

## **CONSTANTIN BRÂNCOVEANU'S IMAGE AS REFLECTED IN THE ROMANIAN PRESS**

**Florica Iuhaș, PhD, Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Bucharest**

*Abstract: The Official Monitor of Romania, part I, no.11, from January 8th, 2014, published a Government Decision declaring 2014 "The Brâncoveanu Year". According to Government Decision no. 1167/2013, 2014 is declared "The Brâncoveanu Year" and commemorates 300 years from the martyrdom of Constantine Brâncoveanu and his sons. The Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church also proclaimed, during the working meetings of October 29, 2012, "2014-Commemoration Year of the Brâncoveni Holy Martyrs in the Romanian Patriarchate", after in June 20th, 1992, the sanctification of the prince, his three sons, their counselor, Ianache and their celebration on August 16, was decided.*

*The figure of Constantin Brâncoveanu has generated successive histories and approaches in the Romanian public consciousness,. The present study aims to examine how the Romanian press has built the ruler's image during "The Brâncoveanu Year". Articles from the religious press usually present the image of a mythical ruler, centered on the idea of martyrdom, while representations from the daily press depart from the sacral and build images focused on themes of evil and the ruler's "cursed treasure" which lits today's imagination and associates Constantin Brancoveanu with Nicolae Ceaușescu.*

*Keywords: Image, Media, Sensational, Constantin Brâncoveanu, Negative journalism.*

### **Introduction**

In the Romanian imaginary, the representative characters of the mythical pantheon have established themselves as such, based on some archetypal features, which is a lingering characteristic of the ancestral mythological system where "the most important item is their strict specialization" (Adrian Cioroianu, 2008, p. 19) and where Decebal and Burebista are *The Ancestors*, Vlad Țepeș is *The Warrant* of honor and order, Ștefan the Great is *The Defender*, Mihai Viteazul- *The Unifier*, Constantin Brâncoveanu- *The Martyr*, Dimitrie Cantemir- *The Scholar*, Alexandru-Ioan Cuza- *The Vigilante*, Nicolae Bălcescu- *The Revolutionary*, Nicolae Titulescu- *The Strategist* etc. It should not surprise us the fact that the Romanian press has associated the figure of ruler Constantin Brancoveanu with the act of being a martyr and the supreme sacrifice for faith: "In the name of the christian belief, starting from Saint Stefan, the first martyr of Christianity, thousands and thousands christians who believed in the one God were killed through burning, crucification, or crushed with stones. The act of becoming a martyr in the name of Christianity amounted, for three centuries, after the coming of Christ, thousands of experiences through which the confessors of Christ's religion have climbed the altar of sacrifice with the cost of their lives. Even after 313, when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, cristianity continued to pay a painful tribute" (Liliana Ivan, „Martirii creștinismului: 300 de ani de la moartea lui Constantin Brâncoveanu” / “Christianity's Martyrs: 300 years since the death of Constantin Brancoveanu”, *Click*, 14.08.2014, <http://www.click.ro/utile/astrologie/martirii-crestinismului-300-de-ani-de-la-moartea-lui-constantin-brancoveanu>).

Lucian Boia said that “nothing is more universal, more archetypal than the personalization of history and of the socio-political resorts. The exceptional character, a mediator between people and gods or between people and history, imposes himself as such from the dawn of the human adventure until today, even in the most advanced and apparently skeptical technological and democratic societies. No community can deprive itself of «heroes» and «saviours» neither in the everyday life, nor while remembering the historical tradition [...] Those people who are different from us» are a part of the imaginary’s mystical area, they are included in the structures of sacredness. Their action still keeps a part of the primary transcendent sense, even in the secularized version of the modern world ” (L. Boia, 2011, p.306).

Depending on the context provided by a particular era, the cult of heroes and martyrs-of ancestral and primary origin- supplied the substance of a people, of a nation-state or even of a religion. „The Brâncoveanu Year” has double meaning, both profane and religious, and defers the remembering of the prominent figure of the leader in Romanian’s history. According to social psychology, “in memory, the past is not simply repeated, but transformed, restored, which is an action that happens particularly due to the presence and intervention of the social context. These contexts make the memory selective, they make it depend on the particularities of the situation when the imprinting and the retention of life experience happens, they induce the value criteria to the memory stream”( *Dicționar de psihologie socială / Social psychology dictionary*, 1982, p.138 )

### **The dimension of Constantin Brâncoveanu in the european culture. The mediatic reflection**

In order to review the way in which the 2014 Romanian press built the image of ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu, we have selected a number of ... online articles. We noticed that the public media institutions: the press agency Agerpress and the Romanian Television dedicated a series of articles to the „Brâncoveanu Year” topic, articles that approach a large variety of subjects regarding the culture and civilization in Constantin Brâncoveanu’s era.

We selected only the articles that specifically approach the ruler’s life, activity and personality, subjects that we analyzed using the phenomenological method focused on the biased, practical and social conditions of the human experience.

Entered in the gallery of history’s most exceptional characters, included in textbooks’ pages, Constantin Brâncoveanu, ruled the Romanian Country from the 29th October 1688 until the 15th of August 1714. Both the secular and the religious media presented an univocal image of the prince, focused on the following topics:

1. ***The origin and the descent:*** after his father, a nobleman from Matei Basarab’s descent, from Brâncoveni village, from the ex-county of Romanați: “The name of Basarab, has been, for a long time, a symbol of the descent from the old princes of the country, the national dynasty’s off springs, and, through this, a symbol of autonomy and of national origin” (Constantin Dobrescu, Carmen Băjenaru, „Constantin Brâncoveanu. 300 de ani de la moartea sa tragică” / “Constantin Brâncoveanu, 300 years since his tragic death”, *Glas comun*, 20.05.2014, <http://www.glascomun.info/2014/05/constantin-brancoveanu/>).

