

SIMION FLOREA MARIAN AND THE LEGENDS ABOUT THE BEGINNINGS OF MOLDAVIA

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Abstract: *The works of Simion Florea Marian belong to the stage of a full assertion of the Romanian spirituality which found expression in Bukovina in the second half of the nineteenth century. His historical legends, traditions, and mythology written and published over the years have had a great impact on the Romanian culture, influencing the way in which people could value their spiritual heritage. His legacy is most complex, featuring various aspects; hence the historiography dedicated to the scholar Simion Florea Marian should be solid and extensive. In this study, we have aimed to highlight the historical legends of the 13th and 14th centuries and, if possible, to compare them with the Moldavian chronicles, the processes, and events from an important period of the Middle Ages, from the great Mongolian invasions until the completion of the second Romanian mediaeval state. The geographic locations, which are quite precise in the texts Simion Florea Marian put into circulation, have been of great help in our attempt; this is important considering that fragments of his legends intertwine with actual historical events.*

Keywords: *Simion Florea Marian, Bukovina, personality, legend, Moldavia, Tatars, geographic location, Dragoș, Sas.*

Rezumat: *Simion Florea Marian, o personalitate a culturii bucovinene și legendele despre începuturile Țării Moldovei. Lucrările lui Simion Florea Marian aparțin etapei de afirmare deplină a spiritualității românești care s-a manifestat în Bucovina în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea. Legendele sale istorice, tradițiile și mitologia despre care a scris și publicat de-a lungul timpului au avut un impact deosebit asupra culturii românești, influențând modul în care oamenii își puteau valoriza patrimoniul spiritual. Moștenirea lăsată este una de mare complexitate, parcurgând aspecte diverse și, prin urmare, istoriografia dedicată savantului Simion Florea Marian trebuie să fie una temeinică și bogată. Prin studiul de față am încercat să evidențiem legendele istorice referitoare la veacurile XIII-XIV și să realizăm, acolo unde este posibil, o comparație a lor cu textele cronicilor moldovenești, cu procesele și evenimentele ce încadrează o perioadă importantă a evului mediu, de la marea invazie mongolă la definitivarea celui de al doilea stat medieval românesc. Ne-au ajutat în acest demers și localizările geografice, destul de precise în textele*

puse în circulație de către Simion Florea Marian, aspect important în condițiile în care fragmente din legendele sale se împletesc cu evenimente istorice propriu-zise.

Résumé : *Simion Florea Marian, une personnalité de la culture de Bucovine et les légendes sur les débuts du Pays de la Moldavie.* L'œuvre de Simion Florea Marian appartient à l'étape d'affirmation complète de la spiritualité roumaine qui se manifesta en Bucovine dès la deuxième partie du XIX^{ème} siècle. Ses légendes historiques, les traditions et la mythologie dont celui-ci écrit et publia le long du temps eurent un impact tout à fait particulier sur la culture roumaine, influençant la manière dans laquelle les gens purent mettre en valeur leur patrimoine spirituel. L'héritage qu'il nous a légué témoigne d'une grande complexité et reflète plusieurs aspects. Par conséquent, cela nous oblige lui dédier une historiographie riche et rigoureusement documentée. A l'intermédiaire de l'étude ci-jointe, nous avons essayé de mettre en évidence les légendes historiques faisant référence aux XIII^{-ème} et XIV^{-ème} siècles et en même temps, de faire une comparaison, si possible, entre celles-ci d'une part et les textes des chroniques moldaves, avec les processus et les événements qui ont jalonné une période importante du Moyen Age, depuis la grande invasion mongole à la formation du deuxième Etat médiéval roumain, de l'autre part. Dans cette démarche, nous nous sommes appuyés également sur les localisations géographiques assez précises figurant dans les textes mises en circulation par Simion Florea Marian, un aspect bien important, les conditions où des fragments de ses légendes se mêlent aux événements historiques proprement-dits.

