, as well as Church publications.[28] In fact, when canonizations are officiated, a cannon of prayers and an outline of the saint's life and works is also published (Panaite 2003a, 2003b), along with an official icon.

The Patriarchy canonization commission members noted that their work "just puts a stamp on what the people are already following and believing." For example, St. Stephen the Great, the great king of medieval Moldova, was canonized in 1992, "but he had long been part of people's consciousness as a great defender of Christianity, cultural promoter, and builder of monasteries and convents." Since it is never a simple top-down process the "Patriarchy cannot impose a saint without the people having faith in them and experiencing their holiness. Therefore it takes a really long time because one cannot afford to make any mistakes." In turn, this perception of a bottom-up approach allows the Church hierarchy to effectively incorporate local cults, diverse experiences, and beliefs regarding the sacred into official dogma and praxis. By hearing the people and acknowledging their beliefs, the Church reaffirms its role as the legitimate structure that

[28] See for example Balan 2001, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, Vasile 2004.

can determine the authentic from the inauthentic. The legitimization of a cult figure, object, or site also verifies the Church's role as the voice of the majority and intermediary with the sacred. Of course, local miracle cults, burial and commemoration practices demonstrate that the Church can only attempt to manage religious experience and practice. At the same time, the mechanisms through which it effectively incorporates new cults into the national veneration of the dead reveal how it can manage a diversity of beliefs and practices into larger shared body of beliefs.[29]

The mass canonizations of 1992, where 30 saints were officiated, indicate a clear reinvigoration of this practice after more than 40 years' absence during communism. The canonization commission evaluated the candidates put forward in 1950 and found that indeed, the cults had not only survived communism, but also "shown immense growth and elation" (Romanian Orthodox Church Synod Act 1992: 7). Notwithstanding new anniversary days added to the Orthodox calendar, the saints would also be celebrated jointly on the "Sunday of the Romanian Saints" (1992: 11). On the Sunday in question, the nation would commemorate martyrs who suffered for the faith, "our people, and country," the pious men and women who led a monastic life and spiritually helped others, the martyrs who "suffered in blood," and the Romanians "killed by pagans or other invaders throughout the centuries, as well as those who died both fighting against enemies or in captivity for their faith, Church or people" (Synod Act 1992: 11).

Although the new saints had lived and died in centuries preceding the 1989 event, their strikingly similar biographies to the revolutionary martyrs struck a chord with the masses. Because the cults of the newly conferred figures had already amassed regional

[29] The Church also attempts to teach followers how to distinguish false and real miracles through numerous publications and through clergy teachings (Urzica 2004, Fageteanu & Stanciu 2004).

followings preceding 1950, by generalizing the regional cults for the nation, the Church put a stamp of approval, reclaiming its traditional role as the judge of national heroes and saints from communist mythmakers. The canonization celebrations that ensued in 1992 also guaranteed that all eyes would be on the Church as the focus of the mass events. In 2003 canonizations ensued again with Saint Teodosie and Saint Vasile (Panaite 2003a, 2003b) whose cults had grown to official status since 1992.

*Conclusion*

In this chapter I explored the reinvigoration of miracle cults after communism. I outlined the cases of Letca and Lacatus while highlighting the complex relationship between informal cults and official worship sanctioned by the Church. Rather than a dichotomy, or a direct challenge to the legitimacy of the Orthodox hierarchy, I argued that informal miracle cults in fact belong on a continuum of belief and practice which the Church benefits from. Letca was confirmed as a miracle since it brought sinners back to the church after 1989, while Lacatus became an important martyr that demonstrated the Church's role during communism as one of suffering along with the people rather than a conspirator against them. By incorporating cults like these, the Church is able to control the message, the site, sacra, and rituals surrounding the cult. The authentication process reaffirms its role as the judge of authenticity as the hierarchy realizes the potency of direct experience of the sacred can in fact reaffirm the Church rather than threaten it if correctly managed.

Although the monopolization of sacred objects by monasteries and churches is challenged by the veneration of unsanctioned relics and icons, when these are confirmed

as legitimate by the Church, these alternative sacra are incorporated into their symbolic and physical possession. By taking possession of the cult object, the Church places it within its structure, literally in its churches or monasteries, or symbolically in its standardized Canon. The informal cult participants' common pursuit of Church blessing not only legitimizes it as a judge of authentic sacredness but simultaneously reinforces the genuineness of the local movement. Further, since 2004 miracle cults often emerged as a lower class rural and urban phenomenon, it ensured that alongside the costlier organized pilgrimage to official sites, other segments' religious activities could also become incorporated into consolidated beliefs and practices that reinvigorated the Church.

Nevertheless, the wide plethora of beliefs and practices of miracle cult participants also demonstrate that the Church is by no means able to impose its ideologies on believers, let alone its own clergy. Assuming that similar processes have occurred in the past, we can argue that organized religions have always had to develop mechanisms through which divergent beliefs and practices could be assimilated into its structures. Certainly, Romanian Orthodoxy has proven its flexibility throughout history from the time of the medieval *voievods*, to inspiring nationalists, communists, revolutionaries, or contemporary power holders and urban poor.

# Chapter 4 – The Organized Pilgrimage:

## Church Management of Veneration as Religious Tourism

*Introduction*

One week into fieldwork I was discussing the Church's strategy for returning to the "middle of the fortress" with the Patriarchy administrator in charge of Press Relations, when I mentioned being interested in the miracle cults. He exclaimed, "if you're interested the cult of the saints, why don't you go on a pilgrimage? I'll run you over to our Pilgrimage Office and you can just join the group right now!" I had no idea as to what he was referring. I thought that perhaps a Patriarchy delegation was undertaking a trip in commemoration of some occasion and I could tag along. Either way, my confused look prompted the priest to explain further:

> At the Patriarchy, we have a Pilgrimage Office. There are many attractions that may interest you – we just expanded our services and we're featuring our summer packages to Moldova, Transylvania… It's a really great way to see the country and you'll get to travel in the new bus we recently acquired! And if you have money to spend, there a variety of services you can sign up for. Anyways, you can check out the website or the pamphlets…

I did more than that. From April until August, I signed up for five official pilgrimages with the Patriarchy and as a result visited 47 monasteries and churches all over Romania. I wasn't alone. Aside from the Patriarchy's itineraries, Metropolitan Pilgrimage Offices offered similar services, as did tourism offices and local parish priests. Of course, believers were undertaking journeys on their own as well. Pilgrimage was becoming a

major recreational activity for Romanians. The options ranged from the inexpensive walk to a nearby monastery to flying to Jerusalem, yet there was something prestigious about climbing out of a large bus that displayed the label *Biroul de Pelerinaj al Patriarhiei Romane* ('The Patriarchy's Pilgrimage Office'). Our group cut the lines of believers waiting to venerate relics, took the best seats during feast day services, and had special audiences with monastery *duhovnics*, topped off by sleeping in 3 star hotels. All this made the experience more than spiritual and I often felt there was an aspect of inauthenticity that differentiated these journeys from participation in informal miracle cults. This nagging feeling was something I later reconsidered upon reflection.

In this chapter I will expand my previous discussion of miracle cult reinvigoration by exploring a particular activity participants undertake as a means of veneration, namely, pilgrimage. Miracle cults, both Church authorized saint cults or informal versions, attract participants to particular sites. This movement to access the sacred is pilgrimage as participants define it. Thus, a pilgrimage can entail venerating Ilie Lacatus at a cemetery, driving to a nearby monastery, as well as journeying to the Holy Land.

Since the 1990s, people have been able to undertake longer and more elaborate journeys for religious purposes. Pilgrimage to monasteries in Romania and to international holy places in Greece and Israel has greatly intensified as have the ways people undertake the journeys. Some of these ways include traveling on their own, with a church group, travel agency and since 1999 through the Patriarchy's pilgrimage offices. The state has also helped by promoting Orthodox monasteries as attractions to Romanians and foreign tourists.

In the previous chapter I demonstrated how the Church attempts to manage miracle cults through processes of canonization which incorporate new cult figures and the sacra (relics or icons) associated with them into formal processes and official sites. In this chapter I want to explore what happens after these cults become nationalized and how the Church has attempted to manage the experience by determining destinations, sacra, and means of veneration through Pilgrimage Offices. I will firstly describe the tradition of pilgrimage in Orthodoxy, which is very closely tied to saint veneration and miracle cults. Then I will examine the various ways pilgrimage is being reinvigorated ranging from being a small-scale family trip to a Church officiated journey to the Holy Land. I want to highlight the motivations of participants in undertaking this activity and why the Church hierarchy is interested in managing aspects of the experience.

At the same time, Romania's opening to global flows has also resulted in increasing tourists which are attracted to some of its Orthodox monasteries. Yet their motivations are not necessarily the same as pilgrims and the interactions the groups have demonstrate how national sacred sites have the potential of bringing believers together in opposition to nonbelievers. Of course, ecumenical movements the Church participates in increasingly also bring other Orthodox and Christians to Romania in appreciation of commonly respected holy sites. Thus, pilgrimage can also transcend national and religious differences. Even for Romanian Orthodox, pilgrimage can be a means of reaffirming and momentarily suspending class divisions and relations. I will consider the recreation of the rural/urban and social class divisions, as well the differentiation between the Romanian Orthodox pilgrim and foreign (often Western) tourists who journey to the same pilgrimage sites.

It is important to note that informal miracle cult participants often went on pilgrimages to monasteries and vice versa. Participants did not exclusively partake in a type of cult. Often, they would take part in numerous informal cults, go on pilgrimage to monasteries that appealed to them, and attend church (or churches). They would also stop and start new religious practices depending on what appealed to them and what fit their present situation. Thus, the individual is simultaneously participating in informal miracle cults, pilgrimage to monasteries or the Holy Land, which are traditional sacred sites, and attending services in churches. The Church hierarchy is attempting to coordinate how internal monasteries act as hosts and manage the pilgrims' experience through Pilgrimage Offices. The Church sees pilgrimage as a means of re-educating the masses of proper Orthodoxy and the Church's importance in the nation's past and future. It is also a means of bettering ecumenical relations with other denominations and promoting Orthodoxy as the crux of Romanian national identity internationally. I end this chapter with some further remarks on the how pilgrimage relates to nation building and consider its future in view of the increasing interest of the state and international visitors in the practice as a form of secular tourism.

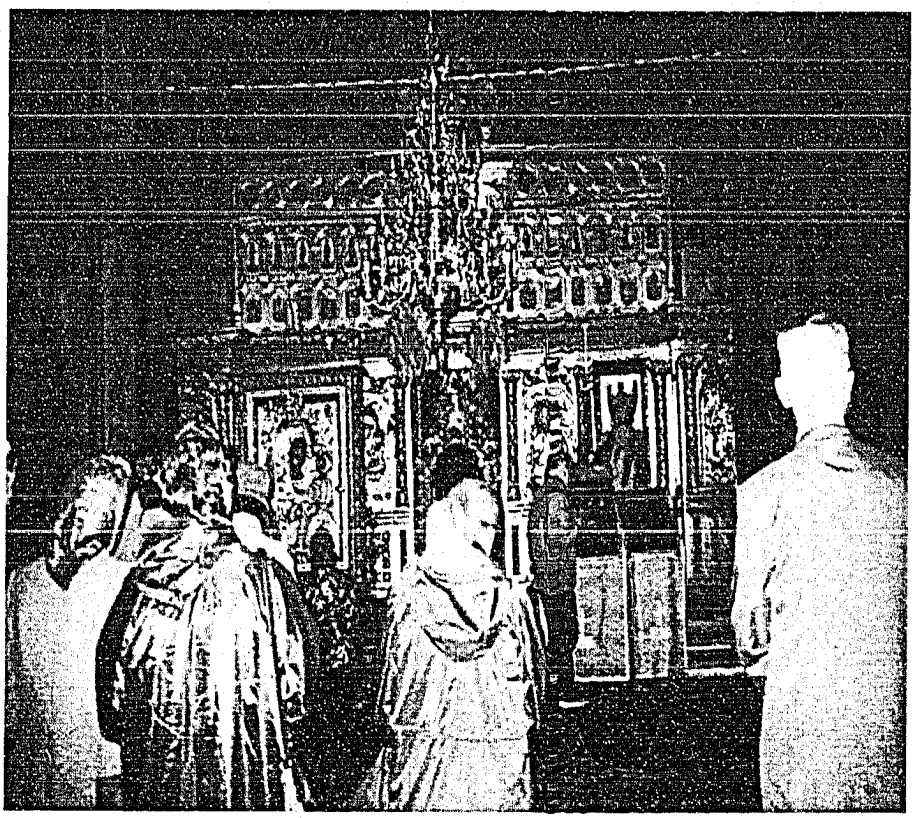

**Figure 11 Pilgrims venerating icons**

*Har-full Places*

Pilgrims hold a general perception that the more relics, the more famous the icon, the more high-ranking priests, the holier the site is and the more access to *har* they can achieve. Thus, sacredness is unequally distributed across space. Places with great *har* often coincide with monasteries because they contain relics and icons proved to be miracle working, they house the most pious of living Orthodox believers, and they have been in the business of worshipping God for centuries. Also during special times, like the anniversary (*hram)* of a church or monastery and feast days, the Holy Spirit is believed to descend at the site giving it even more *har*. This is why believers move en masse to access certain sites during these times. On such days, greater ecclesiasts perform the service, which will also increase *har* the prayer's chances of being fulfilled. The efforts

of pilgrims of fasting, walking, attending long services of kneeling and standing, prayer and giving alms also increase their access to *har* and their chances of having prayers fulfilled. Thus, *har* is dependant on the believer's actions, the site and the type of sacra it contains, other *har*-ful people present, as well as the temporal factor.