2. **The wealth** “whose dimension has been often exaggerated and made the Turkish name him «Altân-bey» («The prince of gold»). The wealth helped him rule so many years, and also helped his diplomatic actions and his benefactor acts but it was also the reason for his untimely death as it attracted the Turkish envy” (Ruxandra Bratu, Horia Plugaru, „Documentar: Constantin Brâncoveanu - un domn profund atașat intereselor țării și ale neamului românesc întreg / „Documentary: Constantin Brâncoveanu – a ruler profoundly bound by the country’s interests and of the entire Romanian people” *Agerpres*, 6.09.2014, <http://www.agerpres.ro/flux-documentare/2014/08/06/documentar-constantin-brancoveanu-un-domn-profund-atasat-intereselor-tarii-si-ale-neamului-romanesc-intreg--09-54-29> ).

3. **The marriage.** The emphasizes is put on the fact that he increased his parents’ heritage through marrying Marica, the niece of Antonie Vodă, and on the fact that they had 11 children. “The beautiful Marica was a few years younger than him and the word spread that she was good, a very good housewife, deliberate and cultured, and her father promised she will give her after his death the Popești estate and two important spots in the Bucharest Police. Brâncoveanu liked the girl and the sumptuous wedding took place in 1674 in the Brâncoveanu’s Filipești Palace. Marica gave birth to 11 children, four boys: Constantin, Ștefan, Radu and Matei and seven daughters: Stanca, Maria, Ilinca, Safta, Anca, Bălașa and Smaranda who were beautifully raised, were educated and gifted and arranged as good as possible” (Liliana Teică, „Căsătoriile în vremea lui Brâncoveanu” / “Marriage in Brâncoveanu’s era”, *TVR*, 23. 06. 2014, [http://stiri.tvr.ro/casatoriile-in-vremea-lui-brancoveanu\\_46325.html](http://stiri.tvr.ro/casatoriile-in-vremea-lui-brancoveanu_46325.html)).

4. **Education:** “Constantin Brâncoveanu benefited from a chosen up bringing and education, that were delivered by Constantin Cantacuzino’s mother, a scholar of high education who studied in Padova and who initiated the future ruler in the secrets of European diplomacy” (Ruxandra Bratu, Horia Plugaru, „Documentar: Constantin Brâncoveanu - un domn profund atașat intereselor țării și ale neamului românesc întreg” / „Documentary: Constantin Brâncoveanu – a ruler profoundly bound by the country’s interests and of the entire Romanian people” *Agerpres*, 6.09.2014, <http://www.agerpres.ro/flux-documentare/2014/08/06/documentar-constantin-brancoveanu-un-domn-profund-atasat-intereselor-tarii-si-ale-neamului-romanesc-intreg--09-54-29> ).

5. **The Ascent:** “He imposed himself in front of the others through his position, through his wealth and through his skills, particularly because he did not had any enemies and he was sympathized by most of the noblemen. He accepted the reign following the request of the Council and he became the ruler of The Romanian Country in 1688” (Mariana Zbora-Ciurel, Irina Andreea Cristea, „Documentar: Voievodul martir Constantin Brâncoveanu - 300 de ani de la moarte” / “Documentary: The martyr ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu - 300 since his death, *Agerpres*, 15.09.2014, <http://www.agerpres.ro/flux-documentare/2014/08/15/documentar-voievodul-martir-constantin-brancoveanu-300-de-ani-de-la-moarte-10-22-24>)

6. **Qualities.** Both the psychological qualities : strong personality, cleverness, and the ones gained during his reign : good strategist, political insight, “outstanding political and

diplomatic skills, recognized by everyone who knew him” were covered. (Ruxandra Bratu, Horia Plugaru, „Documentar: Constantin Brâncoveanu - un domn profund atașat intereselor țării și ale neamului românesc întreg” / „Documentary: Constantin Brâncoveanu – a ruler profoundly bound by the country’s interests and of the entire Romanian people” *Agerpres*, 6.09.2014, <http://www.agerpres.ro/flux-documentare/2014/08/06/documentar-constantin-brancoveanu-un-domn-profund-atasat-intereselor-tarii-si-ale-neamului-romanesc-intreg--09-54-29> ).

### 7. *Political, cultural and economical achievements:*

- He made the Romanian Country a diplomatic center: “he managed, through wit and political insight, to make the Romanian Country an important European diplomatic center, influencing the development of Romanian culture” (Anca Murgoci, „Constantin Brâncoveanu, 300 de ani de la moarte. Ce ar trebui să învețe politicienii de la Constantin Brâncoveanu” / „Constantin Brâncoveanu, 300 years since his death. What should the politicians learn from Constantin Brancoveanu”, *DCNews*, 16.08. 2014, [http://www.dcnews.ro/constantin-brancoveanu-300-de-ani-de-la-moarte-ce-ar-trebuie-sa-inve-e-politicienii-de-la-constantin-brancoveanu\\_451249.html#sthash.WHc5dalk.dpuf](http://www.dcnews.ro/constantin-brancoveanu-300-de-ani-de-la-moarte-ce-ar-trebuie-sa-inve-e-politicienii-de-la-constantin-brancoveanu_451249.html#sthash.WHc5dalk.dpuf));

