

Zitierhinweis

Panaiteescu, Damian: Rezension über: Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu, Patimă și desfătare. Despre lucrurile mărunte ale vieții cotidiene în societatea românească (1750–1860), București: Humanitas, 2015, in: Südost-Forschungen, 76 (2017), S. 366-368, <https://recensio-stag.lorax.syslab.com/r/b738cbb608934ccf982d8b50bcdcc6fe>



copyright

Dieser Beitrag kann vom Nutzer zu eigenen nicht-kommerziellen Zwecken heruntergeladen und/oder ausgedruckt werden. Darüber hinausgehende Nutzungen sind ohne weitere Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber nur im Rahmen der gesetzlichen Schrankenbestimmungen (§§ 44a-63a UrhG) zulässig.

und die deutschsprachige Forschung einig, dass die Komitate das Rückgrat des ständischen Widerstandes bilden“ (57 und schon 14) wünschenswert gewesen, denn die Verwaltungs- und Entscheidungspraxis in manchen Komitaten scheint gerade die ältere Forschung zu bestätigen. Das Innenverhältnis zwischen Patron und Klient vermag manche Fragen in Bezug auf patrimoniale Herrschaftsstrukturen zu beantworten. Allerdings kann die Lage der Untertanen, d. h. derer, die ganz wesentlich zur Wertschöpfung der Grundherrschaften beitrugen, so nur partiell beleuchtet werden. Hier sind andere Quellen, wie etwa Akten des Herrenstuhls (*sedes dominalis*) oder des Komitatsgerichts (*sedes judiciaria* oder *sedria*) gefragt. Doch eine Annäherung an die Untertanen war auch nicht die Absicht der Autoren. Aber: Das sind unbedeutende Mäkeleien an einer brillanten, extrem arbeitsintensiven und beispielhaften Forschungsarbeit, die hoffentlich zur Nachahmung anregt.

Tübingen

Karl-Peter Krauss

Constanța VINTILĂ-GHIȚULESCU, Patimă și desfătare. Despre lucrurile mărunte ale vieții cotidiene în societatea românească (1750-1860) [Leidenschaft und Entzücken. Über die Kleinigkeiten des Alltags in der rumänischen Gesellschaft (1750-1820)]. București: Editura Humanitas 2015. 484 S., ISBN 978-973-50-4955-3, RON 47,20

“Patimă și desfătare” continues Vintilă-Ghițulescu’s series on the Wallachian and Moldavian societies in the 18th and 19th centuries. It reconstructs detailed scenes and patterns of daily life in this period and approaches some important themes that have so far been neglected in Romanian historiography.

The 1st chapter deals with the daily nutritional practices of both upper and lower classes, the author paying considerable attention to social differences, oriental influences, the importance of faith and superstitions in establishing the daily diet and to the introduction of new crops (tomatoes, potatoes), the import of other comestibles (pineapple, sugar) and western culinary practices.

Chapter 2 examines the popularisation of civilising models in the two Romanian Principalities. The author compares the more conservative, boyar’s model, promoted by Ienachita Vacarescu (in whose vocabulary the Greek word *ipolipsis* – respectability, reputation – occupies a central place) with the western model, promoted by Dimitrie Țichindeal (160f.) and Anton Pann, whose manual about good manners was influenced by Erasmus (127-132). Vintilă-Ghițulescu also stresses the fact that boyars would on occasion employ courteous behaviour dissimulation, to conceal sentiments, especially fear, in front of foreign observers (132).

Chapter 3 analyses the body, hygiene and body embellishment. The author emphasises, like in her previous book, the lack of hygiene, the pervading public squalor: no underwear

was used (182), people rarely washed themselves (193, 200f.) and changed their clothes (188), the use of handkerchiefs was uncommon (193-196). Sanitary education was ineffective and hygienic measures were applied with great difficulty (253).

Chapter 4, entitled “Daily Universe”, is mainly concerned with the same themes as the previous one: the lack of public hygiene, access to water, the insalubrious state of both rural and urban spaces. Here, the author also discusses the problem of stray dogs and proposes an interesting parallel between privy and politics (300f.).

The 5th chapter, about sociability and conviviality, is thematically connected with the 2nd chapter. The author describes, in a somewhat random order, the world of the salon, ballroom, coffee house and theatre and also the new forms of masculinity, gardening, repose, taverns, daily fears, disturbances of wild animals, public feasts, the bell and semantron, which set the rhythm of daily life, bathing and laughter.