For the Church hierarchy and clergy, the long tradition of pilgrimage was "confirmed by archaeological evidence dating them back to the first 2 and 3 centuries," according to a Bucharest priest. The Patriarchy Director of Canon Law remarked:

> Let's recall early Christians' pilgrimages to the places of burial of the martyrs, the first to give their lives for Christ, and from there the places of pilgrimage in the deserts where the Christians would seek the hermit fathers who were leading their lives in bettering solitude. They would seek advice, and direction from a *duhovnic*.

In premodern Wallachia, Transylvania, and Moldova localized relic and icon miracle cults were widespread to various extents (Balan 2002: 18-19). Coleman and Elsner note that as result of the split between the Orthodox churches focused on Constantinople and the Catholic Church centered on Rome, pilgrimage did not proceed in the same manner as in Western Europe. Since they could not access the great shrines of Western Europe, Orthodox patterns of pilgrimage focused instead on the churches, relics, and icons of Constantinople, as well as on the tombs of the renowned martyrs in remote monastic settlements such as Mount Athos and Meteora in Greece. After Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453 however, the great St. Sophia Church, the centre of Byzantine liturgy and pilgrimage, was also lost to be transformed into a mosque. Since then,

Orthodox pilgrimage has become increasingly focused on local holy shrines in remaining Orthodox lands (Coleman & Elsner 1995: 120-123).

A Patriarchy administrator noted that pilgrimage acquired a variety of components along the way although, it remained an

> expression of elation, of betterment of the religious life internal life of every believer expression as a community through the worship in a place and a particular exaltation in Christian life at a particular burial of a saint, at a Church where there was an icon that was believed to make miracles.

There is a long history of the host-guest relationship between monasteries and visitors. Usually, the monastery welcomes pilgrims by providing them with shelter, food, and spiritual guidance. Pilgrims may stay for extended periods of time and enjoy the isolation of the monastery while spiritually and physically recharging. Medieval kings often secluded themselves in monasteries to recover from battles or to consult their *duhovnics* on political and religious matters. Monasteries were traditionally the keepers of sacra (relics and icons), cultural patrimony, and protected the elite's wealth from foreign pillaging (which is why they were often targeted by invading forces).

During the communist period, pilgrimages to monasteries were not generally encouraged and the sensationalism of miracles was understandably absent from the mass media. As with other religious practices, pilgrimage was relegated to the private sphere as a family affair that lacked any formal Church involvement. In 2004, Church administrators were certain that both miracles and pilgrimage continued during communism, but that as result of the "press embargo, it was only known locally or those in the church orders." A priest remembers that

> people did go to monasteries even then; they were places where you could escape to from the misery, moral and material, which continues to be the motivation today as well – people go because they have spiritual problems, or because they want to do something different than just going to the park. They want to see something beautiful, participate in a service - so the motivations stay the same, though they've intensified.

One pilgrim remembered in 2004 that during communism,

> depending on the guide and the priest receiving us, whoever was leading the group – you could get more of an indirect introduction to religious issues without being outwardly religious.

A tourism agent recalled that the monasteries were promoted as secular historical sites where emphasis was placed on the great national kings who founded them rather than on their spiritual value. Yet the monasteries were still seen as "special because of the feeling, being closer to nature, of inner peace" letting "you escape from your routine." As I have argued in previous chapters, communism required that religious practices adapt to new circumstances rather than disappear.

*Early Reinvigoration*

After 1989, small scale travel to Romanian monasteries to venerate miracle working relics and icons intensified alongside informal miracle cults. Pilgrims began going to nearby monasteries where they stayed for the weekend, or even a day. They could prolong the journey and stay at series of monasteries for extended periods. The monks and nuns directed the activities the pilgrims partake in, provided them with fasting food

and invited them to partake in prayers. Priests began organizing pilgrimages for members of their parishes. Under their leadership, pilgrims rented buses or simply drove their own cars depending on the destination and demand. Tourism companies began offering package tours of monasteries with hired priests serving as guides. (Of course, rural pilgrims also accessed monasteries during this period, however, my fieldwork concentrated on the experiences of Bucharest urbanites).

Since people were again free to choose the monastic lifestyle as well, many monasteries had been reopened. In turn, as pilgrims began to visit these sites their donations and purchases rendered sufficient funds for the monasteries to undertake restoration and expansion projects. During the 1990s, numerous monasteries commenced the building of museums and pilgrim reception facilities including meal halls and sleeping quarters. The state also began funding such initiatives through the Ministry of Cults and Culture as national patrimony priorities. Private interests in patrimony preservation from Romania and from abroad emerged to spur restoration projects all over the country.

By the late 1990s, pilgrimage had become the main source of income for many monasteries. Considering that in 2004 Romania had 391 functioning monasteries housing 2,748 monks and 4,883 nuns (Romanian Orthodox Church 2004a: Online), the options for the believer seemed endless. The main attractions were the famous relic repositories of St. Dimitrie the New at the Patriarchy in Bucharest, St. Parascheva at the Iasi Cathedral, Ion the New in Suceava, and St. Stephen the Great at Putna. Moldova has the reputation of being the nation's most spiritual region, with Putna and the externally painted Sucevita, Voronet, Moldovita, and Humor making up the most Famous Five of

the country's monasteries. Because the *voievods* of Moldova built the greatest number of monasteries, and the population is perceived to be more spiritual and immersed in traditions than the rest of Romania, Moldova is seen as having more *har* in general. The presence and attention of Western tourists and international development organizations also helped increase the prestige of the Famous Five and helped the reinvigoration of pilgrimage even more.

Pilgrims in turn submitted enough accounts of their experiences on these journeys, that the magazine *Casa Mea* reformatted its focus of household renovations to religious matters after being overwhelmed with submissions. In an interview with the editor, she noted that since making the switch in 2002, *Casa Mea* became the most popular magazine with monthly 12,000 readers, mostly urban women. She noted that the magazine "offers readers a venue of expression and we can also offer them advice to spiritual questions, under the guidance of a priest." The content of *Casa Mea* is particularly interesting: the majority of the magazine is dedicated to homemaking advice and tips on cooking, decorating, refurbishing, and family life. However, with readers' input, an underlying theme emerged. The cooking articles began to focus on the Orthodox holidays and particular fasting foods and recipes. The family advice increasingly drew on Orthodox morality citing priests as reference. Recently, pilgrimage and readers' experiences with the sacred gained a regular section in the magazine. Thus, over a period of approximately 10 years, *Casa Mea* switched from a magazine on homemaking to one on Orthodox family life. *Credinta* was another such magazine focusing on religious issues from historical and biographical articles regarding saints, to profiling *duhovnics*, and advertising holy days events. These media outlets became

important opportunities by the late 1990s when the Church opened its pilgrimage offices and needed to advertise its services.

Post-communism meant that international travel for religious motives could resume freely. The Church was also able to travel across borders and augment relations with other Orthodox, Catholic, and Anglican churches among other faiths. This translated into exchanges of visits between hierarchs, clergy, monks, theology students, and believers. Romanian Orthodox pilgrims were able to go on journeys to Greece and Jerusalem. One such pilgrim remembered that when she took the trip in 1999, it was also means of breaking with the communist past and showing her recommitment to the Church. After 1989, Romanians could not only travel across borders, but they could do so for spiritual reasons. In turn, believers' zeal inspired clergy at various hierarchical levels to organize pilgrimages with variable success depending on the level of funding, infrastructure, and authority the various bishoprics had. The Director of Cannon Law noted that where there were established nodes of organization within the ecclesiastical structures, the coordination of such "forms of manifestation of Christian elation" was successfully undertaken by the Church, which planned and guided groups of pilgrims to the Holy Land.

Considering the intensifying participation of Orthodox believers in journeys to the Holy Land and Greece, the Church decided to establish its own pilgrimage offices in the late 1990s. As its sources of funding, level of organization, and authority on the national stage consolidated, it had the means to eventually establish such offices in major cities. These fully organized, advertised, and implemented Church set itineraries. According to the Patriarchy Pilgrimages Office's manager, the Office was initially established in 1999

as result of "a wish of the believers to travel to the Holy Land, Greece, and other holy places" who requested Church approved spiritual guides. He added that during the early 1990s, believers "had a very great desire and maybe not the greatest funds. As things got stable, the middle class could afford to put money aside." He remembers that the majority who accessed the organized pilgrimages in the later 1990s "tended to come from the middle classes."

A major motive influencing the Patriarchy's organization of pilgrimage was the relation between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Christian ecumene. According to the Patriarchy Director of International Relations, as part of a "universal Church, Orthodoxy is one with extremely close ties indifferent to where the church may be territorially, whether Greece, Jerusalem, Serbia, Athos, Russia" so the exchange of values is very important.

> You can't isolate yourself because that's how Orthodoxy becomes diluted and loses its cohesion whereas it becomes strong from its pillars, so the people have to see what is happening with their spiritual brothers.

There had also been pilgrimages from these other Orthodox churches to Romania from Greece, Bulgaria, and Ukraine, "so there's an exchange of visits between believers," as the Director of Canon Law noted:

> Even the Cathedral here at the Patriarchy gets request for tours from Romanians and foreigners, some want an audience with the Patriarch. Some are Catholic or Protestant and are doing this type of trip and they want to see Moldova – they are with a tourism agency or on their own with a priest of Catholic or Orthodox episcope, and they also stop through Bucharest. So there is an exchange. Because

> I think the majority of those who come to Romania tend to be attracted to the religious, there's of course the Black Sea, Delta, but many went to see Moldova or Transylvania, Dracula. But monasteries are unique to Romania.

In 2004, Pilgrimage Office employees remembered that foreign tourists began requesting the tours of Romania during the later 1990s to see spiritual attractions, although they noted that these tours were tailored for nonbelievers and thus focusing on cultural and historical rather than religious highlights. When the Patriarchy conducted pilgrimages for French, Italians, Spanish, and English visitors, the "character of these is primarily "touristic with a historical focus":

> We have to remember what cult they come from since they may not be Orthodox. They come to see Moldova and Transylvania's monasteries for one to two week tours.

Considering the attempts of the Romanian Patriarch to better relations with the Roman Catholic Church (hence the visit of the Pope in 1999), the ecumenical movement was also a driving force behind Church support for cross-denominational pilgrimage. The Canon Law Director noted:

> we are extremely close to the Roman Catholics and Anglicans in our shared mysteries, beliefs about the saints. But there are places of elation that are not Orthodox. If Thomas Becket was martyred in an Anglican cathedral how can that not be sacred and a justified place of pilgrimage? And even if some dogmatic differences separate them from the Orthodox: the place of pilgrimage remains and the blood of the martyr calls us from wherever and whatever denomination we are. Pilgrimage brings people together, not separates them, and allows them to

know each other better and discover one another. Because what is the Church? It is the recognition of the same God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which we all do. Of course, manifestations differ as fused with cultures and peoples, but that is not all important in religious life – what is most important is becoming closer to God and the searching for places through which you can achieve this.

The ecumenical relations further enabled the international movement of sacra to and from Romania as well. Beginning with the later 1990s, the Romanians Orthodox and the Catholic Church also initiated processions of relics or icons from one sacred site to another. Organized or informal pilgrimages either accessed the temporary site where the relics were stationed, or moved with them. Some mass pilgrimages occurred in Romania when the Virgin Mary's cloth from Moldova, or the relics of Saint Andrew from Greece traveled to various sites. Interestingly, when the Fatima statue, among other Catholic cult objects, had processions through Romania, the Orthodox believers also participated. As one Patriarchy administrator noted,

> we could say that pilgrimage is a place of ecumenical meeting, a place of mutual dialogue witness to a miracle of sacredness. Miracle and sacredness brings everyone together in a common voice and raises us all towards God. So pilgrimage isn't something that we can say belongs to one or another church. Let us not forget the pilgrimages to holy places of other denominations like Fatima, Compostella who went there out of devotion. God's miracles and power works equally everywhere. God doesn't have a confessional color so when he does his works he leaves his spiritual and sacred mark so with assurance there are places of great elation and Christian spirituality and the believer with his desire to perfect

himself and become closer to God searches for any place that may offer him this meeting opportunity which these other faith's holy places offers.

*Internal Pilgrimages*

By 2004, the Patriarchy realized that there was a high demand for internal journeys to Romania's own holy sites. This was a result of the clientele's stabilizing financial conditions such that lower middle class urbanites could now afford these services. Unlike the pilgrims who journeyed to the Holy Land and Greece, they were very interested in seeing the Famous Five but also monasteries closer to home and for shorter periods. The Patriarchy's organized pilgrimages were available for one day to monasteries near the city, but also of several days' stay in Moldova, Transylvania, and practically all over the country. A Patriarchy guide remarked that itineraries are developed according to the "geographies of landscape – so it's easy to do Moldova and come back through Brasov versus crossing the Carpathian mountains, so it's also about costs and management." The manager of the Pilgrimage Office noted that the most visited monasteries remained the externally painted Famous Five in Moldova, which were known as the most sacred of Romania's regions endowed with particular *har*. Aside from their aesthetic beauty and the fact that the externally painted iconography survived remarkable for over 500 years, these sites were also built under the reigns of the great kings and house valuable sacra.

Another issue considered by the Pilgrimage Office in itinerary planning was the date of travel. Because there are periods in the Orthodox calendar, such as Easter or the *hram* anniversary of a monastery that attract more pilgrims, "so we go with this objective in mind to partake in these events to certain monasteries." Of course, the summer months

are when the majority of the pilgrimages occur since these are the holiday months when people have the time to go, "plus the weather is pleasant when you're outside, and the roads are good." Itineraries had to be approved by directors, episcopes, and the Patriarch, publicized on churches billboards and the appropriate (or Church supporting) media outlets.