INTRODUCTION

During the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th, the Romanian spirituality in Bukovina expressed itself most powerfully through the valorisation of oral creations, passed on from one generation to another. Thus, perhaps not accidentally, northern Moldavia was to give the greatest ethnographer, Simion Florea Marian, and the greatest composer of music with folk influences, Ciprian Porumbescu. Since the beginning of the 19th century, the Romanian nation began to seek its identity and the members of the *Transylvanian School* (*Școala Ardeleană*) wanted to demonstrate its continuity. To achieve this, they searched not only for historical testimonies but also for traditions, beliefs, and folk tales.¹ Following the same path, George Barițiu made an appeal, in 1838, in the *Paper for Mind, Heart and Literature* (*Foaie*

¹ Ion Lungu, *Școala Ardeleană. Mișcare ideologică națională iluministă* [The Transylvanian School. Ideological, national, Enlightenment Movement], Editura Minerva, București, 1978, p. 67.

pentru minte, inimă și literatură) for the gathering of traditions and ballads from all over the Romanian territory.² These efforts passed over the mountains, and the interest for ethnography and folklore appears at Moldavian poets such as Vasile Alecsandri, who wrote in 1852 a volume of old ballads and songs.³ Under the influence of Romanticism, folklore was seen as a force able to regenerate the Romanian people and give them strength. We are at the beginning of the ethnic-folklore researches, already underway in West-Central Europe, which would reach the Romanian space where Simion Florea Marian would play an important role.

Simion Florea Marian was born near Suceava, in 1847, at the dawn of the revolutionary momentum that had seized the Principalities. His coming into the world at such moment meant a guarantee of education in the spirit of national symbols, which were manifest under the Austrian administration. We can only imagine that the passion for folklore, for the values of this mythical space of Bukovina was instilled into his mind by his parents, the priest Lazăr Marian from Reuseni and Ruxandra Stanovici, the daughter of the teacher in Udești⁴.

It is certain that at the age of only 17 young Simion had gathered the first collections of Romanian folklore texts and folk tales. Most likely, his spontaneous preoccupation for tradition is the result of the love and solidarity towards those amongst whom he was brought up, of the love for his country, for the people toiling for this land.

We must point out that the history and folklore were the two passions that intersected in the writings of Simion Florea Marian, hence the interest in the Slavic language and old printings⁵, in historical information about the

² Paul Cornea, *Originile romantismului românesc* [The Origins of Romanian Romanticism], Editura Minerva, București, 1972, p. 508-509.

³ Vasile Alecsandri, *Poezii populare ale românilor* [Romanian Folk Poems], Editura Casa Școalelor, București, 1942.

⁴ He must have been greatly influenced by the work of the Enlightenment scholar Silvestru Morariu-Andrievici, who became in the last part of his life, the Metropolitan of Bukovina. Supporting Orthodoxy and Romanian Culture, he watched the development of Bukovinian personalities such as Simion F. Marian or Iraclie Porumbescu. Details on Lora Bostan, *Contribuția bisericii ortodoxe la afirmarea spiritualității românești în nordul Bucovinei (sec. XVIII-XIX)* [Contribution of the Orthodox Church to the Assertion of Romanian spirituality in Northern Bukovina (18th-19th Centuries)], in <http://www.diacronia.ro/ro/indexing/details/A3946/pdf> (Accessed on 10.04.2019).

⁵ Simion Florea Marian, *Inscripțiuni de pe manuscrite și cărți vechi din Bucovina. Partea 1.*

important places of worship⁶ or in the figures of the Romanian mediaeval culture⁷.

Simion Florea Marian is an indisputable value of his nation, who belongs to the trend of the assertion of Romanian spirituality in the second half of the 19th century. Therefore, we may state that Bukovina has lived and breathed through its historical legends, traditions, and mythology that he made known in the entire space stretching over this side of the Carpathians and eastward beyond the mountains.

The scholar's assiduous activity was more thoroughly analysed after his death, starting with the work of his son, Liviu F. Marian, entitled *Schițe biografice*⁸, in 1910. The last half-century, Paul Leu's studies included most of the aspects of the fields researched by Simion Florea Marian, from poet and prose writer to collector of folklore and historical ballads⁹.

His legacy is most complex, featuring various aspects; hence the historiography dedicated to the scholar Simion Florea Marian should be solid and extensive. Due to its diversity, it has been grouped into several important categories: biographical works, encyclopaedic articles, ethnographical works, manuscript patrimony research or monographic investigations¹⁰. It is perhaps

Inscripțiunile de pe manuscriptele și cărțile din districtul Câmpulungului [Inscriptions on Old Manuscripts and Books in Bukovina. Part 1. Inscriptions on Manuscripts and Books in the District of Câmpulung], Suceava, 1900.

⁶ Simion Florea Marian, *Biserica din Părhăuți în Bucovina* [The Părhăuți Church in Bukovina], București, 1887.