- He defended the religious interests of the Romanians from Transylvania in front of Count Caprara, the imperial ambassador: “In 1681, Constantin Brâncoveanu’s request for the right of the Romanians from Transylvania to keep their orthodox religion and for the release of Sava Brancovici, the imprisoned metropolitan, was granted by the Imperial Court” (Mariana Zbora-Ciurel, Irina Andreea Cristea, „Documentar: Voievodul martir Constantin Brâncoveanu - 300 de ani de la moarte” / „Documentary: The martyr ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu - 300 since his death, *Agerpres*, 15.09.2014, <http://www.agerpres.ro/flux-documentare/2014/08/15/documentar-voievodul-martir-constantin-brancoveanu-300-de-ani-de-la-moarte-10-22-24>

- “Constantin Brâncoveanu was preoccupied with strengthening the reign’s role, with reorganizing the tax system, with keeping track of the country’s and the royal court’s finances, particularly because of the national situation and the increasing bonds imposed by the Otoman Empire” . (Ruxandra Bratu, Horia Plugaru, „Documentar: Constantin Brâncoveanu - un domn profund atașat intereselor țării și ale neamului românesc întreg” / „Documentary: Constantin Brâncoveanu – a ruler profoundly bound by the country’s interests and of the entire Romanian people” *Agerpres*, 6.09.2014, <http://www.agerpres.ro/flux-documentare/2014/08/06/documentar-constantin-brancoveanu-un-domn-profund-atasat-intereselor-tarii-si-ale-neamului-romanesc-intreg--09-54-29> ).

- Brâncoveanu Vodă built one of the most brilliant ages of the old Romanian culture. He was the benefactor of a series of churches and monasteries such as: the churches of Potlogi, of Mogoșoaia, the Monastery of Hurezi (Horezu), Brâncoveni Monastery, Mamul Monastery, Saint Sava Church, The New Saint George Church etc, as well as he restored and fortified many of the existing ones;

-The founding of schools and printing houses. The literature (especially the religious one) has considerably developed as a result of the increasing use of the typografer; the higher education program from Saint Sava Academy was developed, the artists were supported, the scholars encouraged to write as much as possible;

- The architecture, defined by new elements and features, has flourished “painting became an art with its own particular features that were a result of mixing the traditional iconography with influences from the athonite post Byzantin art. Furthermore, the music, the art of engraving and the art of working with silverware developed also” (Mariana Zbora-Ciurel, Irina Andreea Cristea, „Documentar: Voievodul martir Constantin Brâncoveanu - 300 de ani de la moarte” / „Documentary: The martyr ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu - 300 since his death, *Agerpres*, 15.09.2014, <http://www.agerpres.ro/flux-documentare/2014/08/15/documentar-voievodul-martir-constantin-brancoveanu-300-de-ani-de-la-moarte-10-22-24>. These articles highlight the fact that the Wallachian ruler wanted to improve the aspect of the royal residences, and similar to the existence of a Louie the 14th style - through the coordination of buildings, ornaments and furniture- there also is a Brâncoveanu style.

- He was preoccupied with the reinforcement of the army and the central authority. The ruler created the first Romanian war fleet. The three kayaks that were built in the Giurgiu shipyard, were actually war ships built after the Ottoman model with 28 rowers. Doctors started to play an important part in the military- health organization.

8. ***The adverse political and historical context.*** “After the Peace of Karlowitz (1699), when the Ottoman armies were defeated and Austria gained Hungary, Transylvania (without Banat), Slovenia and Croatia, the situation of the Romanian Country was very tough. On the one hand, the Turkish were trying to maintain their sovereignty, on the other hand, the imperials were trying to gain these Danubian territories. Brâncoveanu had to withstand the imperials’ request to give the country away as well as the Ottoman pressure with diplomatic skill. Worried by the religious politics imposed in Transylvania (where the majoritary Orthodox religion was not recognized), he started leaning towards Russia, an Orthodox state on the verge of European recognition” (Mariana Zbora-Ciurel, Irina Andreea Cristea, „Documentar: Voievodul martir Constantin Brâncoveanu - 300 de ani de la moarte” / „Documentary: The martyr ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu - 300 since his death, *Agerpres*, 15.09.2014, <http://www.agerpres.ro/flux-documentare/2014/08/15/documentar-voievodul-martir-constantin-brancoveanu-300-de-ani-de-la-moarte-10-22-24>

9. ***Recognition:*** “As a consequence of the messages sent to Moscow, Peter the 1<sup>st</sup> awarded the warlord the Saint Andrew order, trying to support him in some of his actions. He was also given the Great Prince Diploma as well as the right to wear the title of «Iilustrissimus», these titles added up to the Transylvanian nobleman diploma and the one of Count of Hungary. (Mariana Zbora-Ciurel, Irina Andreea Cristea, „Documentar: Voievodul martir Constantin Brâncoveanu - 300 de ani de la moarte” / „Documentary: The martyr ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu - 300 since his death, *Agerpres*, 15.09.2014, <http://www.agerpres.ro/flux-documentare/2014/08/15/documentar-voievodul-martir-constantin-brancoveanu-300-de-ani-de-la-moarte-10-22-24>

10. ***The betryal.*** “The denunciations against the lord, from the country as well as from Transylvania, were continuous” (Mariana Zbora-Ciurel, Irina Andreea Cristea, „Documentar: Voievodul martir Constantin Brâncoveanu - 300 de ani de la moarte” / „Documentary: The

martyr ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu - 300 since his death, *Agerpres*, 15.09.2014, <http://www.agerpres.ro/flux-documentare/2014/08/15/documentar-voievodul-martir-constantin-brancoveanu-300-de-ani-de-la-moarte-10-22-24>