One of the reasons why the Church decided in 2004 to expand services and increase the number and variety of attractions and tour packages was because hierarchs became interested in managing pilgrimage experience as an educational component. (The Patriarchy purchased its own tour bus and hired a driver and another two pilgrimage guides to increase this service.) The Patriarchy administrator of International Relations noted that for forty years religious education was

> done within the interior of the church, now you know that religion is taught within the legal conditions and in the public school system. Churches now have the ability to teach freely. Pilgrimage is a practical materialization, which is either done in schools or through catechism within the church. It's a practical component. You talk about sacredness, about miracles, about chosen life, elated life and as a priest you come with your students or you parishioners, and you go on pilgrimages and you see icons that make miracles. This is palpable evidence; you see the holy relics of church fathers which are things that are palpable and concrete. Then you see monasteries, which are places of great elation and beautiful living. You go and see how religious life has evolved, what is the history of the Church, how did religious life become entrenched in that of the nation because there's a symbiosis between them. They have always gone together.

Since people were becoming more secularized, "they're in too much of a hurry and pilgrimage is a break":

> By remaining in a spot for a time, to remember where you come from, who you are and where you need to get to. What happens in life? You become desacralized, you become too concerned with your professional life, the material and economic and you forget who you are in your spiritual constitution so pilgrimage is a return to moral roots, religious roots. It's a return to God.

Further, pilgrimage was a means of consolidating the relation between priest and Church and priest and followers, but at the same time an opportunity to teach "in a pastoral manner." According to the Director of the Patriarchy's International Relations, religious education "doesn't remain aloof as a dogma" and "gains its concreteness through the living through it of every believer." According to the Director of the Patriarchy's Public Relations, as a whole the Church "contemplates the general issue of pilgrimage" which must be a "unitary vision in all of Romania's episcopates." As such, its organization must follow a "well-defined program tailored to age categories, socio-professional categories, for students, local communities, etc." Since the Church is "ultimately responsible for the manifestation of the sacred. It is therefore the Church that must guide the spiritual development of every believer."

I inquired as to whether the Patriarchy Pilgrimage Office organized pilgrimages to miracle sites such as Letca and Ilie Lacatus' grave because I knew such places to be the focus of informal pilgrimage and veneration. Patriarchy administrators noted that the Church sees pilgrimage as an opportunity to manage the experience of the believer with the sacred and to re-establish its position as the true intermediary with God. Pilgrimage is

a way of re-educating the masses regarding proper practice and Orthodox morality. Considering believers' increasing participation in local unofficial miracle cults spread by media sensationalism, the Church realized the need to have more influence over this expression of Christian elation. One way was to offer an alternative of verified miracles and coordinate the experience of saint veneration through organized pilgrimage. He noted that the Church would not promote pilgrimage to such sites since "that would be like propaganda for it." According to him, only "certain, authenticated" relics and icons that have the "Patriarchy's blessing and proven to be the work of God through time for hundreds of years" are worthy of pilgrimage.

The management of pilgrimage by the Pilgrimage Office also changed the practice from a traditional means of divorcing luxury to temporarily experience the ascetic lifestyle for spiritual inspiration. For Romanian pilgrims, the itinerary included between four and six sites per day while riding in a bus with other believers. The groups ranged from thirty to sixty participants in the five pilgrimages I undertook with the Patriarchy. The one day tours attracted the most participants, since they were also more convenient and cheaper (about $20 which represents half of an average month's salary). The general structure of the daylong trips entailed that the Patriarchy bus drove the group to approximately five monasteries (See for example Pilgrimage Office 2005: Online). The destinations were monasteries within reasonable driving distances from Bucharest and each other ranging from one to five hours. Longer trips to other regions were up to five days long and took us longer distances from the capital. They were therefore more expensive ($100) and had fewer participants, all of whom belonged to the upper middle classes of professionals.

*Pilgrim Motives and Hosting Par Excellence*

Many believers went on pilgrimages on their own, with tourist groups, or their congregations. Vasile's 2003 guide to pilgrimage was even sold in gas stations because of its easy reference style to nearly 400 of Romania's functioning monasteries. He was careful to also include a map of attractions and easy to follow driving directions. Thus, the Church was only able to attract a small portion of believers simply because there were so many options available. What would prompt a pilgrim to choose the Patriarchy's type of pilgrimage as opposed to informal journeys, or those organized by private business? Similarly, what motivates monasteries to participate in these activities? I will explore these questions further in this section.

The actual official pilgrimage[30] experience began in the tour bus where the priest guide began the journey with a prayer. During the drive, our guide usually informed us of the site's attraction and history. The details included the founders and historical points of interests, as well as other artistic features executed by famous painters. He would also mention important guests known in Romanian history who were hosted at the particular monastery, as well as the hardships experienced during communism, and the reinvigoration since. Pilgrims were particularly concerned with the spiritual treasures of the site, which were miracle working icons and relics, and whether or not the *hram* date coincided with their visit. When we arrived at the monasteries, if a service was in progress, we would partake in it, though the stays were approximately one hour. Either the guide or an appointed monk or nun gave us a tour of the monastery highlighting

[30] When I refer to an official pilgrimage, I am talking about journeys organized by the Patriarchy's Pilgrimage Office.

various historical and spiritual points of interests. We had the opportunity to also venerate the icons and relics of the site, interact with the hosts mainly by asking them to pray for us, light candles, and pray for family and friends, and finally (but importantly) buy souvenirs. These were usually blessed icons, crosses, necklaces or bracelets, holy water, myrrh or incense. On several occasions, the *duhovnic* would also grant the group an audience, which consisted of a lecture, while other times priest monks would conduct a special "untying" (exorcism) of evil rituals for us. We were also invited by monasteries to dine, in which case the monk and nuns served us with fasting food.

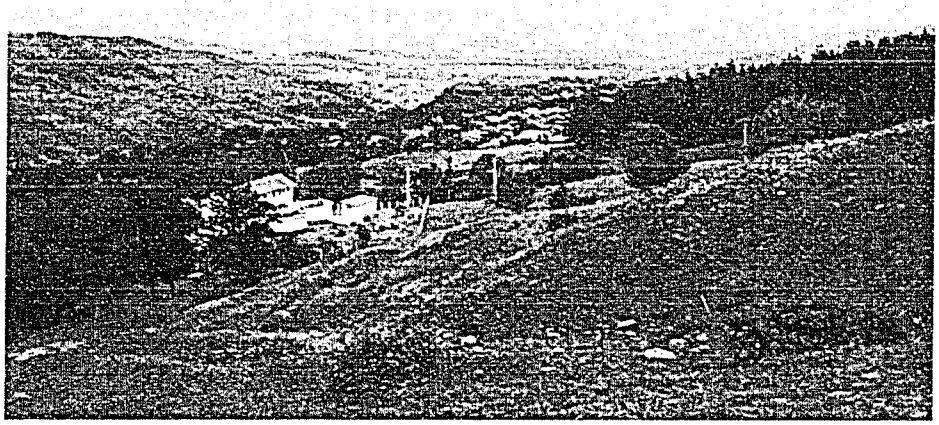

**Figure 12 Pilgrimage through the countryside to Ghighiu Monastery**

Participants shared the perception that they were undertaking a spiritual journey and an act of piety; Patriarchy pilgrimages not only ensured, but also heightened what pilgrims and guides called "authentic spiritual experiences." During feast days when masses of pilgrims would be attempting to access a particularly holy site, being in an

organized Patriarchy tour could grant the pilgrim special privileges and ensure his/her access to the relics and participation in the services. Of course, the pilgrim's means determined whether s/he could afford the costly organized pilgrimages, especially if the trips were farther in distance and longer term. The pilgrim also had to have access to the pilgrimage offices in major cities; therefore this specific activity largely excluded rural Orthodox residents.

Simultaneous to this differentiation of guests, monasteries had begun competing to attract pilgrims during the 1990s. Because there are so many monasteries in Romania, to distinguish themselves in order to draw pilgrims, monasteries needed miracle-working cult objects which they began to acquire to give people something extra. Of course there remains the issue of infrastructure: are the hosting amenities appropriate? And is the place accessible? Being in the country and therefore supposedly 'closer to nature,' having a neatly tended site and beautiful gardens also offers an attraction as a perfect retreat from the busy life of the city where you are removed from the everyday and tended to all basic needs focusing on the spiritual.

It was nevertheless clear during the organized pilgrimages that visitors interfered with monks and nuns activities, which follow a strict schedule. Monks, nuns, and pilgrimage guides I interacted with agreed that pilgrimage at times conflicted with the monasteries' schedules of activities. On numerous occasions, a monk or nun would be pulled from their activities to open the museum, give us a tour of the monastery, or sell us souvenirs. So, why the trouble? Aside from offering a chance to educate them and "bring them closer to God" as one nun noted, pilgrimages were occasions to give lessons to urban visitors. The monks and nuns who hosted could teach the pilgrims about the monastic

lifestyle and piety by allowing them to observe the monks and nuns but also through giving them lectures. These were also a means of transmitting political messages. Thus, at the Sitaru Monastery, the *staret* told us about the nationalist period (late 1800s- early 1900s) when

> Metropolitans were also senators. They were on the right track because Romanians are born Christians and Orthodox, if we lose our religion we lose our lives as a people – we have to be clean and pure. We have to come back! Return to the church – that is the only way!

Considering the nods of approval from the group, it seemed that the message reached a receptive audience. Clearly, pilgrimages organized by the Church also served as platforms to spread their political messages. Another monk warned

> we have lost our way from God and we are so far gone from the Church that the icons are crying – that's what happens when times are bad, and instead of us crying the icons are having to do it for us since we cannot recognize the reality ourselves.

By stressing the persecution of the monasteries during communism, the guides and hosts could also further distance the Church from the communist regime. Like the people, the Church also suffered. Numerous lectures to the group stressed the resiliency and faith with which monasteries survived the atheist propaganda of Ceausescu's reign and continued adherence to the true faith even when endangered by the Securitate.

Nevertheless, the monks and nuns also used pilgrimages to push their own agendas at times against the Patriarchy, who was organizing the pilgrimages. This is also why monks and nuns paid more attention to Patriarchy pilgrims as well. Thus, at the

Cernica Monastery, the monk who guided us through the site was also explicit about the Patriarchy's need to recognize the supposed relics of medieval *voievod* Michael the Brave recently uncovered near Cernica. He argued that the Patriarchy should canonize him "why Stephen the Great and not Michael the Brave? He deserves it just as much." Of course, this would add to Cernica's prestige and symbolic capital since it too, like Putna, could boast the relics of national hero translating into pilgrims, funding, and prestige. By bringing this issue to the attention of pilgrims, the monks hope to raise interest in Michael the Brave's relics and eventually the canonization of the voievod by the Holy Synod.

Thus, famous sacra would increase the monastery's prestige, pilgrims, but also economic revenues. In other words, the sacra's *har* or God's essence brings success. The souvenirs sold which were generally little icons, bracelets, water and oil vials, etc. were often inflated as compared to similar items one can purchase in Bucharest because they are blessed and bought from a place with *har*. I noted that people spent between 100,000 and 200,000 lei (about 10 Canadian dollars, or a tenth of an average household income) per day on pilgrimages just on souvenirs, which is roughly a fourth of a family's average monthly salary. Aside from the monetary benefits that came with souvenir sales and pilgrim donations, when monasteries became pilgrimage attractions, they also received more attention from the Patriarchy as important cultural and religious centers. This translated into a climb on the funding priority ladder for Patriarchy and state moneys to renovate and maintain the community. In turn, monasteries were able to reinvest in their infrastructure and improve hosting facilities and pilgrim attractions. This reinvestment in the site and the quality of the hosting was important to guests. On numerous occasions, visitors would praise or complain about how taken care of (or dirty) a monastery

appeared; clearly, funding for aesthetics increases your attractiveness to visitors and their support. Aside from the looks of the building and courtyard, monks and nuns had to host pilgrims properly.

What was further visible during my visits of over forty monasteries was the differentiation between those who specialized in receiving pilgrims and those who only occasionally hosted them. Not only were the first restored and thriving in terms of attracting monks and nuns, but the living conditions were greatly improved as was the transportation infrastructure. Even the villages near such sites showed signs of profit from the pilgrims. Interestingly, I also noticed that funding for such operations came from the EU in certain cases as indicated by small plaques showing the EU logo as signs of monetary support. Such monasteries had even built housing especially for pilgrims which resembled hotels (for which one had to of course pay) and had kitchens staffed with monks and nuns to tend to the guests' culinary needs for monastery food (fasting food) to be served in the visitors dinner hall. Whereas a traditional part of pilgrimage was to share the communal meal with the host, these new conditions placed a clear separation between the pilgrim and nun or monk and commoditized the experience to a great extent. Thus, the monks and nuns became service providers as priests, cooks, cleaners, hosts, etc. while the pilgrims were altogether guests who could not partake in the traditional sense in monastic life.[31]

[31] When I am referring to traditional pilgrimage practices, I am drawing this information from participants, clergy, Patriarchy administrators, monks, nuns, etc. who described the characteristics of such experiences.