⁷ Simion Florea Marian, *Portretul lui Miron Costin, mare logofăt și cronicar al Moldovei* [The Portrait of Miron Costin, Great Logothete and Chronicler of Moldavia], București, 1900.

⁸ Liviu F. Marian, *Simion Florea Marian. Schițe biografice* [Simion Florea Marian. Biographical Sketches], București, 1910.

⁹ Here are some of his contributions: Paul Leu, *Primirea lui S. F. Marian în Academia Română* [The Admission of S. F. Marian to the Romanian Academy], in "Cercetări istorice", Iași, 1980, p. 421-428; Paul Leu, *S. F. Marian în contemporaneitatea sa europeană* [S. F. Marian within his European Contemporaneity], in "Cercetări istorice", Iași, VII, 1977, pp. 543-554; Paul Leu, *Introducere* [Introduction], in Simion F. Marian, *Legende istorice din Bucovina* [Historical Legends in Bukovina], edition supervised by Paul Leu, Suceava, Editura Junimea, 1981, p. VII-XVIII.

¹⁰ Antonie Moisei, *Privire generală asupra istoriografiei dedicate etnografului Simion Florea Marian* [Overview of the Historiography Dedicated to the Ethnographer Simion Florea Marian], in "Codrul Cosminului", nr. 10, 2004, p. 217. We add some of the studies published, in the context of the centenary, by the journal "Suceava, Anuarul complexului Muzeal Bucovina", XXIV-XXXV-XXXVI, 2007-2008-2009, Suceava, 2009:

unjust that the historical legends have not been thoroughly analysed, particularly in comparison with the texts of Moldavian chronicles, with the processes and events from an important stage of the Middle Ages, from the great Mongolian invasion until the rule of Stephen the Great¹¹.

THE LEGENDS ABOUT THE BEGINNINGS OF MOLDAVIA

The period of pre-state Moldavia, after the Mongolian assault of 1241-1242, is perceived in terms of the legends about Romanians and Tatars. Simion Florea Marian presents an evolution which today, after more than a century of historical research, appears more evident than we might intuit. Simion F. Marian is aware, in the legend called *The Romanians and Tartars*, that the Romanians did not have rulers (voivodes) and lived in various areas, choosing leaders from among themselves for a period of three years. The latter would organise the affairs of the community and everyone else would obey and listen to their advice: "*Cică la început Românii nu aveau domnitori și stăpânitori, ca în ziua de azi, ci ei trăiau răslețiți prin deosebite ținuturi și se cârmuiau singuri de sine.*"¹² (which translates as "*They say that in the beginning the Romanians did not have princes or rulers, like today, but lived scattered in various lands and governed themselves*"). In a romantic

Maria Cuceu, *Simion Florea Marian și cataloagele prozei populare* [Simion Florea Marian and the catalogues of folkloric prose], pp. 39-45; Mihai Alexandru Canciovici, *Contribuția lui S. FI. Marian la studierea mitologiei populare românești* [Simion Florea Marian's contribution to studying Romanian people mythology], pp. 51-57; Paul Leu, *S. FI. Marian, autor al mării enciclopedii austriece* [Simion Florea Marian, author of the great Austrian encyclopaedia], pp. 79-87; Pamfil Bilțiu, *Simion Florea Marian și cercetarea obiceiurilor tradiționale* [Simion Florea Marian and the research of traditional habits], pp. 87-93; Antonie Moisei, *Metodele de investigare a culturii tradiționale a populației din Bucovina în operele științifice ale lui S. FI. Marian* [Investigation methods of traditional culture, of Bukovina population in S. FI. Marian's scientific works], pp. 93-99; Anca Parasca, *Cercetările lui Simion Florea Marian - parte integrantă a patrimoniului cultural european* [Simion Florea Marian's researches - constitutive part of European cultural patrimony], pp. 101-105.

¹¹ The notable exception is the historian Ștefan S. Gorovei who correlated some of the information from the legends gathered by Simion Florea Marian with some aspects related to the emergence of Moldavia. Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Întemeierea Moldovei. Probleme controversate* [The Foundation of Moldavia. Controversial Issues], Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", Iași, 1997, p. 77 and note 48.

¹² Simion Florea Marian, *Tradiții populare române din Bucovina* [Romanian Folk Traditions in Bukovina], București, 1895, p. 16.

view, we may say, in terms of the political and territorial organisation, that this is the phase of the knezates and voivodates attested, on 2 June 1247, in the “Diploma of the Joannites”, south of the Carpathians and only intuited, by means of modern historiography, east of the Carpathian chain¹³.