11. **The dramatic death.** “Constantin Brâncoveanu together with his entire family, his sons Constantin, Ștefan, Radu, Matei and his advisor Ianache Văcărescu were captured and taken to Istanbul (Constantinopol) in 1714, they were robbed of all of their goods: estates, houses, money, jewelry etc. Here, Constantin Brâncoveanu and his four sons were imprisoned in Edicule, the prison of the 7 towers, and they were tortured in order to confess were they kept the rest of the fortune. During the torture, the Turkish promised to stop it, to call off the death sentence and even to return the reign of the country, provided they would give the fabulous amount of 20.000 bags of gold to the Empire and if they would relinquish their Christian religion. The warlord did not give up on his faith, neither did his children. They were all sentenced to death, the advisor Ianache and the four children were decapitated one after the other and at the end, Constantin Brâncoveanu himself was decapitated, on the Assumption Day, the 15th August 1714, the day of his 60th birthday” (Liliana Teică, „Osemintele lui Constantin Brâncoveanu, venerate ca moaște. Procesiune solemnă la București” / “Constantin Brâncoveanu’s bones worshiped as relics. Solemn procession in Bucharest” *TVR*, 20. 05. 2014, [http://stiri.tvr.ro/osemintele-lui-brancoveanu-vor-fi-venerate-ca-moaste---procesiune-solemna-la-bucuresti\\_44643.html#sthash.pKXIsZeY.dpuf](http://stiri.tvr.ro/osemintele-lui-brancoveanu-vor-fi-venerate-ca-moaste---procesiune-solemna-la-bucuresti_44643.html#sthash.pKXIsZeY.dpuf));

12. **The repatriation and the burial of the remains.** “In 1720 the remains of Martyr Saint Constantin Brâncoveanu were brought in the country in secret by Lady Maria, because Ahmed the 3rd was still sultan and he sentenced Constantin Brâncoveanu with treason. Despite of the fact that the grave from Hurezi Monastery was ready for the lord’s body, it remained empty because the warlord’s wife feared the Turkish would search for the body there and if they would find it, they would defile it. She buried the remains at Saint George-the New Church, whose benefactor was Constantin Brâncoveanu in Bucharest in 1705, and they can still be found there today. (Liliana Teică, „Osemintele lui Constantin Brâncoveanu, venerate ca moaște. Procesiune solemnă la București” / “Constantin Brâncoveanu’s bones worshiped as relics. Solemn procession in Bucharest” *TVR*, 20. 05. 2014, [http://stiri.tvr.ro/osemintele-lui-brancoveanu-vor-fi-venerate-ca-moaste---procesiune-solemna-la-bucuresti\\_44643.html#sthash.pKXIsZeY.dpuf](http://stiri.tvr.ro/osemintele-lui-brancoveanu-vor-fi-venerate-ca-moaste---procesiune-solemna-la-bucuresti_44643.html#sthash.pKXIsZeY.dpuf))

13. **The canonization performed by BOR.** “Taking into account the martyric end of Constantin Brâncoveanu’s life as well as his four sons’ and his advisor’s Ianache, and appreciating his confessor’s life, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church decided in the 20-21 June 1992 meetings, the sanctification of the six Brâncoveanu martyrs (Mariana Zbora-Ciurel, Irina Andreea Cristea, „Documentar: Voievodul martir Constantin Brâncoveanu - 300 de ani de la moarte” / „Documentary: The martyr ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu - 300 since his death, *Agerpres*, 15.09.2014, <http://www.agerpres.ro/flux-documentare/2014/08/15/documentar-voievodul-martir-constantin-brancoveanu-300-de-ani-de-la-moarte-10-22-24>

### A cursed fortune and a sensational approach

The image of ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu generated successive histories and approaches in the Romanian public conscience. His death was profoundly impressive, triggering a series of folkloric creation “after their tragic death, songs and ballads about the warlord’s and his sons’ awful perish spread. The people’s sensitivity honored his memory in its poetical and pathetic way, one of these ballads being spread in the 1850’s in Alecsandri’s collection” (Constantin Dobrescu, Carmen Băjenaru, „Constantin Brâncoveanu. 300 de ani de la moartea sa tragică” / “Constantin Brâncoveanu. 300 years since his tragic death”, *Glas comun*, 20. 05. 2014, <http://www.glascomun.info/2014/05/constantin-brancoveanu/>).

In the contemporary age, “the people’s sensitivity” is no longer attracted by ballads and sad songs, but by the sensational stories of popular journalism, where the yearning for the human’s resacralization, both individually and as a group, is demonstrated by an appetite for melodrama as a form of resistance against “the theoretical and abstract ways of conceiving society and history” (Jostein Gripsrud in P. Dahlgren, C. Sparks, 1992, p. 89).

On the one hand, media feeds the public’s craving for sensational, on the other hand, as Ștefan Vlăduțescu says “even history, the reality’s chronicle escapes into sensational. As Hayden White concludes in *Metahistory* (1973) and in *Topics of Discourse* (1978), all the history books contain a little fiction as well as all the fiction books contain a little history” (Ștefan Vlăduțescu, 2006, p. 75). Out of all the previously listed topics, the daily press particularly concentrated on the warlord’s wealth, a subject that stimulated many approaches in the national and the local publications.