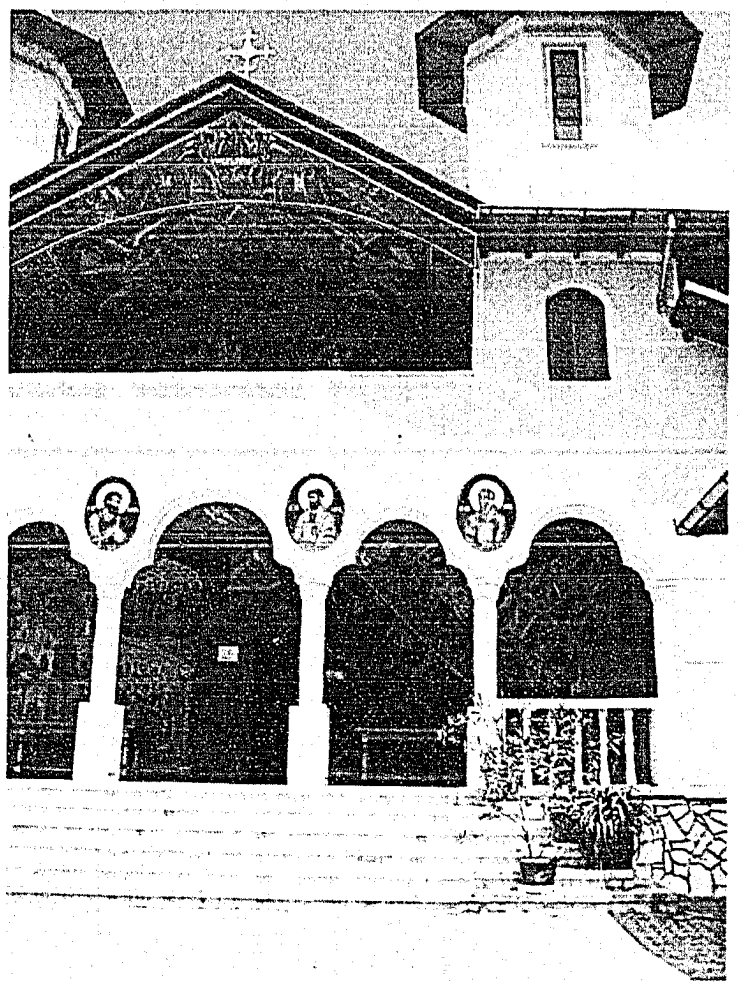

**Figure 13 Restored Ghighiu Monastery**

Aside from the basic amenities being improved, such monasteries enhanced their spiritual services as well. Thus, at the Ghighiu Monastery, we were treated to a special ceremony performed by the monk-priests of *dezlegare* or'untying' (exorcism) This was followed by a prayer session and blessing. The visit was topped with an invitation to a meal in the dining room where our group was served with a simple vegetarian meal. In comparison to the non-specialist monasteries however, such an experience made quite an impression on my fellow pilgrims. When they were invited to dine, they generally became very ecstatic and praised the food with much appreciation. "It's so good, always

so good! It's the best in monasteries!" This perception is in part justified because the monasteries are usually self-sustaining and grow their own food, but more so because the food is prepared in a place and by people with *har*, which believers attribute to the potential of gaining a closer communion with the sacred.

Thus, audiences with the *duhovnic*, special ritual services, meals, among other tokens of attention increased their perception of a sacred experience. These also added to the feeling of communitas between pilgrims as they share a journey, prayer, and food before re-entering the real world. Thus, the better the hosting was, the more *har*-full the pilgrims characterized the monastery to be and the more they seemed to bond as a group. By the end of such pilgrimages, they exchanged phone numbers, made plans to meet at another pilgrimage in the future, and gave each other tips on other destinations worthy of visits.

The pilgrims also had an opportunity to discuss what they experienced and learned which they also shared with families and friends upon their return. This partially motivated the purchase of souvenirs (the most common goods were bracelets, pamphlets, icons, prayer books, and holy water, incense, and candles) which believers thought assisted in the potency of their prayer. "Monasteries have *har* and when I go home, I take a little piece of this place and their *har* back with me, so when I pray, it will be heard better by God." Another motivation was the association of participating in pilgrimage, especially the costly Patriarchy organized ones, to social prestige. In particular, pilgrims could recount the experience and special privileges of being with the Patriarchy. Showing others the souvenirs gave the pilgrim an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to afford the service, and also expressed their piety.

After returning participants often remarked to friends or family members that they prayed for them, made a donation in their name and brought them back a blessed gift bought from the monastery. The value of the object increased if it was purchased or blessed on the monastery's *hram* or a feast day and if it was served by a hierarch. In fact, believers were amassing religious treasuries in their homes which would be shown to guests and used in prayers which included souvenirs purchased on pilgrimages. In other words, socio-economic class determined one's access to *har*. Yet, even within the middle classes, the Patriarchy one-day tours were a fifth of the price of the longer treks to the famous Moldovan monasteries and thus the pilgrims could still be differentiated even further. What added to this symbolic capital was the increasing presence of Western tourists at the same pilgrimage sites as the expensive weeklong organized pilgrimages. During the Patriarchy's organized pilgrimages to Romania's Famous Five monasteries in Moldova, tours often coincided with American, French, German, and Italian busloads that were stopping to take in the sites as part of cross country excursions.

*The Famous Five and International Tourism*

Notwithstanding the poor tourism infrastructure, quality of service and prospects regarding the future of rural, heritage and cultural tourism (Light and Dumbraveanu 1999: 898), Romania has become a growing choice for tourists who are looking for something 'different.' It seems that amidst an overall economic recession of international travel as result of the SARS epidemic, the Iraq conflict, Central and Eastern nations showed an increase as opposed to Western neighbors (World Tourism Organization 2002: 11-12). In 2003, Romania was visited by 5.6 million foreign travelers, a 17%

increase since 2002's 4.8 million (Blanaru 2004: 25, World Tourism Organization 2003).[32] The number of EU citizens visiting Romania grew by 14% of which approximately half came from Germany, followed by Italians, Austrians, and French. The Romanian National Association of Tourism Agencies estimated a further 15-20% growth in 2004, facilitated by the admission of the nation into NATO, and candidacy to the European Union.[33]

The main five monasteries which received the most Romanian pilgrims and foreign tourists were Putna, Voronet, Humor, Moldovita, and Sucevita. The nuns there gave foreign visitors tours of the site in various languages highlighting the art and architecture as well as main historical points of interest. They also recounted suffering of the monasteries at the hands of Western Europeans and Ottomans but only to the Romanian Orthodox visitors. Foreign tourists were not led in prayers or given audiences with a *staret*, blessed, or encouraged to venerate miracle-working relics as the Romanian Orthodox pilgrims. The monasteries were however prepared to sell everyone handmade authentic Moldovan peasant shirts, handcrafted dolls, musical instruments, and other souvenirs. They were also selling pamphlets and books in five languages outlining the history of the site. Outside the gates of the Famous Five, locals had also picked up on the tourism trade and markets had been set up to sell souvenirs to the Western tours. Of course, pilgrims would also stop by although most insisted to purchase souvenirs "from the monastery because they're blessed."

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[32] The European Travel Commission reported that Romania's growth was only second to Bulgaria's among the European nations (Blanaru 2004: 25).

[33] Alin Burcea, ex-secretary of the Ministry of Tourism and tourism entrepreneur, explained that changes in preferences of foreign travelers have turned from the Black Sea towards cross-country trips that begin in Transylvania and end in Bucharest passing through the Danube Delta, Transylvanian Alps, Orthodox monasteries, and medieval castles (Burcea in Ivan 2004: 25).

Some Western tourists who were looking for something different and wanted to get away from the pre-packaged tour even joined Church-organized pilgrimages together with Orthodox Romanians to the famous Moldovan monasteries. None were Orthodox but rather Protestants and Catholic (French, German), and often shocked and "in disbelief" about what they saw at monasteries. During a pilgrimage to Moldova, one noted how "medieval" and "intense" pilgrims were as they pushed to get closer to relics and was generally amazed by the Romanian's "passionate religiosity." Yet, the intense pilgrims who were on the same mini-bus, not only interpreted the same events differently, but also their foreign tour members who they deemed to be non-believers and "emotionally cold." One Romanian pilgrim noted on a previous pilgrimage with the Patriarchy, two families from Canada did not know the protocol for pilgrimage and its purpose. She declared that by signing up for a Patriarchy organized pilgrimage, one should expect something spiritual.

> They didn't know what was good for them. They complained about the modest servings at the monasteries which they prepared and welcomed us so warmly and kindly with. And they even went as far as to go to a restaurant instead during the church service since they were being deprived.

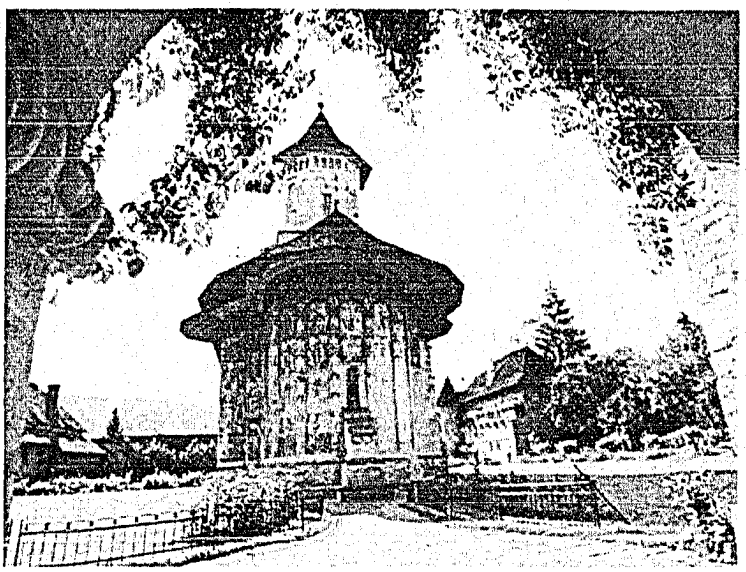

**Figure 14 Moldovita Monastery**

Foreign tourists that joined Patriarchy pilgrimages were rather interested in the history and art of the monasteries. Since the guiding priests did not speak English, they were often split from the group. Thus, while the Orthodox groups listened to the priest or monastic hosts and partook in rituals, the foreign tourists formed their own group and engaged in conversations while examining the art and architecture. Yet, the presence of the foreign Western tourist reaffirmed to the pilgrims that indeed the monasteries were cultural treasures:

> They came all the way here to see what we have, because the West has destroyed this beauty in their own countries. Western tourists can feel the power of these places and they can see their splendid beauty, that's why they come. It is unique to Romania, Our monasteries are our souls: our history, our faith.

The two groups definitely agreed on this. Another matter both shared was an appreciation for the beauty of the countryside and the picturesque landscape. Again, the Romanian pilgrims remarked that the industrialization of the West

has erased all this natural beauty, so they can only see it in Romania. It shows how we are closer to nature. People have been doing this since the beginning of time, in the West they lost this way. It's all about capitalism and people don't even have no faith anymore. That's why it's so important to keep our faith when we get so much detrimental influence from the West.

The popularity of the monasteries and pilgrimage did not go unnoticed by the Romanian government who even decided to capitalize on them. In 2004 the Ministry of Tourism's official representation centered on Romania's Orthodox monasteries, medieval towns, Black Sea resorts, Transylvanian Alps, and agrotourism as authentically Romanian attractions (Romania Travel 2004: Online, Romania Travel 2005a: Online, Romania Travel 2005b: Online). When I asked about the future of tourism, a government decision maker summarized that

> the new push in the Romanian government is that of ethno-religious pilgrimage, tourism which is really a combination of agrotourism, religious and ethnic tourism – one is welcomed in the monastery or convent and partakes in the monk's and nun's daily lives while visiting holy places and learning about the country in the process. The pilgrim learns about Romanian history through the religious prism and focuses his journey on spiritual recharging instead of the superficialityof mass tourism. We will promote this to the West as spiritual tourism.[34]

[34] John Urry argues that as a feature of disorganized capitalism, mass tourism is characterized by the predominance of culture, consumption, and concern for the environment. Thus, tourism is increasingly consumer dominant, leading to further market segmentation, an increase in consumer knowledge, and the need for new products with shorter life span (European Travel Commission 2004: 1-2). Urry argues that tourist preferences are shifting from the pre-packaged tour or vacation is 'safe' places, to more adventurous, individually tailored "backwoods" trips and "green tourism" (1995: 151).

Interestingly, the Romanian Ministry for Integration also successfully redirected EU development moneys towards the readying of monasteries for hosting international tourism (Ministry of Integration 2003: Online). Already, Romanian international pilgrimage and religious tourism are the main income sources for many such sites. By bringing them to Occidental standards, the government's tourism promotion and burgeoning Orthodox Church pilgrimage offices support the image of Romania as Europe's spiritual stronghold (Bucuroiu 2004: 18).

The promotion of religious and agro- tourism romanticized the peasant and monastic way of life as closer to nature and therefore above the industrialized, polluted, urbanized and overanxious West. According to the European Travel Commission's Tourism Trends for Europe, this exact type of "authentic," "back to basics," educational and "spiritual holidaymaking" is predicted as the future set of demands of increasingly personalized and specialized travel (Urry 1995). Tourism demands to Central and Eastern Europe will only increase (European Travel Commission 2004: 1-2).

The architect who won the EU contract to refurbish the Agapia Monastery in Moldova for Western tourism asked

> what would beat getting the monasteries ready to meet Occidental standards with running water, heating, and a private room in the same little house as a cute nun? They'll love it! It's going to be like having a slice right out of medieval life and they can experience it, but still have the comforts. They can see how the nuns live and how they pray and all that.

The plans for the Agapia monastery will also bring in "jobs for the locals since we (the restoration firm) will be employing them to do the work" and they "can have part of the

tourism money that comes in." The architectural plans overseen by EU appointed contractors outline the minutest details of the project from the type of foundation material to the environmentally safe plumbing to be built. What the impact of this development will be on the nuns of Agapia when the monastery opens for business for 2008 is yet to be determined.[35]

The Church has also supported and even promoted the state's push for religious tourism. To the hierarchy, international attention reaffirms the role of Orthodoxy internally. If the West is coming to experience the monastic lifestyle, then Romanians definitely should. Promoting religious tourism also creates a space for Romanians in the cultural landscape of Europe where they are not solely associated with the communist past. By highlighting the medieval Golden Age of cultural height, nationalist hierarchs and politicians are reconfirming long-standing mythologies. Romania is therefore a spiritual stronghold and an example for Europe rather than a place of corruption and poverty. For Romanians, the state and Church's use of deeply rooted national mythologies is a powerful means of recreating their identities after communism. Pilgrims have a myriad of reasons to partake in pilgrimage and have innumerable ways of experiencing it. However, by partaking in an activity that focuses on nationalized saints' cults and Orthodox mythologies, beliefs, practices, etc., they are collectively reinvigorating national identities bound by religion.