The establishment of the Mongolian rule over the Moldavian space, achieved in stages in the second part of the 13th century, is accurately illustrated from a historical point of view, as the number of Tatars was overwhelming as compared to the local population that was unable to organise the defence. Most disobedient would retreat to safer places. But even there they were found with Tatars’ *hawk-dogs*, as the legend calls them¹⁴. Therefore, they were constrained to withdraw into the mountains that the Tatars would reach with great difficulty and, as the legend tells us, this would often happen by means of subterfuge: “Într-o vară însă, văzând ei că numai de geabă se ascund prin stuhării, că și-n aceste locuri sunt descoperiți, se adunară iarăși cu toții la un loc și se sfătuiră ca să facă și ei odată tătarilor o moară de vânt, adică, dacă nu-i pot învinge și fugări din țară, cel puțin să-și bată joc de dânșii.”¹⁵ (“One summer, though, realising that it was useless to hide in the reeds for they were discovered even in these places, they gathered and agreed that, if they could not beat and chase the Tatars out of the country, they might at least mock them”).

So, they looked for the large ponds where they knew the Tatars would come and placed caps on top of reeds in hidden spots in order to mislead the hawks. Hearing the birds’ cry, the Tatars rushed to those ponds and when they found only

¹³ Of the extensive bibliography dedicated to this subject, we have selected a few titles: Nicolae Stoicescu, “Descălecat” sau întemeiere? O veche preocupare a istoriografiei românești. Legendă și adevăr istoric [“Dismounting” or Foundation? An Old Concern of Romanian Historiography. Legend and Historical Truth], in vol. *Constituirea statelor feudale românești* [Formation of Romanian Feudal States], coordinated by Nicolae Stoicescu, Editura Academiei Române, București, 1980, p. 121-122; Ș. Papacostea, *Românii în secolul al XIII-lea. Între cruciadă și imperiul mongol* [The Romanians in the 13th Century. Between the Crusade and the Mongolian Empire], Editura Enciclopedică, București, 1993, p. 56; Ioan-Aurel Pop, *Noi comentarii asupra diplomei cavalerilor ioaniți (1247) și a contextului emiterii sale* [Further Comments on the Diploma of the Joannites], in *Românii în Europa medievală (între Orientul Bizantin și Occidentul Latin). Studii în onoarea profesorului Victor Spinei* [The Romanians in Mediaeval Europe (between the Byzantine East and the Latin West). Studies in Honour of Professor Victor Spinei], a volume prepared by Dumitru Țeicu and Ionel Cândea, Editura Istros, Brăila, 2008, p. 225-242.

¹⁴ Simion Florea Marian, *Tradiții populare române din Bucovina*, p. 17.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

the hats, they realised that they had been fooled, but it was much too late, for the Romanians had managed to withdraw into the mountains.

Simion Florea Marian does not forget to mention where this legend starts from because he truly believes in the humour of the Romanian people, manifested in the most difficult moments: "*Căci așa-i Românul, uneori și la cea mai mare nevoie îi place să facă câte-o șagă, doră-i mai trece din cel necaz...*"¹⁶ ("For that is how the Romanian is like: sometimes, even when he is in the greatest need, he likes to play a trick or joke to make the sorrow go away").

The geographic locations are quite precise in the legends of Simion Florea Marian. For example, Vama village, in the north of present-day Suceava County, is often mentioned in the legends about Romanians and Tatars. Its existence has got lost in the mists of time and it may be a rural settlement of the 13th century. However, the first clear attestation related to this community is a document of Alexander the Good¹⁷, which mentions a *vama* ('customs point') located where the Moldovița River flows into the Moldova River. The village that came into existence in this area has a definite connection with the customs point. Located at an altitude of about 800 metres, it also served as an observation point.

The legend tells us that here a woman with a baby in her arms once noticed the Tatars approach. She left the baby wrapped in a cloth, hanging from the branches of a fir-tree and fled to let the Romanians know about the coming of the pagans. Seeing the baby hanging in the tree, the Tatars thought it is a bad sign and did not go any further despite the khan's orders and threats. This hesitancy allowed the locals to group and to succeed in banishing the Tatars¹⁸.

