THE REORGANIZATION OF JUSTICE BY THE COMMUNIST REGIME ACCORDING TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE ROMANIAN PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF 1948 AND ITS CONSEQUENCES ON ROMANIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract: *The Constitution of the Romanian People's Republic of 1948 represented the instrument by which the Romanian Workers' Party prepared the transition of the entire economy under state control. The constitution, being the fundamental law of the state, imposed the principle of popular sovereignty instead of national sovereignty, a fact that allowed the U.S.S.R. to intervene in the political and economic life of Romania. The Romanian state was organized on the principle of the unity of powers, and the leading role was held by the Romanian Workers' Party. The economic provisions prevailed over the political ones, the Constitution being the instrument, apparently legal, through which private property was abolished and the transition of the entire economy and private institutions under state control was being prepared, i.e.: banks, enterprises, means of production, internal and external trade, etc. Starting from 1948, the judiciary in Romania became an instrument to keep under control the population of Romania, condemned to live in a regime totalitarian communist.*

Keywords: *justice, communist regime, Constitution of the Romanian People's Republic of 1948, laws, decrees.*

Introduction

The political, legal, economic, and cultural transformations that began in Romania in 1990, following the removal of the communist regime and the establishment of a democratic government, made it possible to investigate the most challenging period in the country's recent history: the totalitarian era.

After the events of 1989, reconstructing contemporary or immediate historical events became a priority for historians, who gained access to and utilized numerous documents preserved in the national state archives and military tribunal records.

This article aims to analyze the manner in which the communist authorities reorganized the Romanian justice system starting in 1948. The foundation of this investigation consists of scholarly literature, legislation, and decrees issued by the communist authorities concerning the judiciary and its functioning from that year onward. The Constitution of the People's Republic of Romania, adopted on April 13, 1948, became the fundamental legal instrument used by the communist regime

to restructure Romanian political, legal, economic, administrative, religious, and cultural life.

The forced abdication of King Michael I of Romania, the dissolution of the Romanian Parliament, the proclamation of the People's Republic of Romania on December 30, 1947, the falsification of the 1948 elections by the Communist Party, and the concentration of all state power into the hands of a single party—the Romanian Communist Party (renamed the Romanian Workers' Party during 1948–1964)—enabled the comprehensive reorganization of state structures according to totalitarian principles, in line with the Soviet model.

A particularly unconstitutional act occurred on February 4, 1948, when Petru Groza, President of the Council of Ministers, signed in Moscow with Vyacheslav Molotov, the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, a protocol titled *"Regarding the Specification of the State Border Line between the People's Republic of Romania and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics."* The document stated that "Snake Island, located in the Black Sea east of the Danube mouths, is part of the Soviet Union." Through the signing of this protocol—without any mandate to do so—Prime Minister Groza effectively relinquished Snake Island, a Romanian territory that had never been part of Russia or the USSR (Focșăneanu, 2009, pp. 179–180).

This transfer of Romanian territory constituted a blatant violation of the Romanian Constitution of 1923, which stated in Article 2: "The territory of Romania is inalienable. The borders of the state may not be changed or rectified except by virtue of a law." (*Monitorul Oficial*, no. 282, March 29, 1923). The handover of the island was formalized through a protocol signed on May 25, 1948, by two officials: Nicolai Pavlovich Sutov, First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy and representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, and Eduard Mezincescu, plenipotentiary minister and representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Romania.

The Reorganization of the Romanian Justice System After the Second World War

Following the dissolution of the Romanian Parliament, the *Great National Assembly* became the unicameral legislative body of the People's Republic of Romania. It issued a series of laws and decrees in accordance with the 1948 Constitution of the People's Republic of Romania. Regarding the functions and competencies of the Great National Assembly, Chapter 3 of the Constitution stated:
Article 22: The supreme state authority of the People's Republic of Romania is the Great National Assembly.
Article 23: The Great National Assembly is the sole legislative body of the People's Republic of Romania.
Article 24: The Great National Assembly holds the following powers:
a) electing the Presidium of the Assembly;
b) forming the government;
c) amending the Constitution;

d) addressing matters of war and peace;
e) approving national economic plans;
f) approving the state budget and taxes;
g) establishing, renaming, merging, and dissolving ministries;
h) modifying the territorial-administrative divisions;
i) granting amnesty;
j) overseeing constitutional compliance.
Article 25: "The Great National Assembly is elected by the working people, citizens of the People's Republic of Romania, in electoral constituencies, with one deputy for every 40,000 inhabitants. The Great National Assembly is elected for a term of four years."
Article 26: A law is considered adopted if passed by a simple majority vote.
(Official Gazette No. 87 bis, April 13, 1948)

With the establishment of the communist regime, the Court of Cassation and Justice—originally created under the Paris Convention of August 7/19, 1858 (Article 38)—ceased to operate under its own law. Its organization and operational rules were instead defined by Law No. 341 of December 5, 1947, on judicial organization, published in the Official Gazette, Part I A, No. 282. As early as 1945, Law No. 63 of January 31, 1945, had reduced the number of court sections to three and the number of judges to 51, with 17 judges per section plus section presidents and the chief president (Official Gazette, No. 25, February 1, 1945).