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[35] In spite of the obvious similarities between religious pilgrimage and secular tourism, only reinforced by the presence of Western tourists, I am not suggesting that the authenticity of the religious experience is somehow compromised by its touristy aspects. I suggest that this form of official pilgrimage is an adaptation of pre-existing religious practices and beliefs tailored to the urban postcommunist context. Pilgrims, the Church, and monasteries never questioned the authenticity of the spiritual experience gained through participation. In fact, Patriarchy-led pilgrimages were deemed as even more authentic than informal versions.

*Conclusion*

In this chapter I described the general tenets of the pilgrimage tradition in Orthodoxy and how this practice evolved after 1989. I aimed to contextualize the reasons for the Church's 1999 decision to create the pilgrimage offices in urban centers to manage the experience. I concentrated my analysis on the pilgrims and hosts motives and experiences with such organized spiritual journeys. I wanted to show that ecclesiastical and monastic orders are not blindly following the directions set by the Holy Synod. Monasteries have particular interests in partaking in religious tourism because of the increase in revenues it offers along with the opportunities to increase the spiritual awareness of lay believers. At the same time, pilgrims are also motivated by complex reasons not all of which can be classified as spiritual or determined by the Pilgrimage Office. The fact that informal pilgrimage continued to flourish alongside the official versions also indicates that the Church is unable to control the practice. Inasmuch as pilgrimage is able to bring people together, it can also recreate social divisions. I noted how smaller versus larger scale official pilgrimages serve as means of differentiating socio-economic classes or urban Orthodox believers. Further, I highlighted how Orthodox pilgrims and Western tourists perceive one another.

Finally, I demonstrated how the Church has benefited from the intensification of pilgrimage and tourism to Orthodox sacred sites. Because these activities reaffirmed Orthodoxy as key to Romanian identity, the Church was legitimized as intermediary with the sacred and a representative voice of the majority further. Whether they were part of official pilgrimages or not, by accessing Church-sanctioned sacred sites, pilgrims experienced a reinterpretation of the past used the Golden Age of the martyr defenders of

Orthodoxy, monastic life, and intensifying popular religiosity as the crux of Romania's national identity. As places of rest for national heroes, monasteries showcased the martyrs of the nation. Regardless of their class, Orthodox Romanians shared their belief in the sacredness of the monasteries, the relics they housed, and the saints they promoted with the Church hierarchy's approval.

Pilgrimage is a nation building activity tapped by the state as well. The promotion of religious tourism to urban middle classes strengthened the Church's position since it endorsed the rediscovering of Romania's glorious and Orthodox past, picturesque landscape, spirituality, and peasant life that made the nation unique in Europe as its spiritual leader rather than a developmental laggard. The presence of Westerners in official pilgrimages and their inability to access the *har* of the monasteries they visited reconfirmed their lack of connection with God. This became a means for Romanian pilgrims to differentiate themselves as more spiritual and thus superior to the secularized and morally corrupt West. Would that mean that the readying of Romania's monasteries for increased Western tourism consumption has a missionary purpose of bringing them closer to God? Or is religious tourism simply a means of promoting the nation to others? It will be interesting to re-examine this situation if the Church and state hopes for increasing Western tourism to monasteries comes to fruition.

# Chapter 5 – Saint Stephen Celebrates His 500th Anniversary:

## Commemoration at the Heart of Nation-Building

*Introduction*

The summer of 2004 was dominated by a number of national issues. Aside from the continuing preoccupation of the public and politicians with joining the EU, Romania was also facing municipal elections in June and national elections in November. It was also a summer of corruption scandals as competing parties dug dirt on one another. Another tactic to gain support was appearing and sponsoring mass events such as Europe Day, Labour Day or the Sunday of the Romanian National Saints. Religious celebrations were an important stage for political self-promotion, and candidates vied for seats closer to the ritual action. The most important religious event that dominated the summer of 2004 was the 500th anniversary of St. Stephen the Great, at the Putna Monastery in Moldova. Deemed to be the greatest figure in Romanian history, Stephen the Great was a medieval ruler of Moldova who had gained a regional following over the past 500 years what finally culminated in his canonization in 1992. As a key national cult, the anniversary celebrations of St. Stephen involved interlocking processes of tourism, nationalism, and religion amidst global flows.

I have already described how informal miracle cults are managed by the Church through processes of canonization. I have also described the motivations and experiences of believers at formalized sacred sites such as monasteries during pilgrimage. In this chapter I explore a national saint cult and a mass pilgrimage event. Aside from rural and urban lower class pilgrims, organized pilgrimages and Western tours all converged with

the nation's political and religious leaders on July 2nd amidst a gathering exceeding 60,000 participants. In previous chapters I described the historical role of religion in nation and ethnie building, while highlighting the postcommunist reinvigoration of miracle cults and pilgrimage practices. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how these themes come together at the mass pilgrimage event in commemoration of Stephen the Great's 500th anniversary. The event exemplifies the importance of nationally recognized heroes and Golden Ages in nation-building. Both Church and state use such sacred resources to legitimize themselves vis-à-vis the masses and each other. Yet this event also demonstrates the complex interaction between various groups and interests which power holders by no means unilaterally determine.

Before delving into the intricacies of the event however, I will outline the major developments of the St. Stephen mythology since the time of his reign to his 500th anniversary to contextualize the resulting re-negotiations of meaning with respect to the his present image. By outlining the role of his mythology in ethnie and nation building through the premodern, nationalist, communist and postcommunist periods, I will demonstrate the key role the national saints cults played in nation/ethnie building, further, their ability to animate individuals, groups, and the nation today.

*Holy Warrior*

Stephen ruled the principality of Moldova for forty-seven years (1457–1504). He has become the most important figure in Romanian history whether nationalist, communist, or post-1989. This was not however possible with some generous reworking and debates over this figure, dubbed "the Great and Holy" since 1992. The context of

Stephen's rule was largely determined by the threats that Ottoman and Hungarian powers posed to Moldova. Along with Wallachia, Moldova was one of the last remaining buffers between the Turks and Catholic Hungary and his life was greatly characterized by his relationships with the aforementioned powers.

There is one aspect most critical to Stephen's image both while living and thereafter, which is his piety. It is his quintessential connection to Orthodoxy that renders some clues to his ability to muster the impressive consolidation of the Moldovan ethnic, which would become the most important sacred resource for Romanian nationalism beginning in the 18th century. In 1475, Stephen writes, "with the help of our all-Almighty God, we went against the enemies of Christendom, and we defeated them . . . and for this, let our Almighty God be praised." Before battles, he fasted with the entire army and clergy and he would fall to his knees praising God after his victories. He founded no less than 44 monasteries during his 47 years in power. The first was Putna, consecrated in 1470, which he built with the intent of its being his final resting place as well. On Stephen's battle flag was a depiction of another holy warrior, St. George, the dragon slayer. Thus, while he was characterized as violent and pleasure seeking, historians do not question his commitment to the faith and his people (Tabara 2004: 9). His defense of Moldova in no less than 36 battles (Tabara 2004: 9) and his strength of character were seen as holy (Pimen 2004: 14). Of course, Moldovan chroniclers offered nothing but praises for the *voievod*. Grigore Ureche's accounts note his piety and respect for the clergy and the populations' commitment to him in turn (Pimen 2004: 8). Foreign writers largely confirmed the accounts of their Moldovan counterparts.[36]

[36] Thus, Polish chronicler Ioannes Dlugoss writes in 1475 that Stephen

As the result of his success against the Turks, Pope Sixtus IV named Stephen "a true athlete of the Christian faith." In return, Stephen called the kings of Christendom to "be ready without delay" to battle the growing power of the Ottomans and swore

> on our Christian faith that we will stand on our feet and we will fight until death for the Christian law, we with our heads. And so you must do, by sea or by land, after which the help of Almighty God we will cut off his right hand. (in Daniel 2004: 16-17, my translation).

The Pope praised Stephen's eagerness in several responses to the call for action. In 1476, he wrote that nowhere would his feats of bravery be more appreciated than in his "eternal glory....your work against the nonbeliever Turks, the enemies of the community . . . brings brilliance to your name, for you are praised by all, united in feeling" (in Pimen 2004: 1, my translation). Yet, even after the Pope's call for a concerted effort to "defend Christianity," Stephen remained alone to repulse the Ottoman attacks. The Moldovan position grew increasingly weak as other countries, particularly Hungary, failed to aid Christ's athlete. This betrayal by the West has continued to resurface in Romanian histories of Stephen, which portray him as a quintessential hero who stood alone before the Ottoman threat to defend Europe and Christendom.

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> did not smite after this triumph (Rahova battle – Podul Inalt 1475), but rather he fasted for 40 days with water and bread and told his nation not to dare attribute the victory to his doing, but only God . . . in my opinion, he is the most worthy to be the entire world's leader, and more so has the ability to command against the Turks, with the advice, understanding and decision of all Christians while all the other Catholic princes and kings waste their time in civil strife and stupidities (in Pimen 2004: 14, my translation).

Matei Miechowscki, another Pole chronicler, calls Stephen "a triumphant and victorious man, who defeated all neighbouring kings. He is not to be counted among the heroes of our time for no reason" (in Pimen 2004: 14, my translation). Turkish chronicles did not understandably share the enthusiastic support of Christian accounts, although they did admit defeat with earnest. Orudj bin Adil's *Chronicles of the Ottoman Dynasty* noted that "because the Turkish army was tired...it could not face the Moldovan army, so the Musulman army was defeated and destroyed" (in Pimen 2004, my translation).

Stephen's role in the development of the official cult of saints and miracle working relics is also important. During his rule, Moldova experienced a period of relative independence. He founded many monasteries and in turn spurred the most flourishing period of religious life and cultural activity (Pacurariu 2005: Online, Romanian Orthodox Church 2004c). Aside from being places of worship and communities of religious specialists dedicated to the preservation of the faith, these places were also the repositories of rulers' wealth: both material, spiritual, and symbolic. Thus, during periods of Ottoman invasions, rulers often deposited their treasures for safekeeping in these sites. Because of this function, monasteries were usually built in isolated locations and often with an architecture resembling fortresses rather than places of worship. This political situation led to the proliferation of localized miracle cults and pilgrimage patterns in comparison to the mass movements in the West (Coleman & Elsner 1995: 120-123).

Another reason for the *voievods'* interest in founding monasteries was more personal. In return for their support and defense of the Church and true faith, the clergy offered *voievods'* a vow to commemorate their founder for all eternity in prayer. It was the belief that one who is commemorated ascends quicker and higher into God's kingdom. Orthodox believers generally share the notion that if one did God's work and was worthy to be commemorated by the living, s/he was in a better position when their judgment came, resulting in a better spot in God's Kingdom. The *voievods*, being devout Orthodox believers, were very concerned with their afterlives. Since the fate to the soul was not simply an equation of his/her earthly good or bad deeds, commemoration by the living was a sure way to better the deceased's lot. This concern with the commemoration

of the dead was and remained central to Orthodoxy in both its official and popular forms. This practice of establishing relatively small monasteries to house the leader and his family after death, coupled with their safe-keeping role further ensured that monasteries would be scattered and relatively secluded, impacting pilgrimage patterns. Rather than erecting a mass cathedral, *voievods* and ruling classes who could afford it preferred the smaller scale edifices. At the same time, this localizing trend also ensured that small-scale cults continued and gradually became incorporated into larger church structures (Stan 1950: 263, Pacurariu 2005: Online).

The commemoration of the *voievods* is an interesting example of the legitimacy conferring in agrarian pre-modern societies by organized religions. The relationship between ruler, Orthodox clergy, and believers was critical in the formation of the ethnie. Priest and prince became the chief protectors of languages and cultural traditions against foreign invaders. On the village level, the priests provided secular leadership (Gilberg 1984: 170) while organized religion supplied the communication channels and personnel for the diffusion of ethnic symbols and myths. Monk scribes and priests recorded and disseminated common symbols, sacred texts, myths, rituals, lifestyles, and laws, and guarded the symbolism that linked and legitimated the feudal elite to the masses, thus uniting "local traditions and rites" (Smith 1986: 36-37). As Gellner has observed, through such processes, they preserved and intensified communal sentiment and solidarity, reaffirming its distinct identity (1988: 99).

The Orthodox *voievods'* offer to protect the Church and battle in the name of God ensured the perpetuation of the religious specialist class who in turn legitimated their authority as God-chosen leaders. Through ritual, the religious class had a near-monopoly

of legitimacy ascription and the clergy had the ability to impart legitimacy to political leaders by consulting codified divine rules (Gellner 1988: 99). Stephen's relationship with his hermit *duhovnic* and spiritual guide, Daniil Sihastru, became legendary example of the close-knit relation between leader and priest consulting on state matters.

By publicly endorsing and eternally commemorating him after his death, the Orthodox clergy established Stephen, and other leaders, as heroes of the people, now rewarded for their earthly feats by God in the consciousness of the masses. These cults of rulers adapted features of the already flourishing cult of the saints which is traceable to the early Christians who commemorated the martyrs of the faith. Their relics and icons had been the focus of pilgrimages, processions, and miracle cults throughout Europe and became a rich resource of sacred symbols and mythologies for medieval rulers' cults and the national awakening of Romania less than three centuries after Stephen's death.

*Nationalist Revolutionary*

The nationalist awakening made great use of this cult of the famous dead. As the Orthodox clergy and intellectual elites promoted the Latin revival through the principalities, the heroes of past golden ages became powerful symbols used to awaken national awareness. Thus, in spite of distinct histories, Transylvania and Moldova were assimilated in Romanian nationalist mythology through the incorporation of events, heroes, and landmarks into the historical narrative of the Romanian nation. The three principalities which were to form Romania were treated as provinces of the same country rather than distinct ethnies.[37] The Great Kings were called on to reinforce the movement

[37] Whether Moldovan and Transylvanian masses were in fact distinct ethnies from the Wallachian counterpart was a political issue still debated in scholarly work. Historically, since their self-identified

from foreign interference by both secular and religious leaders. Orthodox practices of commemorating the dead, particularly the exemplary ones, became key resources for the invention of new rituals applied across the three principalities believed to collectively represent Ancient Dacia. The Orthodox saints, historical heroes, and the cults which surrounded them, including pilgrimage and other commemoration rituals, became the impetus for the cult of national glorious dead, or the martyrs of the Romanian Nation. Thus, as Orthodoxy became closely associated with the nascent state, the cult of the ruler saints began to take the forefront in the faith. Since nationalism drew its mythology from Orthodoxy, it elevated the figures which represented its aims to national level and promoted them to the masses.