Although Simion Florea Marian speaks about impressive numbers of horsemen, 40,000-80,000 Tatars, historical reality makes us think there were only a few hundred penetrating to plunder. The Tatar rule over the Northern part of Moldavia is not confirmed at the peak of the Horde's domination east of the Carpathians either¹⁹ when the payment of some financial contributions was

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁷ *Documenta Romaniae Historica, A. Moldova*, vol. I, compiled by C. Cihodaru, I. Caproșu, L. Șimanschi, Editura Academiei Române, București, 1975, p. 27.

¹⁸ The hypothesis that this legend could be placed more recently during the campaign of the voivode Mihail Racovita over the Austrians, in 1714-1716, was eliminated by Ion Cernat, *Simion Florea Marian și satul Vama* [Simion Florea Marian and the Village of Vama], in "Codrul Cosminului", 10, 2004, p. 159.

¹⁹ Sergiu Iosipescu, *Carpații sud-estici în evul mediu târziu (1166-1526). O istorie europeană prin pasurile montane* [South-Eastern Carpathians in the Late Middle Ages (1166-1526). An European History through Mountain Passes], Editura Istros, Brăila, 2013, p. 96-97.

probably agreed on. Instead, the fast unification and organisation of an efficient resistance, as in the legend above, points to the existence of a local formation that was powerful enough.

The legends made known by Simion Florea Marian concern two figures that were essential to the emergence of Moldavia as a state: Dragoș and Sas.

In the case of Dragoș, the first founder of Moldavia, the legend of the hunt has certain nuances which are not found in mediaeval chronicles²⁰. For example, from the very beginning, Dragoș has to choose among a twelve-antler deer going westward, a wild boar moving north and a wisent setting off east²¹. The will to chase the wisent is divine, for Dragoș is led by a hermit to the place where he saw the beasts and the latter advises the voivode not to follow the path westward or northward. The wisent throws into the clear water of Moldova River and reappears when Dragoș least expects it at the north end of Câmpulung²².

Just as in the legends about Romanians and Tatars, this story abounds in geographic locations and explanations of certain toponyms and hydronyms. Pârăul Boului (*'The Wisent's Brook'*) is a current tributary of the Moldovița River which got its name from the place where the wisent wounded by Dragoș's arrow stopped to drink water. Most of the toponyms related to Dragoș's hunt are to be encountered at Vatra Moldoviței: Valea Boului, Gura Boului, Runcul Boului, Gura Dragoșei²³.

But we should not believe that the legend fragments do not intertwine with historical deeds proper. Dragoș Vodă is a ruler in Maramureș but he is compared with Bogdan I, the future voivode of Moldavia, for it is mentioned that he had to face many inconveniences, shortcomings, and harms caused by the Hungarians who intended to change the law and steal his properties²⁴. Dragoș was unaware that Moldavia was trodden by barbarians; realising that he could not rule them he first sought to inspect them and settle down in a safer place: "*Dar fiind că el a venit de astă dată numai ca s-o iscodească, și avea numai foarte puțini oameni cu dânsul, de aceea, ca să aibe cu cine o cuprinde și stăpâni, cum a*

²⁰ A brief comparison with the oldest chronicle written in Romanian is relevant; here we find the classic legend about the hunt of the wisent devoid of the various additions in the legends collected by Simion Florea Marian (Grigore Ureche, *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei* [Chronicles of the Land of Moldavia], edited by P. P. Panaitescu, București, 1978, p. 71-72).

²¹ Simion Florea Marian, *Legende istorice din Bucovina*, p. 27.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 28.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

²⁴ Simion Florea Marian, *Tradiții populare române...*, p. 40.

iscodit-o de ajuns, s-a întors înderept în țara sa, în Maramureș, și a prins a îndemna pre supușii sei și pre alți Români ca să vie și ei cu dânsul.”²⁵ (“This time he came only to survey and had only a few men with him, but once he had finished, he returned to his country, in Maramureș, and urged his subjects and other Romanians to come with him in order to take it and rule it”). The similarities with the oldest chronicles are obvious. Here is a short fragment from the “Moldo-Russian Chronicle”: “Și între ei era un bărbat înțelept și viteaz, anume Dragoș și a pornit cu drujina lui la vânătoare de fiare și au aflat supt munții înalți urma unui bour... și au prins din urmă călări pe bour la un râu... și l-au omorât... Și le-a venit de la Dumnezeu în inimă gândul să-și caute loc de trai și s-au așezat aici... Și s-au întors înapoi și au spus tuturor a lor săi despre frumusețea țării.”²⁶ (“Among them was a wise and brave man called Dragoș who set out with his companions to hunt beasts and all found the trace of a wisent at the feet of the high mountains... and they rode and caught the wisent at a river and killed it. And God gave them the idea that they should find a place to live and they settled here. And they came back and told their people about the beauty of that land”).