The boundry between myth, folklore and sensational is very thin. Places’ names overlap, and the journalistic stories lead towards a vaste and obscur symbolism that, not only does it not present Constantin Brâncoveanu as a saint, but it generates an entire thematic univers of evil. From Ștefan Vlăduțescu’s point of view, we deal with a form of “negative journalism” ,as it is named by the author, that is keen to persuade and to transform information into fiction. While “persuasion ignores, distorts, elides objectivity by the total replacement of reality or by mixing reality with fiction” (Ș. Vlăduțescu, 2006, p. 75), fiction customizes and defines itself – according to R. Helms- as „a story whose purpose is not to describe the past but to affect the present” (Ștefan Vlăduțescu, 2006, p. 75).

The narrative present tense brings the fortune in the present, as it being „still hidden” in one of the country’s caves. “One of the most searched for treasures, that is allegedly hidden in one of the county’s caves, is ex-ruler Constantin Brâncoveanu’s treasury. According to the legend, he hid his entire treasure in Caras-Severin before being captured by the Turkish” (Alexandra Jurca, „Caraș Severin, județul cu cele mai multe comori ascunse” / “Caraș Severin, the county with the most hidden treasures”, *Express de Banat*, 26. 01. 2014, <http://expressdebanat.ro/caras-severin-judetul-cu-cele-mai-multe-comori-ascunse/>).

We consequently observe that:

1. **The fortune’s source is presented as ambiguous:** “It was rumored in 1632, when Matei Brâncoveanu became warlord under the name of Basarab, that he discovered a treasure. Constantin Brâncoveanu bought with 600.000 taler, in 1688, the throne for life”. «Alțân

Bei», as he was called by the Turkish, created the «Black Cabinet» that dealt with studying old documents that were related to treasures. In 1714, the ruler, his sons and his son in law were beheaded by the Turkish sultan who fervently wanted the treasure” (Roxana Roseti, „Departament secret: Era Ceaușescu preocupat de comoara Brâncovenilor?” / “Secret department: Was Ceausescu preoccupied by the Brâncoveanu’s treasure?”, *Evenimentul Zilei*, 22.05.2014, <http://www.evz.ro/departament-secret-era-ceausescu-preocupat-de-comoara-brancovenilor-video-.html>

**2. The treasure was cursed:** “the legends say that the golden treasure that dated back from the Dacians’ era brought the awful death of Brâncoveanu and his sons” („Tezaurul blestemat din visteria lui Brâncoveanu” / “The cursed treasure from Brâncoveanu’s treasury” *Libertatea*, 8. 02. 2014, <http://www.libertatea.ro/detalii/articol/aurul-otravit-din-vistieria-lui-brancoveanu-411637.html#ixzz3EV0nMVKk>);

**3. It triggered many overreactions starting from the days of his reign:** “The alleged nine charges against the ruler, have come to us thanks to Anton Maria del Chiro, Brâncoveanu’s chief of cabinet. One of them was hilarious, as it stated that he bought silver trumpets from Vienna, which was audacious as not even the Great Sultan had such things” (Constantin Dobrescu, Carmen Băjenaru, „Constantin Brâncoveanu. 300 de ani de la moartea sa tragică” / „Constantin Brâncoveanu. 300 years since his tragic death, *Glas comun*, 20.05.2014, <http://www.glascomun.info/2014/05/constantin-brancoveanu/>);

**4. It was the main factor that secured his reign,** one of the longest from the history of our country. “With diplomatic insight, through agreements and mail that were kept secret from the Turkish, whose vassal was the Romanian Country, and with the price of many bags full of gold that were open-handedly given, the ruler maintained the political balance at the border of three great empires, The Ottoman Empire, The Habsburg Empire and the Russian Empire” (Liliana Teică, „Pe urmele Brâncovenilor la Istanbul. Închisorile și martiriul” / „Following the Brâncoveanu’s in Istanbul. The prisons and the martyr”, *TVR*, 14. 09, 2014, [http://stiri.tvr.ro/pe-urmele-brancovenilor-la-istanbul--inchisorile-si-martiriul\\_48660.html](http://stiri.tvr.ro/pe-urmele-brancovenilor-la-istanbul--inchisorile-si-martiriul_48660.html));

**5. It brought his death.** “His large treasure drew the ottoman’s envy as well as the Cantacuzino noblemen’s. For four months, in the tower or in the «Pit of blood», the lord was to be continuously tortured in order to confess where he hides his fortunes [...] as a result to the excruciating torment, the Turkish got his signature for the gold hidden in the Venice banks. (Liliana Teică, „Pe urmele Brâncovenilor la Istanbul. Închisorile și martiriul” / „Following the Brâncoveanu’s in Istanbul. The prisons and the martyr”, *TVR*, 14. 09, 2014, [http://stiri.tvr.ro/pe-urmele-brancovenilor-la-istanbul--inchisorile-si-martiriul\\_48660.html](http://stiri.tvr.ro/pe-urmele-brancovenilor-la-istanbul--inchisorile-si-martiriul_48660.html));

**6. It is a topic that has challenged people’s imagination throughout the history,** from Nicolae Ceausescu to the average people: „«It was suspected that under the Brâncoveanu’s estate, there were tunnels that could lead to the legendary treasure and that this was the reason why Ceaușescu decided to demolish these buildings» says the filmmaker. In the *A less familiar Bucharest* volume, Silviu Dragomir observes that the dictator asked to



be notified when the demolition gets to the basements. Tuțuleasa says he «spent many hours on the construction site but he did not find anything. That we know of, at least...» (Roxana Roseti, „Departament secret: Era Ceaușescu preocupat de comoara Brâncovenilor?” / „Secret department: Was Ceaușescu interested in the Brâncoveanu’s treasure?”, *Evenimentul Zilei*, 22.05.2014, <http://www.evz.ro/departament-secret-era-ceausescu-preocupat-de-comoara-brancovenilor-video-.html>).