The heroics of great *voievods* coalesced with the Daco-Roman descent myth to strike a chord with the masses and placed the Romanians above the socially superior to co-existing ethnies (Hungarian, Russian, German) as higher on the scale of nobility since they were the inheritors of a great civilization. They were endowed with a mission as the 'chosen' standard bearers and defenders of Latin civilization through centuries of barbarian invasions. The Romanians, as they came to be known since the 19th century, were not merely backward peasants, but more pure blooded Romans than the Romance people in the West. Having suffered under Ottoman rule, the Romanians also saw

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establishment in the 1350s, the principalities had all experienced varying forms of foreign domination. Moldova's independence period from 1352 until 1484 was in fact largely synonymous with Stephen's rule. It was also speckled with evasive efforts to become closer to Wallachia, which included a brief unification in 1600. Yet Romanian nationalists and their supporters deemed this as evidence for the self-identification of the two regions to be of the same nation and justified their joining of the two regions in 1858. In 1862, the name "Romania," the land of the Romans, was selected to label the combined territories. Nevertheless, the eastern Moldovan historical region lying between the Prut and Dniester rivers remained outside the nascent nation and continues to be an anomaly in Romanian national mythology. Scholars interpreted the fact that it did not follow suit in joining the Romanian nation to be the result of foreign domination and oppression rather than peoples' genuine will (cf.. King 1994, Bruchis 1997, Dima 1991).

themselves as the protectors of Christianity against the Turks as modeled by the medieval kings of the Golden Ages, particularly Stephen the Great, of independence from the foreign threat (Van de Vyver 1998: 89). By idealizing medieval Wallachia and Moldova as examples of freedom from foreign interference under the heroic *voievods'* leadership, religious and national elite were able to reinterpret pre-existing beliefs and practices to further their cause. They aimed to recapture this Golden Age of greatest religious, cultural activity and freedom. Thus, they successfully aligned long-standing traditions with "the yearning for a lost golden age and the collective belief in destiny through sacrifice" (Smith 2003: 256).

Romanian nationalists revered Stephen the Great. Writers Mihai Eminescu, Vasile Alecsandri, and Nicolae Iorga wrote poetry, odes, and histories in his honor (Bardas 2004: 11). Together with other key nationalists A.D. Xenopol, Ciprian Porumbescu, and Mihai Eminescu organized the gathering of over 3000 Romanians at the Putna Monastery in 1871 to celebrate the 400$^{th}$ anniversary of the church's consecration. Eminescu wrote "let us make Putna the Jerusalem of the Romanian people, and let us also make Stephen's grave the altar of our nation's conscience." (Putna Monastery 2004: 6). In 1904, historian Iorga participated in the 400the commemoration of Stephen's death at Putna once more and noted that in Stephen's "memory was always lit in the Great Church of the nation's conscience" (in Zamfir 2004: 63, my translation). In "him the Romanian people found the fullest and purest icon of its soul ... for it is when this icon is seen the clearest that a nation can obediently follow in the footsteps of its ancestor" (in Zamfir 2004: 61, my translation).

*Communist King*

During the early communist period, scholars at the Socialist Academy for the Study of Art History praised, documented, and studied Stephen's Moldovan monasteries (Institutul de Istoria Artei 1958). Even more impressive was the ongoing activity of the Holy Synod, which culminated in the 1950 decision to begin investigations to confirm the canonization of 22 national saints, including Stephen the Great and his advisor, Daniil Sihastru (Synod Act 1992: 3). After 1965, Ceausescu led an official ideological offensive against religious superstition, yet he still recognized the importance of Orthodox hierarchy in the quest for personal and regime legitimacy. When Ceausescu came to power, he even visited Putna Monastery in 1966 to pay tribute to Stephen the Great, after which pilgrimage to the site skyrocketed according to guides (Pimen 2004: 11). Particularly during the 1970s, Ceausescu's nationalist campaign included tourism promotion of Moldovan monasteries, which were now a national patrimony. Priests were not only offering historical lessons, but also religious services to arriving visitors. Foreign tourism was permitted to these sites in 1970s although Ceausescu failed to invest in their infrastructure. The fact that the Moldovan externally painted monasteries were awarded World Heritage sites status during the early 1960s by UNESCO (UNESCO 1965: 31-53) improved their funding for restoration and ability to host visitors internal and foreign. The state even promoted the pilgrimage to the Putna monastery where Stephen the Great was buried (Beeson 1982: 363).

The communist leaders nevertheless reinterpreted popular practices and traditions historically associated with Orthodoxy in light of Marxist ideology. We may see communist attempts to inscribe class struggle into progressive views of history, the

elevation of new heroes into the national pantheon, and promotion of secular values and religion-free language as indicative of a break with the sacred. Communist national cults were perfect examples of the arbitrariness of the religion/secularism division and one could argue that without the rich cosmologies or premodern ethnies, nationalism would have never had the resources for cross-class mobilization. Like his earlier nationalist predecessors, Ceausescu called on the Great Kings once more to unite the nation. He also proceeded to make revisions to their biographies as well.

This struggle for the masses was further highlighted by the regime's treatment of medieval Orthodox monasteries. This exclusively Romanian heritage was based on the importance of Orthodoxy for the masses, which clearly countered communist secularizing ideologies. The fact that Ceausescu's national heroes also founded these religious cultural treasures was also a problem (Opris 2001). Stephen, along with other great kings and heroes, was inextricably linked to the Church and Orthodoxy; his piety was undeniable. To deal with such issues, the regime revised the histories of such sites and promoted them as scenes of class struggles. Orthodox monasteries founded by Stephen and other rulers were sites of resistance against Ottoman occupation and cultural treasures built as symbols of victory against foreign oppression by national heroes rather than being interpreted as evidence of popular religiosity. [38]

In 1976, Ceausescu even began the building of the museum to showcase Stephen's past and commissioned archaeological excavations to reveal the remains of his

[38] See Sadoveanu (1965) for a nationalist take on Stephen the Great's biography full of religious references. Although he wrote the book in 1932, it was published in 1965 in spite of its overt religious undertones. Similarly, Nicolae Iorga's biography of Stephen was also published in 1966 by state pubishung house Editura pentru Literatura despite the author's clear emphasis of the *voievod's* resolution to the faith. It was re-published in commemoration of the 500th anniversary of Putna. The first edition was published in 1904 in commemoration of the 400th anniversary since Stephen's death (Iorga 1966: 5).

princely house. The latter was restored in the 1980s (Putna Monastery 2004). Again, rather than countering Stephen's popularity, Ceausescu simply focused on his secular feats. The same practice was also applied to the early nationalists like Mihai Eminescu who were quite clear on the importance of Orthodoxy for both the great kings and the nascent nation. Ceausescu glorified their call for mobilization against foreign oppression, but downplayed their piety. These aspects of Stephen's life were also the focus of academic works during this period. Historians even traced class struggle back to the Dacian Empire and discovered new kings whose names could be added to his anti-oppression pantheon. King Decebalus' resistance to the Roman colonizers became the impetus of not only archaeological digging and museum building, but also popular movies. What the great kings shared was their love for the nation, self-sacrifice, and have course, foreign betrayal.

Aside from revising the biographies of the Great Kings, Ceausescu also began creating new national hero cults modeled on the Orthodox precedent. Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu's personality cults drew on earlier Orthodox traditions (Crowther 1998: 181). Communist posters of the new heroes were reinterpretations of the icon through which saint cults were promoted by the Church (Petrescu 2004: 206). The mass pilgrimage for various state sanctioned secular events only reinforced practices of saint cults and relic veneration. The founding of mausoleums for communist heroes to ensure their eternal remembrance reinterpreted already exiting frameworks of Orthodox commemoration of the dead under the guise of atheism.[39] The mausoleums, which served as their shrines

[39] Notably, the Monument of the Unknown Soldier in Bucharest is a perfect example of the raising of the common man as the nation's exemplary hero. This combines the communist ideology that idealizes the worker and peasant, yet enlists pre-existing Orthodox frameworks shared by the masses and revised by nationalists. Again, by drawing on popular beliefs about death, afterlife and the importance of

further intended to replace the Orthodox saints of old with the regime's chosen. Of course, the miracle working powers of the communist saints were not as efficient as the saint cults of Orthodoxy, although the embalmed Lenin indeed tried to emulate Orthodox beliefs regarding saints' inability to decompose. Thus, the communist attempt to manage Orthodox popular practices of commemoration and miracle cults with their own pantheon reinforced these practices indirectly rather than negating their potency. Not surprisingly, the postcommunist situation was a great context for the intensification of such practices which focused on the same national heroes that Ceausescu also venerated. Stephen the Great is a perfect example.

*Postcommunist Saint*

After the 1989 revolution, Iliescu and Teoctist realized that new heroes had to replace communist figures as both Church and state competed to reclaim their legitimacy vis-à-vis the masses. I already noted in Chapter 3 how, the Holy Synod canonized over 30 martyr saints who suffered for the nation and the true faith in 1992, Stephen the Great among them. Because his cult had already amassed regional followings, by generalizing veneration for the entire nation, the Church put a stamp of approval reclaiming its traditional role as the judge of national heroes and saints from the communist mythmaking. Since he belonged to the martyrs of the faith and people, Stephen's piety, which the communist state had denigrated for over 40 years, became a highlight during the festivities.

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commemoration in Orthodoxy, the communist reinterpretation attempted to elevate the Unknown Soldier, or other communist holy figures, to saint status.

While the new saints were enjoying the canonization festivities of 1992, another conflict emerged in Transylvanian where the Romanian mayor wanted to change the inscription of the statue of Hungarian King Matthias Corvinus to a quote by Romanian nationalist writer Ion Creanga. Protests from the Hungarian minority ensued against the statement that that King Matthias, the "greatest king of the Hungarians," was slain by Stephen the Great. The mayor also planned to melt down the statue and use the bronze for a statue of Stephen (Gallagher 1995: 203). Once again, the battle over biographies was at the heart of nation building and legitimacy struggles (1995: 217). Yet, the fuss over Stephen could not have come at a better time. When Teoctist and Iliescu joined the nation and a mass of pilgrims at Putna on July 2nd 1992 to partake in the canonization of the national hero, to the regime, Stephen represented freedom from oppression and ethnic meddling while to the Church, the festivity was an opportunity to point out that the heroics and martyrdom of Stephen were rooted in his Orthodox piety, an example for all. The event spurred new books, articles, and news specials all about Stephen. Other mass pilgrimages also resumed during this period, or at least intensified in comparison to pre-1989 as means for believers to repudiate the communist past.

*Putna 2004*

By 2004 when I arrived, the preparations for the 500th anniversary since his death were well underway and thousands were planning to attend the official ritual commemoration at Putna, including Teoctist and Iliescu. I joined the Patriarchy's official pilgrimage to Moldova's sacred sites which culminated at Putna. Along the way we watched more pious rural and urban pilgrims walking in processions towards Putna. The

Western tourists who had joined the Patriarchy pilgrimage were either in shock or in awe of the mystical veneration of relics and icons they observed. Many of the rural pilgrims were walking and fasting for days; some were in trance or passed out from exhaustion. Unlike us, they had been camping out for the duration of the pilgrimage.

The rural pilgrims also saw the event as an opportunity to congregate with members from other villages and renew relations. Many had also come as a means to giving alms in commemoration of family dead and took the opportunity to impart offerings in their memory to the gathering pilgrims. Interestingly, Moldova is also seen by the rest of Romania as the most backward region stuck in superstition, yet my fellow urban pilgrims remarked that these peasants were "authentic," more "devoted" and worthy of admiration for their piousness. Even within our group, pilgrims differentiated each other based on this perceived authenticity. As the tour progressed towards July 2nd and Putna, they thrived to emulate the examples of the real pilgrims under the priest's guidance.

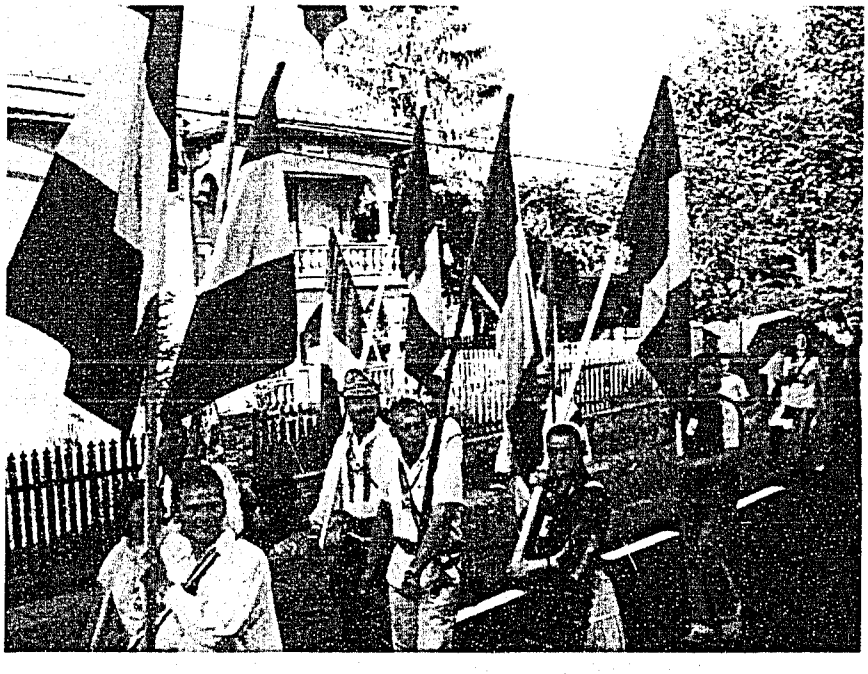

**Figure 15 Walking to Putna in traditional costumes**

**Figure 16 Pilgrims arriving at Putna**

Although they were happy to share the occasion with the Westerners, pilgrims also saw them as tourists and as not really understanding the event's significance. They pitied their lack of soul and faith, which their co-nationals so feverishly displayed in the mass pilgrimage. Whereas the foreign tourist was coming to see the aesthetics of the UNESCO recognized monasteries and the rustic countryside, the Romanian Orthodox pilgrims also appreciated the power of the sacred within these, thereby reaffirming their superiority as true believers vis-à-vis the secular West. They were able to access the sacred site with special privileges of being with the Patriarchy and have their prayers heard by God as well, perhaps even be granted a miracle if not contentment with rediscovering their roots and renewing their faith.