The next chapter approaches the public health system and touches on aspects connected to chapter 3: the organisation of hospitals and rest homes, the role of doctors and midwives, quack remedies for the poor and spa visits for the boyars.

The book concludes with aspects about death: testaments, the spectacle of funerals, the public organisation of cemeteries and the supervision of the gravediggers. One of the most interesting points made in this chapter is the opinion that modernity makes death more public (447) and something like a commodity. In the author’s own words: “the newspaper makes the transition to commercial death. Everything becomes available and it’s for sale” (461).

The multitude of topics addressed by the book is impressive, yet a few motifs surface continually throughout the book. One is the noticeable expansion of state intervention during this period. The state attempted to bring under regulation commerce, public hygiene, pharmacies, grave digging services, dental medicine. It tried to impose sumptuary laws and the cultivation of the potato. It banned bathing in public places, obscene theatrical plays, the burying of the dead in churches and cities. Despite the relative failure of these policies, the persistence with which they were constantly restated may have contributed to the expansion of state infrastructure and to the strengthening of its legitimacy to interfere in additional domains.¹

Vintilă-Ghițulescu is also very attentive to the issue of social inequality. Even though she cautiously admits that, because of the nature of the sources, hers is “for the most part the story of the rich [...]”. It is the story of those who had something to say, of those who had the power to say something” (462), the book offers valuable information about the poor lower classes. Most of this information relates to the image of the commoner, in opposition to which others, boyars and middle classes, defined themselves. The lower strata were identified by derogatory links to millet (25), pastrami (46), catfish as opposed to surgeon (79), the pipe as opposed to hookah (155), walking as opposed to carriage rides (328) and with hora as opposed to imported European dances (340). The commoners were portrayed as lacking manners (128f.), the physicians visiting them only after the boyars and sometimes avoiding them (407, 413). The Gypsies were portrayed as always starving

(79), having a specific odour (229) and when they passed away they were simply thrown into the common pits (449).

Even more interesting are those passages in which the underprivileged themselves speak, revealing something about their own universe and the way in which they cope with their social position: the resistance to change of the peasants (411, 425), the ridicule of a master by one young servant, in the absence of the former (376), the frenzy of Manea the Lunatic, who was, due to his alleged mental illness, tolerated when he yelled in the streets: “death to all boyars!” (394). And Theodor Merișescu, a fugitive young boyar who came to work as a day labourer in a vineyard, could hardly endure the rough language of his mismatched co-workers, who mocked him because of his fancy clothes (177f.).

On the other hand, it seems that the author does not position herself critically towards one type of sources frequently cited: the contemporary modernizing literature that emphasised the backwardness of those who didn’t renounce the old oriental ways and didn’t participate in the de-ottomanisation of Romanian society (161f., 142f., 147, 155, 214f., 465). She refers to perennial national features when she writes: “There is something undefined in the fibre of this nation. Could it be laziness, negligence, carelessness, deriding? I cannot easily find an answer” (281). She makes the link between 18th and 19th centuries society and that of the early 21st century more clearly when she qualifies some early 19th-century critique of the ignorance and preconceptions of peasants and the laziness of the city dwellers as “more present than we would like to believe” (386, see also 466). These passages, which point to the responsibility of ordinary people for delaying the modernisation of the Principalities, contrast with the author’s sympathetic descriptions of the poor, in which they are portrayed rather as victims: “Poverty is the only certainty [...]; small people are losing the little that they have, worn out by taxes, maladies, bitterness and sadness.” To them, “every day brings nothing but misery” (464).

By using a wide range of unpublished and published sources, the author convinces us once again that the lack of sources for the history of Romanian principalities before 1860 is just a myth (14f.). This book is a welcome incentive towards further research on this period and more interest on the part of Romanian scholars in “Alltagsgeschichte” and history from below but also points towards the need for more theoretically robust comparative approaches.

Bucharest

Damian Panaitescu

¹ For an excellent analysis of this topic, to which Vintilă-Ghițulescu’s research could bring more insight, see Vasile OLARU, *Writs and Measures. Symbolic Power and the Growth of State Infrastructure in Wallachia, 1740-1800*, PhD Thesis, Central European University, Budapest 2013.