Dragoș returned from Maramureș with “boyars and people” and settled in the same place he named Moldavia. Here he raised a fortress to which he could retreat and defend himself from enemies. The spot where the fortification was built was: “cu cinci șanțuri în sus de satul de astăzi, Volovăț...ale cărei urme de ziduri se mai pot vedea și astăzi.”²⁷ (“five ditches up the current village Volovăț... and traces of walls are still visible today”). The only structure in the area traditionally attributed to Dragoș is the wooden church of Volovăț that Prince Stephen the Great brought to Putna, which is confirmed by the chronicler Nicolae Costin who stated: “Înțeles-am și noi den oameni bătrâni ... că o biserică de lemn la Olovăț, să fie făcută de Dragoș vodă ... Și aceia biserică de lemn au mutat-o Ștefan vodă ce Bun, de o au clădit la Mănăstirea Putna.”²⁸ (“We have found out from the elders that a wooden church from Olovăț, built by Dragoș vodă, was moved to Putna Monastery by the good Prince Stephen”). Dendrological analyses carried out in the early 21st century do not validate the age of the monument, placing it in the first years of the

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

²⁶ *Cronicile slavo-române din secolele XV-XVI* [15th-16th Century Slavonic-Romanian Chronicles], published by I. Bogdan, edited by P. P. Panaitescu, Editura Academiei Române, București, 1959, pp. 159-160.

²⁷ Simion Florea Marian, *Tradiții populare române...*, p. 56.

²⁸ Nicolae Costin, *Opere*, Editura Junimea, Iași, 1976, p. 74.

15th century²⁹. This is only one example of tradition not being confirmed by modern techniques of investigation.

In the legend named *Dragoș Vodă*, Simion Florea Marian points to two other centres of power in the Moldavian territory, by mentioning how envoys from Siret and Suceava came to Dragoș to ask for military support against the Tatars and the Poles who were making plundering raids. As he granted them help and drove the Tatars away, he was chosen to be the ruler of the entire Moldavia³⁰.

Following his counselors' advice, he established his power at Siret. The legend also provides an explanation of this decision, namely that there were only three cities in Moldavia: Suceava, Siret, and Cotoveț (which no longer exists). The population was also scattered all over the country in several hundreds of villages³¹, an allusion to the demographic void presented in the Moldavian chroniclers' works as well³².

The discovery of Dragoș's grave from Volovăț, a fragment included in the legend *Dragoș Vodă*, is also interesting, especially because it was taken over, with minor alterations, by the modern historiography³³. He was buried in the wooden

²⁹ Alexandru Baboș, Hans Linderson, *Mănăstirea veche de lemn a Putnei în arhitectura medievală românească* [The Old Wooden Putna Monastery in the Romanian Mediaeval Architecture], in "Anuarul Institutului de Istorie A. D. Xenopol", XXXIX-XL, 2003, Iași, pp. 43-59.

³⁰ Simion Florea Marian, *Tradiții poporane române...*, p. 57.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Nicolae Costin, *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei* [Chronicles of the Land of Moldavia], in vol. *Marii cronicari ai Moldovei*, edited and prefaced by G. Ștrempel, editura Academiei Române, București, 2003, pp. 510-514: "700 și mai bine de ani au fostu pustii locurile acestea, de descălecătura cea dentâi de Traian, împăratul Râmului. Ce gotii întâi, apoi volgarii au stăpânit locurile aceste, până ce s-au mutat și ei în alte părți de loc: unii peste Dunăre pe vremea lui Theodosie, împăratul grecesc, cum s-au scris mai sus, alții în alte părți, și rămâind de tot pustie țara, nelăcuind niceun niam până la Dragoș vodă în Moldova" [For more than 700 years these places had been empty after Trajan, the emperor of Rome, came here. The Goths and the Bulgarian ruled these areas but they moved elsewhere: some beyond the Danube in the time of the Greek emperor Theodosius, as mentioned above, or to some other parts, leaving the country deserted, uninhabited until Dragoș vodă came to Moldavia].