The actual event at Putna was managed by the Church and state. The monastery had been barricaded and army squadrons had been installed to preserve order throughout.

Guns drawn, they controlled who and how many pilgrims would be allowed within the monasteries outer walls and inner courtyard where the hierarchy and political leaders along with other important figures were separated from the masses. The Patriarch and bishops performed the service while the masses were relegated to the surrounding hills, clearly marking the differentiation of access to the sacred by class. Of course, those who walked for days to be at the site on this particular holy day only to be pushed away by the barrel of a gun at the gate of the journey's destination were furious. Being with the Patriarchy got the official pilgrimage in the monastery but not into the main courtyard and we were left to struggle within the masses to reach a little closer. The panic of the crowd led to constant fights reaching riotous level on several occasions with the army stepping in to beat the instigators out of the crowds. For all the sacredness of the event, people had become so focused and angry about being marginalized from the service that they were generally complaining about the abuse of the government taking over their event. They did not blame the Church and rather saw that the politicians wanted to be undisturbed by regular folk and usurped the best seats to ensure their best access to the *har* of the event.

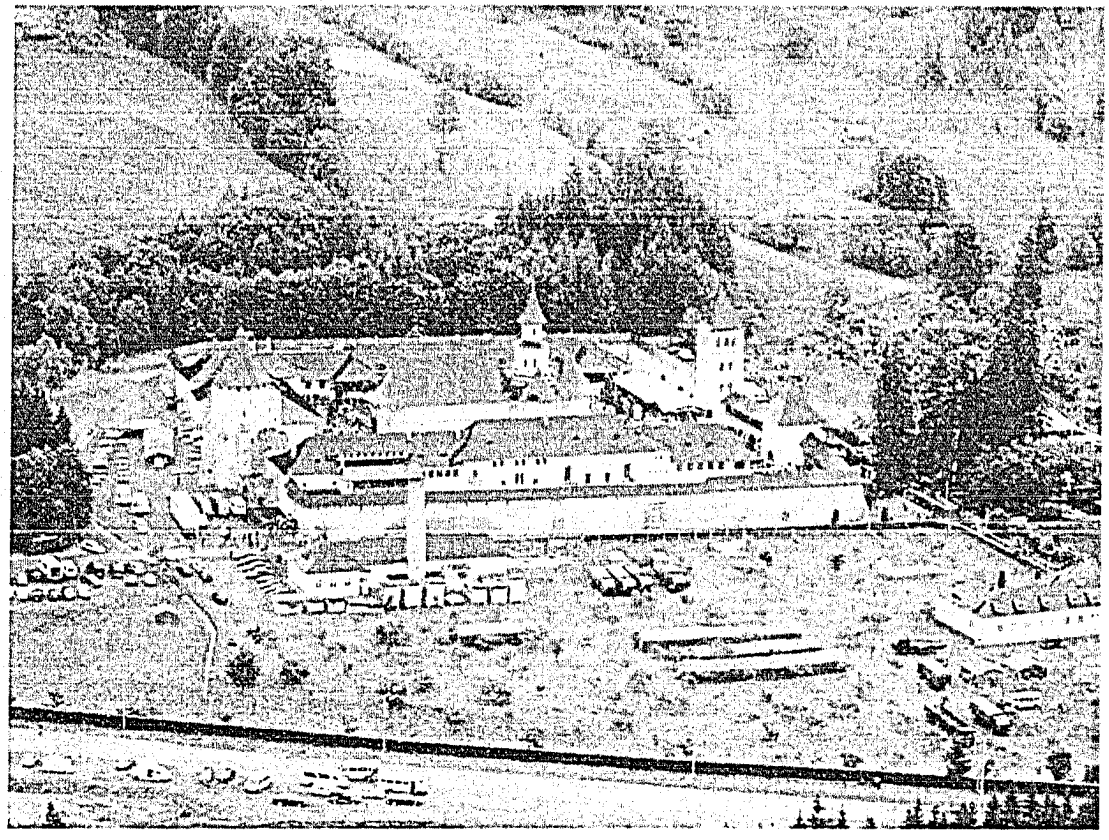

**Figure 17 Army barricades surround Putna**

As the day progressed, the crowds trickled to the hills surrounding Putna, conversed, had picnics to mark the end of the fast, and generally relaxed until the service ended. The ritual had been broadcast on television, radio, and loudspeakers so they could hear it in the background as well. Some were also in prayer, others listened to the speakers, but most were immersed in conversations. If they had been listening, they would have heard Teoctist's praise of great medieval king and saint Stephen the Great's piety, and his defense of the nation, bringing it to unsurpassed glory. They would hear his call for the nation's leaders to recapture this Golden Age by following Stephen's example. He called for closer relations and consultation between Church and state, as Stephen and other national heroes had done in the past. Only by following the exemplary

collaborations of past great leaders and priests could the nation survive the pangs of globalization and become the world's beacon of faith amidst terror, wars, and misguided faith.

Radio and television crews captured his message and transmitted it throughout the country. Thus, when I returned to Bucharest, those who followed the event on television were not aware of the conflicts I experienced at Putna. They witnessed an orderly spectacle dominated by the hierarchy and legitimized by the presence of politicians and 60,000 Romanians. The viewers I talked to about the event saw it as a unifying force for the nation in the memory of its greatest hero. Rather than hearing protests, they witnessed a cohesive message from the hierarchy calling for closer Church-state relations in the context on increasing globalization and Westernization. The event at Putna was the beginning of an intensifying campaign of aligning Iliescu's Social Democrats with the Orthodox Church to increase popular support for the coming elections. Considering their lagging public image as corrupt, the PSD tried to appeal to the masses over the intensifying competition closely aligning themselves with the Orthodox Church and religious morality.

**Figure 18 Patriarch Teoctist at Putna**

*Conclusion*

In this chapter, I traced the mythology of Stephen the Great from his reign as medieval *voievod* of Moldova through 500 years of transformations as a key sacred resource in ethnic and nation building. His latest reincarnation as an example of national pride, renewal and piety is particularly appropriate as postcommunist Romanians faces an uncertain future in Europe. The anniversary event provided an opportunity for the Church to promote the myth of ethnic election and the conviction of Romanians being chosen for a covenant or mission to preserve their authenticity in the face of capitalism's erosion of morality and even becoming an example for Europe. (Numerous Church publications confirmed this further such as Pimen 2004, Daniel 2004).

This anniversary event represents a convergence of the themes I have so far discussed. The refashioned mythology of St. Stephen symbolizes Romania's Golden Age

as an Orthodox free nation once again facing the dangers of oppression from Others, this time Westernization. The fact that Orthodox hierarchs were at the centre of the event also demonstrates the postcommunist Church's attempt to resume its traditional place at the "centre of the fortress." The presence of the statesmen as a means of approval for the event and what it represents reinforced the role of the Church. Romanian pilgrims are also incorporated in the spectacle, though differentiated according to class and status. Only those who are important are permitted by the army into the center of Putna; regular people witness the event outside the monastery. Clearly, the site, the sacra and associated access to *har* which draws the masses is controlled by the state (through the army) and mitigated by Orthodox hierarchy through ritual.

The protest by believers regarding the monopolization of the event by the elite demonstrates that participants are not passive by-standers in power-holders' spectacles. Despite the conflicts however, the event still had the ability to act as a strong means of nation-definition and formation. Because the anniversary mobilized potent cultural resources and sacred foundations based on existing religious belief-systems entwined with a long-standing sense of common ethnicity, the mythology, rituals, and sacra associated with Saint Stephen had the ability to suspend divisions and propel its members into a reinterpretation of their community as a cultural and political nation. Further, it reinforced the yearning to recover and realize the spirit of golden ages of communal heroism and creativity. The event strengthened the belief in the regenerative power of mass and individual sacrifice to ensure a glorious destiny as well as the importance of commemorating the community and its heroes (Smith 2003: 255). As Europe's New Jerusalem, Putna also represented Romania's uniqueness as a spiritual leader. The

inability of Western tourists to appreciate and participate in the event confirmed a sense 'mission' to Orthodox pilgrims.

**Figure 19 Crowding to get into the Putna**

## TOURISM, NATIONALISM, AND POST-COMMUNIST ROMANIA:

### *PILGRIMS AND TOURISTS/HOSTS AND GUESTS* AT THE CRUX OF EAST AND WEST

During my last week of fieldwork in Romania, my grandmother and I were having coffee and a conversation about the future of the country in Europe. She declared that "of course things will be better if we get in right?" I asked her why she thought integration would help Romania and upon reflecting she admitted "I don't know I guess – that's just what the politicians say, and everybody agrees". I pointed to some of the downfalls of globalization in Romania, which included the increasing drug and sex trade alongside multinational corporations making gains from the country's supply of resources and cheap labor and my grandmother replied that while she saw these issues too, "for some reason people still think it'll get better when we're in."

In this concluding section I will explore the issue of European integration further. After drawing the themes of the last five chapters together as examples of religious and national reinvigoration in postcommunist Romania, I turn my analysis to the interconnections between religion, nationalism, and tourism. My aim is to make some final points regarding the future of Romania's religious reinvigoration as basis for national identity construction in the context of European integration.

*Varying Aspects of Religious Reinvigoration*

In Chapter 1, I explored nationalism and religion through the premodern, nationalist, and communist periods to highlight the role of the Orthodox religion in ethnic

and nation forming by focusing on the Church and state. This relationship has historically been interdependent, although the Church was at times deemed as dominated by the state, particularly since the national awakening and during communism. In turn, the Church is seen as an aide for the state's control over the masses. In Chapter 2, I have argued that this view does not adequately recognize the complexity of this relationship, especially after 1989. The increasing global flows, especially from the so-called West, have created a context in which Church and state face new challenges as they struggle to maintain legitimacy vis-à-vis each other, the Romanians populace, and the international scene. The structural opportunity of 1989 allowed the Church to re-emerge on the public scene with impressive success. The Church hierarchy was able to become a key player on the political stage as the morality compass of the Orthodox nation. The Church's stance on abortion, homosexuality, education, and joining the West has proven that it is a powerful force in national politics since the revolution. While regimes have changed with elections, the Church's continuity has increased its legitimacy vis-à-vis the masses who view politicians with suspicion.

Of course, the Church is not successful in all its quests, like banning proselytism or having their bishops become senators (Ionescu 1996: 24-27). Thus, at Putna in 2004, Patriarch Teoctist called for even closer relations between Church and state that mirrored those of medieval rulers whose closest confidants on state matters were priests. We cannot assume the Church's political success is wholly unchallenged. The cases of the still un-materialized Nation's Salvation Cathedral and the Vacaresti group are examples of direct challenges to the Church's legitimacy that bring its implications with the communist yoke to the fore. The same claims the Church makes for martyrdom for their

compromises during communism, are interpreted as betrayals of the people, the nation, and the faith. Aside from such explicit protests, the Church is also challenged from the masses of believers as well.

In Chapter 3, I explored religious reinvigoration in everyday lives to add a deeper understanding of the postcommunist situation to top level analyses of the Church and state. While numerous Romanian authors have argued that the country's religious reinvigoration is not authentic because of the population's lack of church attendance (Barbu 1999, Preda 2004, Mungiu-Pippidi 1998, Stan & Turcescu 2000), I demonstrated that popular Orthodoxy is in fact becoming an increasingly important part of people's everyday lives. To showcase this, I concentrated my analysis on the complex relationship between official Church-endorsed worship of saints and the proliferation of informal veneration of unofficial relics after 1989. I argued that informal miracle cults play an important role in shaping formal religious practice, interpersonal and communal relationships. Informal miracle cults serve as a powerful ways through which believers create meaning in their lives that reach beyond what we may define as religious. As I have demonstrated, Lacatus cult participants were attracted to the site because they hoped for miracles, but also because it provided them with an opportunity to create new relationships with believers, exchange information, and relieve social isolation.

The Church's ability to manage unofficial cults by incorporating them into official practice through canonization processes is key to the ecclesiastical structure's ability to continually adapt to changing contexts and maintain its relevancy in followers' lives. In the case of postcommunist Romania, the Church is also able to appropriate miracle cult figures such as Ilie Lacatus and Ilie Cleopa as examples of its persecution

during communism as a means of also legitimizing its suffering alongside these martyrs and the population. By legitimizing informal cults, the Church re-affirms its role as true intermediary between the masses and the sacred. Although cult participants' direct experience with the sacred via miracle cults may at first seem to challenge the Church's role as intermediary, it is this flex in Church practice that ensured its reproduction through centuries. Direct experiences with the sacred are at the heart of Orthodoxy and without it the Church would greatly suffer. The process through which informal charismatic miracle cults reach generalized status allows the Church to manage direct experiences that have a powerful ability to demonstrate God's power to believers. The tangibility of miracles through *har*-ful relics, icons, or living practitioners ensures that believers bear witness to the real-ness of God and the saints, and to their ability to interfere in everyday lives for the worthy. This is why miracle cult participants often saw their experiences to reinforce their 'return to the Church' to ensure they led their lives as good believers. Not surprisingly, it is this promise of a direct experience of the sacred that draws believers to generalized cult sites such as Putna to venerate national saints like Stephen the Great. These contain have even more *har* than informal miracle sites and sacra. The fact that they are managed by ecclesiasts reinforces this belief and legitimizes the Church as the authenticator of and intermediary with the sacred. The Church recognized the popularity of pilgrimage and miracle cults and took on the direct management of believers' experience through canonization activities and pilgrimage offices.