“The archeologists speak about a sketch that shows the fact that there is a cave under the monastery that was covered with concrete, which explains the bumps of the monument. The priest who allegedly did this does not want to confess, and he is prosecuted because he dugged inside the church, and the monastery is an historical monument, and some rules need to be followed” („Goana după cel mai mare tezaur din lume. Comoara lui Brâncoveanu a declanșat un adevărat război” / “The race after the world’s biggest treasure. Brâncoveanu’s treasure triggered a war”, *Antena 3*, 24.11.2013, <http://www.antena3.ro/romania/goana-dupa-cel-mai-mare-tezaur-din-lume-comoara-lui-brancoveanu-a-declansat-un-adevarat-razboi-235826.html>);

**7. It resembles a mythical story:** “the contemporary writings mention a trip Constantin Brâncoveanu made in the summer of 1695 from Cladova to Cerneți and then to Tismana. He crossed God’s Bridge and Ponoarele and he got to Baia de Aramă, where he halted at Milco Băiașul’s inn. In that area, for over 300 years there is one of Constantin Brâncoveanu’s treasures: The Sfintii Voievozi Church. The locals say that Constantin Brâncoveanu buried his entire fortune under this church. Many archeologists and gold diggers digged after the treasure throughout the years” (“Misterele care învăluie averea domnitorului Constantin Brâncoveanu” / “The mysteries that surround Constantin Brâncoveanu’s treasure”, *TVR*, 13.009. 2014, [http://stiri.tvr.ro/misterele-care-invaluie-averea-voievodului-.constantin-brancoveanu\\_49980.html#sthash.c2KRCQ14.dpuf](http://stiri.tvr.ro/misterele-care-invaluie-averea-voievodului-.constantin-brancoveanu_49980.html#sthash.c2KRCQ14.dpuf));

**8. It is part of a dramatic story that is based on a plot where the ruler is the negative character:** “The locals of Horezu say that the biggest part of Brancoveanu’s treasure is hidden near the Horezi Monastery. This was his most outstanding foundation, built in the roundabouts of Căpățâni Mountains that are full of caves and hiding places. It was written in that era’s documents that the builders hired by the warlord, only digged the church’s foundation at night. It is believed that Brâncoveanu hid the biggest part of his treasure: expensive weapons, golden icons, or chests full of money, in its mysterious basement. He summoned seven devoted servants to brick up the entrance, and as soon as they finished, he killed them himself in order for them to take the secret to their graves” („Tezaurul blestemat din visteria lui Brâncoveanu” / “The cursed treasure from Brâncoveanu’s treasury”, *Libertatea*, 8.02.2014, <http://www.libertatea.ro/detalii/articol/aurul-otravit-din-vistieria-lui-brancoveanu-411637.html#ixzz3EV1nsgrH>).

Not only literature and urban legends but also the daily press are full of articles that link the Ceaușescu’s death with Safta Brâncoveanu’s curse; „she signed the contract for building a hospital next to the Brâncoveanu Church from Bucharest. The Brâncoveanu hospital was opened at the 14<sup>th</sup> October 1838. In order to label this building, Safta ordered a marble monument that was put on the church’s frontispiece. Among other things, the sign

contained a curse against anyone who would dare to harm the building. Ceaușescu demolished the church and the hospital in 1984. «The inscription that is now at in the University's area, in the yard of The Bucharest Museum of History, contains a curse that asks God for the one that will harm the building, the hospital, to be killed by his people on a holiday. In 1989, Ceaușescu was shot by his people on Christmas. This is a strange coincidence» says the curator Dan Falcan („Pietroiu blestemat a anunțat moartea lui Ceaușescu” / “The cursed stone that anticipated Ceaușescu's death”, *Libertatea*, 27. 01. 2010, <http://www.libertatea.ro/detalii/articol/pietroiu-blestemat-a-anuntat-moartea-lui-ceausescu-273703.html#ixzz3EPp6INgg>).

In the article “Ceaușescu killed by the Brâncoveanu's curse” it is stated that the interest Ceaușescu in the Brancoveanu's treasure, made him pay special attention to “The Black Cabinet”- the office that was founded by the ruler in order to discover the Dacian's treasures- and to Anton Maria del Chiaro's memoirs- Brancoveanu's ex-secretary. Inspired by the ruler's idea, Ceausescu also created a secret office to deal with the same things (see Luiza Popa, „Ceaușescu ucis de blestemul Brâncovenilor” / “Ceaușescu killed by Brancoveanu's curse”, *Obiectiv.info*, 08.05.2014, [http://www.obiectiv.info/ceausescu-a-fost-ucis-de-blestemulbrancovenilor\\_41373.html#sthash.iSo0T5aq.dpuf](http://www.obiectiv.info/ceausescu-a-fost-ucis-de-blestemulbrancovenilor_41373.html#sthash.iSo0T5aq.dpuf)).

In another article it is stated that “Brâncoveanu's treasure, the one that is mentioned by legends, was searched since the 30's. The comunists knew about it, so in the late 80's the research were taken over by the Army's specialits. The residents from that area say that even Valentin Ceausescu came here to look for the tresure using modern technology. But he did not have any luck either” (Vasile Surcel, „Popii asmut Poliția asupra arheologilor care caută comoara lui Brâncoveanu” / “The priests whet the Police at the archeologists who look for Brâncoveanu's treasure, *Curentul*,

<http://www.curentul.info/2013/index.php/2013111393358/Actualitate/Popii-asmut-Politia-asupra-arheologilor-care-cauta-comoara-lui-Brancoveanu.html>).