³³ Dan Simionescu, *Tradiția istorică și folclorică în problema "întemeierii" Moldovei* [Historical and Folk Tradition Related to the Issue of the "Foundation" of Moldavia], in *Studii de folclor și literatură*, București, 1967, p. 41; Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Biserica de la Volovăț și mormântul lui Dragoș Vodă* [The Volovăț Church and the Grave of Prince Dragoș], in "Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei", 1971, nr. 5-6, p. 378; L. Pilat, *Sfințirea Mănăstirii Putna*

church he founded – the church that more than a century later Stephen the Great would dismantle, raising a stone church instead. Over time, it fell into ruin and was discovered, at a moment which is hard to specify, by a shepherd who was looking for his sheep in the holy place. He told the inhabitants of the nearby village, who brought it to light from the depths of the woods and restored it. They also found a secret door to a cellar that sheltered a large stone grave on which the words Dragoș Vodă were written. The restoration of the church led to the emergence of a new village, not on the spot of the former one but slightly westward, named Volovăț instead of Olovăț³⁴.

With such a beautiful legend, as the historian Ștefan S. Gorovei would describe it, we can only appeal to logic: “...în fond, Dragoș Vodă a murit în Moldova. Ce poate fi mai firesc decât ca mormântul lui să se afle tot în Moldova?!”³⁵ (“...after all, Voivode Dragoș died in Moldavia. What can be more natural but to have the grave in Moldavia as well?”).

Sas Vodă is another legendary figure, but his existence is attested by documents as well³⁶. Simion Florea Marian points out that Siret, though serving as the capital, did not have a fortified residence. Moreover, because the land was not favourable to building a fortress, Sas ordered his men to make a mound on which they should raise a citadel capable of withstanding any danger. Moldavian chroniclers even claim that a fortification was raised during the rule of Dragoș. in his work “*O samă de cuvinte*”, Ion Neculce states: “*Dragoș-vodă, așa povestesc oamenii cum că, dacă au descălecat Țara Moldovii, au descălecat târgul Siretiului. Și i-au fost scaonul domnii sale acolo. Și au făcut zamcă, cetate de pământ, și în zamcă case domnești și lângă zamcă biserică de piatră. Și hramul bisericii este Sfânta Troițe, care și până astăzi iaște și să slujaște sfânta liturghie.*”³⁷ (“*People say that Dragoș-vodă settled in Moldavia at Siret. He set up his residence there and had*

[The Consecration of Putna Monastery], in “*Analele Putnei*”, I, 2005, 2, p. 43.

³⁴ Simion Florea Marian, *Tradiții populare române...*, p. 62.

³⁵ Ștefan S. Gorovei, *Biserica de la Volovăț și mormântul lui Dragoș Vodă* [The Volovăț Church and the Grave of Prince Dragoș], in *Ștefan cel mare și Sfânt. Biserica. O lecție de istorie*, Editura Mușatinii, Putna, 2004, p. 141.

³⁶ I. Mihaly de Apșa, *Diplome maramureșene din secolul XIV și XV* [Maramureș Diplomas in the 14th and 15th Centuries], Sighet, 1900, p. 68; I. Mihaly de Apșa, *Diplome Maramureșene din secolele XIV și XV* [Maramureș Diplomas in the 14th and 15th Centuries], 4th edition, coordinated by Vasile Iuga de Săliște, translation and notes by Prof. Vasile Rus, Editura Pro Maramureș, Cluj-Napoca, 2009, p. 73.

³⁷ Ion Neculce, *Letopisețul Țării Moldovei* [Chronicles of the Land of Moldavia], Editura Minerva, București, 1986, p. 11.

an earthen fortress built, with princely houses inside and a stone church close by. The church was dedicated to the Holy Trinity and holy liturgy have been held to this day”). In the early 20th century, Simeon Reli, a professor from Chernivtsi, noted that at Siret, on Sasca hill, the brave men of Sas-vodă built a fortress that could shelter up to 100 soldiers, with a bulwark, the ruins of which had been visible until not long before³⁸.

The only thing confirmed in the legend collected by Florea Marian and entitled *Again about Sas Vodă* is the building of the stone church, “Holy Trinity Church”. The archaeological data, which are rather poor, point to the erection of the edifice in the age of the Mușatins, therefore towards the end of the 14th century. The first surveys carried out at Siret more than five decades ago revealed only household objects, grey pottery and a sword typologically included in the Mușatins’ age³⁹. Not even the most recent excavations made within the perimeter of the much-disputed Sasca hill have managed to reveal the existence of traces, of vestiges that should lead to the idea that this area was, in the mid-14th century, the residence of the first voivodes of Moldavia, subjects of the Kingdom of Hungary⁴⁰.