As I demonstrated in Chapter 4, the pilgrimage offices offer spiritual rejuvenation through Church-authenticated pilgrimages to well-established sacred sites in and outside

Romania. I described how these pilgrimages seem to resemble secular tourism and noted that for the urban participants it attracts, it remains a popular and authentic means of religious participation. Aside from the rediscovery of spirituality, the picturesque Romanian countryside and Orthodox past such official pilgrimages offer participants, urban pilgrims also benefit from increased social prestige. By accessing the *har*-ful sites through Patriarchy led tours, pilgrims deem their experiences to be more authentic than other informal versions. Because the cost of these pilgrimages is high, access is relegated to those who can afford it. The segmentation of pilgrimage simultaneously reinforces existing social and class divisions as well as a shared Orthodox morality and past. Official pilgrimage is a means of bridging grassroots miracle cults and tourism into a Church-managed activity that ensured the correct religious education of the participants and brought in considerable revenues to restore monasteries and expand services.[40]

Nevertheless, official pilgrimages, sacred sites, or Church services did not replace informal practices; rather, the Church offered yet another means of religious participation. The Church did not outwardly condone informal pilgrimage or miracle cults. Official Orthodoxy harnesses participants' enthusiasm into a controlled adaptation of the practice which still allowed for informal means to co-exist. The Church even reinforced the practice by providing proper guidance to veneration in the form of publications, sermons, official pilgrimages and sacred sites/sacra.

[40] Diana Webb (2001) discusses how medieval pilgrimage in the West is credited with prompting the development of travel infrastructure and why monasteries were so vehemently competing for the best attractions, which definitely bears mention and comparison to procommunist pilgrimage reinvigoration in Romania. Stewart Perowne 1976 work also summarizes the main sites and traditions of pilgrimage in Christendom.

I have also described Church and state's increased promotion of consumption at Orthodox sacred sites and of monastic life and pilgrimage. These processes can be interpreted as a feature of disorganized capitalism characterized by the predominance of culture, consumption, and concern for the environment.[41] Thus, tourism is increasingly consumer dominant, leading to further market segmentation, an increase in consumer knowledge, and the need for new products with shorter life span. John Urry argues that tourist preferences are shifting from the pre-packaged tour or vacation in 'safe' places, to more adventurous, individually tailored backwoods trips and "green tourism" (1995: 151), pilgrimage clearly fitting this trend of preferences. Cohen argues that this change towards mass tourism is predicated by the "gradual abandonment of the traditional sacred image of the cosmos, and the awakening of interest in the culture, social life and environment of others" (Cohen 1996: 93). This change has resulted in modern tourism movement away from the centre and to the periphery (1996: 94), as is the case of pilgrimage to rural Moldovan monasteries.

The management of the informal miracle cults and commoditization of monastic life for urban middle class consumption by the Church through pilgrimage offices offers an opportunity for the tourist to experience the Other, in this case the rural, monastic, yet co-national Other. For the Western tourist, it offers a piece of medieval life, romanticized as closer to nature and immersed in superstition and backwardness. Yet alongside the organized pilgrimage and Western tours, we still find the rural and informal believers accessing not only sites of mass pilgrimage and tourism attractions, but also partaking in

[41] See Urry 1995, Cohen 1996, Nash 1989, 1996, Smith 1989 for discussions of the changes in tourism demands since the 20th century towards market segmentation.

informal miracle cults in cemeteries and other unofficial sites they deem as sacred. Official promotion of religious tourism by the Church and state has clearly not replaced already existing local practices.

Further, we cannot lament the impact of tourism on underdeveloped countries and emphasize the overpowering of local peoples by the market system and national schemes to increase revenue at their expense (Nash 1989, Smith 1989: 103). Since cultures are not static, changes must be examined from the host's point of view while considering agency.[42] As Amanda Stronza (2001) and Theron Nunez (1989) note, theories on tourism that stress the binary relationships between hosts and guests as producers and consumers as dominant and oppressed are unilateral conceptualizations leading to partial views. Tourism can be a vehicle of empowerment, self-representation, and cultural revival since "locals may purposely choose to reinvent themselves through time, modifying how they are seen and perceived by different groups of outsiders" (Stronza 2001: 271). The monasteries which receive the pilgrims and tourists are a perfect example of this point. Some are becoming hot-spots and increasingly specializing in hosting and many exploring means through which they can attract more visitors, and the prestige and funds they bring with them. Some of the ways they have attempted to increase their appeal include increasing their relic depository, upgrading amenities, and offering specialized religious services. Aside from internal pilgrims, the Famous Five externally painted monasteries deemed World Heritage Sites by UNESCO have also benefited from the opening of Romania to global flows (UNESCO 2004a, 2004b).

In Chapter 5, I concentrated on the anniversary pilgrimage to St. Stephen the Great's resting place because it brought together all segments of Romanian society,

politicians, and Orthodox hierarchs, but also foreign tourists from Western European nations. I explored the historical development of Stephen the Great's mythology to demonstrate his changing yet constant role as Romania's quintessential national hero. His latest reinterpretation as both a great medieval warrior and Orthodox 'good believer,' have rendered his resting place at Putna as a site of mass pilgrimage and tourism attraction for external and internal audiences. The interests of the Church hierarchy, politicians, various classes of believers, and foreign tourists demonstrate the complex relations between nationalism, religion, tourism, and identity construction on the national and local level while pointing to the ongoing struggles for representation in the global ecumene and Romania's place in an integrating Europe. The event was way to attract international attention to Romania's authentic Orthodox cultural heritage and the development monies to support it, while reaffirming ecumenical relations. The Church also saw the event as an opportunity to gain more ground vis-à-vis the state and to push Orthodoxy to the core of Romanian national image. For politicians, the mass pilgrimages were opportunities to recall traditions where leaders gained support by partaking in religious activities and by supporting the Church's vision they hoped to gain their influence over the masses in the coming elections.

The June municipal and November national elections made 2004 an interesting year. To appeal to the masses over the intensifying competition, the ruling PSD party attempted to closely align itself with the Orthodox Church and religious morality as I have demonstrated in the previous chapter. Leaders took the best seats in Orthodox pilgrimages and processions, and even sponsored them, while increasing funding for the building and restoration of churches and monasteries. This elbow rubbing with the

Orthodox Church also led to a refocus of the 2004 tourism campaigns on Romania's Orthodox monasteries as authentically Romanian attractions as EU development moneys began readying monasteries for hosting international tourism. By bringing monasteries to Occidental standards, the government's tourism promotion and burgeoning Orthodox Church pilgrimage offices supported the image of Romania as Europe's New Jerusalem and spiritual stronghold.

The promotion of religious and agro- tourism romanticized the peasant and monastic way of life as closer to nature and therefore superior to the industrialized and polluted West, which confirmed the European Travel Commission's observation of increasing tourist preference for authentic, educational, and "spiritual holidaymaking" (European Travel Commission 2004: 1-2). This type of tourism promotion to urban middle classes reinforced the rediscovery of the nation's glorious and Orthodox past, picturesque landscape, spirituality, and peasant life that made Romania unique in Europe. Considering Western ideas about Romania as a backward nation, this mythology fashioned the country as spiritual leader rather than a developmental laggard. This mythology was promoted by both Church and state. It struck a chord with the masses since it incorporated the sacred resources of the golden age of the pious *voievods* and great kings, monastic life, and intensifying popular religiosity as the crux of Romania's national identity.

Yet for all this effort, in November 2004, Traian Basescu, leader of the allied liberal official opposition (*Alianta Partidul Naitonal Democrat-Partidul Democrat*), was voted in to replace President Iliescu and the PSD party. Basescu was opposed to various Orthodox Church initiatives, including the Nation's Salvation Cathedral, and based his

campaign on the promise that Romania will join the EU by 2007. What his regime's revision of histories and corresponding reinterpretation of national image for tourism promotion will be is yet to be determined. Of course, the Church's new strategies to ensure their place as morality compass will also adapt to emerging contexts as will informal religious practices.

*The Future of Romanian Orthodoxy in an Integrated Europe*

Several Patriarchy administrators I interviewed in 2004 still warned against the uncritical adoption of Western systems and values that cultural imperialism and encroaching capitalism will impose on the nation, threatening the Romanian way of life. Although the West and the EU have been regarded by the Church as secularizing forces threatening its position, the Church is showing clear changes in its stance vis-à-vis the West. The Church has realized that the population and the state have consistently shown their commitment to joining the West regardless of the cautions, and have thus required redress on the hierarchy's part. Rather than protesting the EU, the Church had already begun placing itself at the crux of Romanian national identity in the context of the European Union. By stressing the role of the faith as vector for the preservation of Romanian identity through the ages of tribulation (Mungiu-Pippidi 1998, Stan & Turcescu 2000), the Church claims that its guidance will not only ensure Romanians will not lose their way amidst globalizing forces, but that the nation will serve as an example to the world and serve as its source of religious reinvigoration. The fact that Basescu won the national elections in 2004 despite the Church's support for Iliescu and the PSD, is prompting the Church to reconsider their position of Western integration even more.

This debate is one among many on the future of nations and religions in the European Union. Part of integrating Europe's nations under a constitution agreed upon by various nationalities and faiths has been a challenge for world leaders. The EU Constitution has actually been accused to be a Christian missionary tool because of particular articles which support such denominations (Carp 2004: 301, Preda 2004: 320). Thus, the EU's attempt to account for diversity and allow for religious freedoms has resulted in a boost of interfaith dialogues regarding the role of religion in the Europe Union. According to Joseph Ratzinger, who would become the new Pope of the Roman Catholic Church in 2005, Christianity is a natural means of unifying the various peoples of the continent into a new integrated Europe (2002: 519). In fact, where would Europe be if it were to discount "the corrective elements which stem from the great tradition [of Christianity] and humanity's greatest ethical tradition?" (2002: 523).

For Orthodoxy, this push has reinforced the already existing pan-Orthodox and pan-Christian ecumenical activities, particularly the relations between the Anglican, Catholic, and Orthodox Churches. In Romania, as I noted in regards to official pilgrimages, the exchange of believers, clerics, and ideas between these three faiths has witnessed a major growth. Thus, the state's push to join the EU has necessarily increased the importance of the Church because part of the EU's mandate is to integrate religious bodies, especially those of national churches (Preda 2004: 352-354).

In a collection of theological essays on the social thought of the Church, Patriarch Teoctist opens the volume with a call for increased Christian ecumenicity. He notes the mending relations of the Church with the Greek Catholic minority and Pope John Paul's 1999 visit to Romania as key efforts of his Church towards these ends (Patriarch Teoctist

2002: 6). Together with other Orthodox churches, there is a need to recognize and target missionary efforts towards the "common ecumene." In fact, "our Orthodoxy, along with Romania's entire spiritual dowry, could constitute an inspiring power for the maintenance and enrichment of Europe's Christian spirit" (2002: 7). With the union of European nations, theologians are also contemplating the union of the Christian churches of the continent as well. Thus, after hundreds of years since the split with Rome, Eastern Orthodox churches are increasing serious ecumenical dialogue (Ica 2002a: 52-53). One result is to also mend the dividing line of Europe which has historically been determined by the division between the Eastern and Western denominations of Christianity (Spidlik 2002: 390).

In fact, Patriarchy administrators I interviewed noted that in a Europe screaming for spiritual guidance, "Orthodoxy is the flame that will see it through." Even priests and believers I interviewed remarked on several occasions that Romania spiritual strength and long history entwined with "the original faith" will place it as "the leader of the world in terms of spirituality." One priest in Bucharest remarked that "Westerners are converting to Orthodoxy now because they recognize that this is the right way." This is also why Western tourists are increasingly visiting Orthodox monasteries. Theologians are attributing these factors to a reawakening of religiosity in the Occident as well (Clemet 2002: 516-517); the West is looking to the East as a model of spirituality and guide to rediscover its roots.

Clearly, intensifying global flows are not simply eradicating religion and nationalism; in this case, they help reinvigorate it. Rather than assuming that increasing transnational movement will eradicate nations and religions, these examples of

reinvigoration demonstrate that we must examine the durability, dissolution, and rise of nations and ethnies through the mobilization of pre-existing sacred foundations (1996: 7). European nationalisms draw their mythologies from religious (Christian and Judaic) pre-modern beliefs and practices and this case certainly demonstrates that the process of inter-borrowing is never complete. Romania's religious reinvigoration confirms that Church and state, as well as nationalism and religion, have, and continue to be, interdependent amidst increasing global flows, miraculous relics, reinvented saints and individual or group interests.

While I concentrated my analysis on a postcommunist Romania, Eliade made a similar point over 40 years ago when he commented on the expectation of Western nations that in former colonies' "'mythical behavior'" will disappear as a result of acquiring more political independence"(1963: 3). I hope I have at least partially painted an adequate picture of the complexity of Romanian Orthodox spirituality. What is certain is that the sacred will continue to shape everyday realities and political events. Romania is certainly not unique in this aspect as events since 2001 have so aptly revealed. As Eliade put it,

> What is to happen in a more or less distant future will not help us understand what has just happened. What we most need is to grasp the meaning of these strange forms of behavior, to understand the cause and the justification for these excesses. For to understand them is to see them as human phenomena, phenomena of culture, creations of the human spirit and not as the pathological outbreak of instinctual behaviors, bestiality, or sheer childishness. There is no other alternative. Either we do our outmost to deny, minimize, or forget these excesses,

taking them as isolated examples of "savagery" that will vanish completely as the tribes have been "civilized," or we make the necessary effort to understand the mythical antecedents that explain and justify such excesses and give them a religious value (1963: 3-4).

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