

Preface

The exploration of a national identity is, generally, a complex approach, as it requires a comprehensive understanding and representation of cultural historical, social, and political aspects from both past and present through which the respective nation defines itself. This process is even more complicated by the fact that identifying, highlighting, and interpreting these aspects must take into account not only how they are reflected in the nation's own consciousness and conduct, but also how they are perceived by those outside the nation.

This complexity also applies to the understanding of Romanian identity. Therefore, the study of Romanian culture and civilization generally follows two main research directions:

- an in-depth investigation of the elements which define Romanian identity (those elements considered essential by the Romanian identity itself, and therefore valued and embraced as integral to its self-definition);
- an analysis of the expressive forms of Romanian identity (those manifestations and expressions that render Romanian identity visible and intelligible to external observers, and consequently, can be perceived by individuals who are not part of the Romanian cultural context).

The present volume proposes to offer an integrated approach to Romanian identity that emphasizes the importance of understanding “the other,” the outsider to Romanian culture and civilization. In other words, it combines the two traditional research approaches, demonstrating that it is possible to analyze the elements that give meaning and value to one's own culture and civilization from a broader interpretive framework – one that exceeds the national perspective.

This volume introduces a third researching direction as well, proposing an integrated approach to the specific aspects of Ro-

manian identity, one that takes into account the perspective of the “other”, someone who is external to Romanian culture and civilization. With other words, it combines the two traditional research directions, demonstrating that it is possible to analyze the elements that confer meaning and value to one’s own culture and civilization from a broader interpretative framework – one that transcends the confines of national self-perception. Accordingly, the studies included in this volume deepen and expand the understanding of Romanian identity, while remaining grounded both in the Romanian intellectual and cultural context and within the wider European framework. This integrated approach is the primary contribution of the volume *Identity and Collective Memory in Romanian Space. History, Society and Culture*.

Secondly, the studies included in this volume are authored by Romanian researchers. This ensures that these approaches are closely aligned with the authentic view of Romanian culture and civilization. As a result, this minimizes the potential – whether intentional or not – interference from alternative modes of perception, understanding, and interpretation that are often shaped by different cultural and civilizational frameworks.

Thirdly, the volume addresses topics that are not frequently explored in specialized academic research, yet they significantly contribute to a more complete understanding of Romanian culture and civilization. In this regard, the subjects explored become particularly appealing to those interested in the study and comprehension of Romanian identity – whether they are part of the Romanian or international academic communities, students, or members of the general public.

Furthermore, another notable value of this volume lies in the thematic diversity of the included studies, which cover areas such as legislation, institutional development, philosophy, sociology, philology, and anthropology. This variety of themes not only caters to a wide range of reader interests but also contributes to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of Romanian

culture and civilization. Each study examines a particular facet of Romanian identity, and collectively, the studies demonstrate that to understand a nation's culture and civilization requires an awareness of the multiple dimensions in which that identity is expressed. Consequently, this collection contributes significantly to the identification, highlighting and interpreting of the various facets through which Romanian identity defines itself and is presented to others.

The volume proposes two perspectives for approaching issues related to Romanian realities. Some studies employ a quantitative research approach, offering statistical analyses and interpretations. Other studies adopt a qualitative research method, involving observations, opinions, and individual reflections. These methodological approaches are not mutually exclusive; in fact, many authors combine both quantitative and qualitative perspectives for a more comprehensive understanding. Alongside these approaches, and in order to achieve a deeper understanding of the issues addressed, most authors also incorporate an interdisciplinary perspective, fostering a "dialogue" between different academic disciplines that opens new avenues for analysis, interpretation, and comprehension.

The structure of the volume organizes the proposed studies in a way that guides the reader toward the specific issues of particular interest. However, by situating some studies within a broader thematic framework and offering diverse analytical approaches, the volume encourages readers to move beyond the narrow confines of their initial focus and to explore other topics that can expand their understanding. Consequently, this also promotes an interdisciplinary perspective on the themes addressed.

For example, in order to understand Romanian identity from a historical perspective, several studies address elements reflecting the historical evolution of political and cultural institutions and systems in modern and contemporary Romania. Topics include

local public authority, higher education, diplomatic consulates, and administration within the context of Russian expansionist policies in the Bessarabian Romanian territory, which today forms the Republic of Moldova. This section of the volume, entitled “Historical identity – Institutions and representative personalities,” provides readers with statistical data derived from primary sources of analysis, lists of notable personalities and representatives from various professional sectors, as well as a model for the application of fundamental legislation to outline local institutional activity. Moreover, the study presenting the political situation of Bessarabia – a Romanian territory that became a Russian province during early modernity – will help readers better understand the current context of relations between the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation, especially in light of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war.

Another section of the volume, entitled “Migration and employment - Dimensions, attitudes, and intervention strategies”, focuses on contemporary sociological issues, particularly relevant for readers seeking a deeper understanding of how the phenomenon of migration manifests in Romania, along with the attitudes and strategies specific to Romanian communities in relation to this topic. Another timely subject addressed is the employment and unemployment situation in Romania, which, supported by statistical data, provides valuable insight into national patterns of employability. Naturally, these two areas of inquiry – migration and employment and unemployment – can also be approached from a collaborative perspective, encouraging the reader to reflect on the possible interconnections between them, as they apply to both modern and contemporary Romanian realities.

The third section is dedicated to cultural analysis, under the theme “Romanian Cultural Identity: Reflections, Attitudes, and Popular Practices.” For instance, the study titled “Meanings of Normality in the Romanian Cultural Space” offers a philosophical, logical, and sociological introspection into how the Romanian

mindset defines the concept of normality. Another study, "Explanation and Paradox in the Context of the History of Knowledge", adds to this philosophical perspective by analyzing how paradoxes have been understood in Romanian intellectual traditions – especially those recognized within broader European culture.

For readers who are interested in Romanian collective consciousness, the volume includes a study focused on the Romanian perception of death ("Death and Dying in Romanian Premodernity – Between Individuality and Collectivity").

Continuing the exploration of the interplay between Romanian mentality and its forms of expression – though in a more narrowly focused context – one study examines a specific segment of applicability: interpersonal relationships, lifestyle, marginality, and the underworld in two peripheral neighbourhoods' Galați.

For readers particularly interested in representatives of Romanian literature with a European vocation, the volume recommends the study "Panait Istrati – The Strange Journey from the Mouths of the Danube to the Great Publishing Houses of Paris".

The authors of this volume are academics at "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați, Romania, and most are affiliated with the Centre for East European Historical, Social, and Cultural Studies. The studies included in the volume draw upon the results of research conducted by the authors in the broader field of Romanian culture and civilization.

In conclusion, this collection explores Romanian realities from diverse perspectives. By harmoniously blending theoretical frameworks with specific case studies, the volume highlights new research directions that are valuable and relevant for understanding Romanian society, culture, and history.