The legend also provides some explanations about the departure of Sas from Siret. The voivode had a son whom his wife baptized, without his approval, in the Catholic faith. Enraged, Sas ordered that the house where the baptism had taken place and where his wife and baby still were should be torn down. After this horrible event, the voivode is said to have left Siret for good⁴¹.

The last legend about the beginnings of Moldavia as a state is entitled “*The son of Sas Vodă*”. There is a mysterious character here, a son of Sas, whose residence was in the city of Siret. Without mentioning his name, legend presents him as a pious, peace-loving ruler. Unfortunately, three brothers of ‘foreign origins’ (“*seminție venetică*”) tried to murder him and assume power over

³⁸ Simeon Reli, *Orașul Siret în vremuri de demult* [The Town of Siret in Old Times], Cernăuți, 1927, pp. 33-34.

³⁹ Dorin Popescu, *Săpăturile arheologice din R.P.R. în anul 1962* [1962 Archaeological Excavations in the People’s Republic of Romania], “*Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche*”, 2, 1963, p. 463.

⁴⁰ Mircea D. Matei, *Cercetările arheologice de la Siret (1984-1989). Raport de etapă* [Archaeological Excavations from Siret (1984-1989). Stage Report], in “*Suceava*”, XXIV-XXV, pp. 77-80; V. Spinei, C. Asăvoaie, *Date preliminare privind rezultatele săpăturilor din 1992 de la Siret* [Preliminary Data regarding the Results of the 1992 Excavations from Siret], in “*Arheologia Moldovei*”, XVI, 1993, p. 226.

⁴¹ Simion Florea Marian, *Tradiții poporane române...* p. 68-69.

Moldavia. Realising they would fail, they decided to dig a tunnel under the ground to reach his residence up on a hill, east of the city of Siret. The voivode found out about the plot and moved with all his courtiers in the area of the current hearth of the city where he built a new fortress⁴². Documents have no reference to a son of Sas ruling in Siret. Furthermore, the act of 2 February 1365 issued by the Hungarian Chancellery mentions the passage of Balc and of the other children of Sas to Transylvania, after the battles lost against the Maramureş-born Bogdan who became the voivode of Moldavia⁴³.

CONCLUSION

The explanation of all the inadequacies presented above comes somehow naturally. The Bukovinian scholar collected legends related to historical events that had occurred more than five generations before. It is obvious that Simion Florea Marian is concerned with the age of his legends. The research related to the village of Vama is only a proof because that can be found in many of his stories. Here, he tries to figure out the old manuscripts, but he does not fall prey to the temptation of dating them erroneously⁴⁴.

Nevertheless, the historical characters presented do not have many connections with the documentary evolution, even if, for instance, Sas is seen, through this legends, as a voivode who had his power focused on the Siret area, which is actually confirmed by the chronicles. However, the information about his sons, about Balc, is lacking, even if the documents speak about the political structure controlled by them, under the protection of the Hungarian Kingdom, in Moldavian territories.

It should be added that the legends gathered by Simion Florea Marian provide no information about voivode Bogdan and his contribution to the achievement of the Romanian statehood. The aspect is even stranger as we know that Bogdan, in his short reign (1363-1367), concentrated his power in the northern part of the territory, where many of the analyzed legends are located. Therefore, in the 19th century - a century that had been, for quite a while, in search

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 88-89.

⁴³ I. Mihaly de Apşa, *Diplome maramureşene din secolul XIV și XV*, p.56.

⁴⁴ For example, he received a manuscript, which was believed to be from the 12th century, but Simion Florea Marian dates it to the second half of the 16th century (the entire discussion in Ion Cernat, *Simion Florea Marian și satul Vama* [Simion Florea Marian and the Village of Vama], p. 162.).

of a national consciousness - the information he got must have been much distorted. His extensive work and the main source of information, *Tradiții poporane din Bucovina/ Folk Traditions in Bukovina*, is groundbreaking, opening the path to everything that the legends about pre-state Moldavia meant, precisely because we find a grain of truth in each geographic or historical description. It is the merit of Simion Florea Marian to have related everything to the present, as he was aware that the passage of time may wipe out traces but cannot completely discard the evolution of this land.