## Conclusions

The articles from the Romanian daily press, show, on the one side an objective image of the personality and the accomplishments of Constantin Brâncoveanu, when it only presents information, category that in which Walter Benjamin sees „ the possibility to verify the facts” (Benjamin, 1970, p. 89). On the other hand, the jurnalists are interested in the colective imaginary, where we find mythical themes that address the Brâncoveanu's treasure theme in a mythical and sensational manner. The articles centered on the Brâncoveanu's treasure subject dramatize and style the story, making it similar to the mithological and sensational stories, distinguished by their own symbolic codes, that are recognized by their public. From this point of view, we deal with soft journalism, where the lord's death is presented as a tragic and dramatic story, based on a plot that is sewed around the treasure. The aricles show a profetic moral order where the cursed treasure also brought the Ceaușescu's death.

The journalistic framing, where Todd Giltin sees „ a manner of organizing the word for the journalists who cover it as but also- in a large amount- for us, the ones who rely on their coverage” (1980, p. 7), for the public that is given this selection of reality, is based on the following narrative direction:

1. Constantin Brâncoveanu allegedly found a treasure that brought his death;

2. Nicolae Ceaușescu, who was interested in this treasure, brought this curse on himself and he allegedly died because of it;
3. The subject is still of interest: many treasure hunters and archeologists dig even in the churches whose benefactor was Constantin Brâncoveanu to find it. (see Corina Macavei, „Scandal pe presupusele comori ale lui Constantin Brâncoveanu” / „Scandal because of the alleged treasures of Constantin Brâncoveanu”, *Adevărul*, 11. 11. 2013 [adev.ro/mw45ra](http://adev.ro/mw45ra)); the press organizes debates on this topic (see „VIDEO Dezbateră Historia la Adevărul Live: Unde e ascunsă comoara lui Constantin Brâncoveanu?” / „VIDEO Historia debate at Adevărul Live: Where is Constantin Brâncoveanu’s treasure hidden?”, *Adevărul*, 7. 02. 2014, [adev.ro/n0m334](http://adev.ro/n0m334), The church and the groups made out of archeologists, historians and scholars interested in the state of Romanian archeology as well as in the protection of the historical patrimony take a stand through online petitions against the „archeological” methods used to search for the treasure addressed to The Ministry of Culture and Patrimony (see „Arheologii caută comori?” / „Do the archeologists look for treasures?”, 19. 11. 2013, [http://www.petitiononline.net/petitie/arheologii\\_cauta\\_comori\\_-p14412143.html](http://www.petitiononline.net/petitie/arheologii_cauta_comori_-p14412143.html)).

*Acknowledgements: This paper was financed through the project „Young successful researchers- professional development in the interdisciplinary and international context”: POSDRU/159/1.5/S/132400, project co-financed from the Social- European Fund through the Operational and Sectorial Program for Human Resources’ development 2007-2013”.*

## Bibliography

### a. Specialized papers:

- Benjamin Walter, 1970, „The Storyteller” in H. Arendt, *Illuminations*, Jonathan Cape, London, pp. 83 - 109
- Boia Lucian, 2011, *History and myth in the Romanian*, Humanitas, Bucharest
- Cioroianu Adrian, 2008, *History, Heroes, Political Culture* Istorie, Scrisul Românesc, Craiova
- \*\*\* 1982, *Social psychology dictionary*, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, Bucharest
- Girardet Raoul, 1997, *Miths and political mythologies*, Institutul European, Iași
- Gripsrud, Jostein 1992, “The Aesthetics and Politics of Melodrama” in P. Dahlgren, C. Sparks (eds.), *Journalism and Popular Culture*, London, Sage, pp.84-95
- Vlăduțescu Ștefan, 2006, *Negative journalistic communication*, Editura Academiei Române, Bucharest

### b. Press articles

- Bratu Ruxandra, Plugaru Horia, „Documentar: Constantin Brâncoveanu - un domn profund atașat intereselor țării și ale neamului românesc întreg” / “Documentary: Constantin Brâncoveanu – a ruler deeply attached to the country’s interests and to the entire Romanian people, *Agerpres*, 6.09.2014, <http://www.agerpres.ro/flux-documentare/2014/08/06/documentar-constantin-brancoveanu-un-domn-profund-atasat-intereselor-tarii-si-ale-neamului-romanesc-intreg--09-54-29>, accessed in 14. 10. 2014

- Dobrescu Constantin, Băjenaru Carmen, „Constantin Brâncoveanu. 300 de ani de la moartea sa tragică” / “Constantin Brâncoveanu. 300 years since his tragic death”, *Glas comun*, 20. 05. 2014, <http://www.glascomun.info/2014/05/constantin-brancoveanu/>, accessed in 09. 10. 2014
- Ivan Liliana, „Martirii creștinismului: 300 de ani de la moartea lui Constantin Brâncoveanu” / “Christianity’s martyrs: 300 since Constantin Brâncoveanu’s death”, *Click*, 14. 08. 2014, <http://www.click.ro/utile/astrologie/martirii-crestinismului-300-de-ani-de-la-moartea-lui-constantin-brancoveanu>, accessed in 09. 10. 2014
- Jurca Alexandra, „Caraș Severin, județul cu cele mai multe comori ascunse” / “Caraș Severin, the county with the most hidden treasures”, *Express de Banat*, 26. 01. 2014, <http://expressdebanat.ro/caras-severin-judetul-cu-cele-mai-multe-comori-ascunse/>, accessed in 14. 10. 2014
- Macavei Corina, „Scandal pe presupusele comori ale lui Constantin Brâncoveanu” / “Scandal because of the alleged treasures of Constantin Brâncoveanu”, *Adevărul*, 11. 11. 2013 [adev.ro/mw45ra](http://adev.ro/mw45ra), accessed in 14. 10. 2014
- “Misterele care învăluie averea domnitorului Constantin Brâncoveanu” / “The mysteries that surround Constantin Brâncoveanu’s treasure”, *TVR*, 13. 009. 2014, [http://stiri.tvr.ro/misterele-care-invaluie-averea-voievodului-constantin-brancoveanu\\_49980.html#sthash.c2KRCQ14.dpuf](http://stiri.tvr.ro/misterele-care-invaluie-averea-voievodului-constantin-brancoveanu_49980.html#sthash.c2KRCQ14.dpuf), accessed in 13. 10. 2014
- Murgoci Anca, „Constantin Brâncoveanu, 300 de ani de la moarte. Ce ar trebui să învețe politicienii de la Constantin Brâncoveanu” / “Constantin Brâncoveanu, 300 years since his death. What should the politicians learn from Constantin Brâncoveanu”, 16.08. 2014, *DCNews*, [http://www.dcnews.ro/constantin-brancoveanu-300-de-ani-de-la-moarte-ce-ar-trebuie-sa-inve-e-politicienii-de-la-constantin-brancoveanu\\_451249.html#sthash.WHc5dalk.dpuf](http://www.dcnews.ro/constantin-brancoveanu-300-de-ani-de-la-moarte-ce-ar-trebuie-sa-inve-e-politicienii-de-la-constantin-brancoveanu_451249.html#sthash.WHc5dalk.dpuf), accessed in 10. 10. 2014
- Popa Luiza, „Ceașescu ucis de blestemul Brâncovenilor” / “Ceașescu killed by the Brâncoveanu’s curse”, *Obiectiv.info*, 08.05.2014, [http://www.obiectiv.info/ceausescu-a-fost-ucis-de-blestemul-brancovenilor\\_41373.html#sthash.iSo0T5aq.dpuf](http://www.obiectiv.info/ceausescu-a-fost-ucis-de-blestemul-brancovenilor_41373.html#sthash.iSo0T5aq.dpuf)
- Roseti Roxana, „Departament secret: Era Ceaușescu preocupat de comoara Brâncovenilor?” / “Secret department: Was Ceausescu preoccupied by the Brâncoveanu’s treasure?”, *Evenimentul Zilei*, 22.05.2014, <http://www.evz.ro/departament-secret-era-ceausescu-preocupat-de-comoara-brancovenilor-video-.html>, accessed in 14. 10. 2014
- Teică Liliana, „Căsătoriile în vremea lui Brâncoveanu” / “The marriages in Brâncoveanu’s time”, *TVR*, 23. 06. 2014, [http://stiri.tvr.ro/casatoriile-in-vremea-lui-brancoveanu\\_46325.html](http://stiri.tvr.ro/casatoriile-in-vremea-lui-brancoveanu_46325.html) accessed in 10. 10. 2014
- Teică Liliana, „Pe urmele Brâncovenilor la Istanbul. Închisorile și martiriul” / “Following the Brâncoveanu’s in Istanbul . The prisons and the act of becoming a martyr”, *TVR*, 14. 09, 2014, [http://stiri.tvr.ro/pe-urmele-brancovenilor-la-istanbul--inchisorile-si-martiriul\\_48660.html](http://stiri.tvr.ro/pe-urmele-brancovenilor-la-istanbul--inchisorile-si-martiriul_48660.html)
- „Tezaurul blestemat din visteria lui Brâncoveanu” / “The cursed treasure in Brâncoveanu’s treasury”, *Libertatea*, 8. 02. 2014, <http://www.libertatea.ro/detalii/articol/aurul-otravit-din-visitieria-lui-brancoveanu-411637.html#ixzz3EV0nMVKk>, accessed in 14. 10. 2014
- Surcel Vasile, „Popii asmut Poliția asupra arheologilor care caută comoara lui Brâncoveanu” / “The priests whet the police on the archeologists who search for Brâncoveanu’s treasure”,

*Curentul*, <http://www.curentul.info/2013/index.php/2013111393358/Actualitate/Popii-asmut-Politia-asupra-arheologilor-care-cauta-comoara-lui-Brancoveanu.html>

Zbora-Ciurel Mariana, Cristea Irina Andreea, „Documentar: Voievodul martir Constantin Brâncoveanu - 300 de ani de la moarte” / “Documentary: The martyr warlord Constantin Brâncoveanu - 300 years since his death, *Agerpres*, 15.09.2014, <http://www.agerpres.ro/flux-documentare/2014/08/15/documentar-voievodul-martir-constantin-brancoveanu-300-de-ani-de-la-moarte-10-22-24>, accessed in 14. 10. 2014

„VIDEO Dezbateri Historia la Adevărul Live: Unde e ascunsă comoara lui Constantin Brâncoveanu?” / “VIDEO Historia debate at Adevărul Live: Where is Constantin Brâncoveanu’s treasure hidden?”, *Adevărul*, 7. 02. 2014, [adev.ro/n0m334](http://adev.ro/n0m334), accessed in 15. 10. 2014

c. Online resources:

„Arheologii caută comori?” / „Do the archeologists look for treasures?”, 19. 11. 2013, [http://www.petitieonline.net/petitie/arheologii\\_cauta\\_comori\\_-p14412143.html](http://www.petitieonline.net/petitie/arheologii_cauta_comori_-p14412143.html), accessed in 15. 10. 2014