Following the adoption of the 1948 Constitution, Decree No. 132 of April 1, 1949, was issued by the Presidium of the Great National Assembly and published in the Official Bulletin, Part I, No. 15. This decree repealed Law No. 341/1947. Under the new law, the High Court of Cassation and Justice was renamed the Supreme Court. The number of judges was reduced to 28, and the court was divided into two sections: the **Penal Section**, which handled appeals related to customs law, forestry law, military court decisions, and other criminal matters and the **Civil Section**, which ruled on all other types of appeals.

In the summer of 1948, the new Education Law was enacted to centralize, politicize, and fully control Romania's educational institutions at all levels. Decree No. 174 on education reform was published in the Official Gazette on August 3, 1948. Its objectives were to "educate youth in the spirit of people's democracy" and to "train middle- and high-level specialists according to the scientific needs of consolidating people's democracy and building socialist society."

Based on this 1948 Education Law, Decree No. 297, published on October 29, 1948, established one-year legal training schools in Bucharest, Iași, and Cluj. Candidates for these schools were selected by county trade union councils and accepted by the Ministry of Justice. These individuals were removed from the labor force, received a monthly stipend, and upon completion of one year of training and a final examination, were granted diplomas that qualified them for judicial, prosecutorial, or other legal positions.

On December 15, 1948, the authorities in Bucharest established military tribunals in Sibiu and Brașov, along with corresponding prisons. This reflects the

fact that, beginning in 1948, the communist regime initiated a Soviet-inspired reorganization of Romania's judiciary. The period saw the highest number of magistrate dismissals and the dissolution of the bar associations on January 17, 1948, which were replaced by the Colleges of Lawyers of the People's Republic of Romania. Justice Minister Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu was dismissed and replaced on February 24, 1948, by Avram Bunaciu (Tărăbîc, 2019, p. 217).

By the end of 1948, as a result of the new Law on Judicial Organization, the Code of Civil Procedure, the Criminal Code of the People's Republic of Romania, and the Code of Military Justice, the entire Romanian justice system was brought under full control of the communist regime.

Law No. 18 of February 12, 1948, published in Monitorul Oficial No. 35, amended the Code of Civil Procedure and defined the jurisdiction of judicial bodies under the newly established legal system of the People's Republic of Romania. According to Articles 1, 2, and 3 of this law, the judicial hierarchy and corresponding competencies were clearly delineated.

According to **Article 1** of Law No. 18 of February 12, 1948 (Monitorul Oficial, No. 35), the local courts are competent to adjudicate all claims that are not expressly assigned by law to other judicial bodies. This provision establishes local courts as courts of general jurisdiction where no specific competence is otherwise provided.

Article 2 defines the jurisdiction of the Tribunals as courts of first instance over the following types of cases:

1) commercial disputes;

2) cases concerning interdiction and judicial guardianship;

3) matters related to matrimonial agreements;

4) issues concerning the transcription of deeds relating to the transfer and enforcement of immovable property, as well as the registration of privileges, mortgages, and pledges.

Article 3 of Law No. 18 of February 12, 1948 (Monitorul Oficial, No. 35) provides that the Courts of Appeal (Curțile) are responsible for hearing appeals filed against judgments delivered by Tribunals acting as courts of first instance. In addition, the Courts are competent to rule on cassation appeals against decisions rendered by Tribunals either in their capacity as appellate courts or as courts of first instance where no right of appeal exists. They are also empowered to hear appeals against decisions issued by jurisdictions established under special laws, unless those laws or the current law assign the matter to another appellate court. Furthermore, the Courts of Appeal shall also adjudicate any other matters that are expressly assigned to them under applicable law.

Article 4 assigns jurisdiction to the Court of Cassation (Curtea de Casație), which shall hear: 1) cassation appeals against final decisions issued by the Courts of Appeal;

2) appeals against non-final decisions and judicial acts of any kind, if such acts cannot be challenged through any ordinary legal remedy and the trial proceedings would otherwise be halted;

3) any other matters that are specifically designated by law as falling within the jurisdiction of the Court of Cassation.

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Romania, published in Monitorul Oficial, No. 87 bis, on April 13, 1948, was the first constitution of communist Romania, drafted in accordance with the model of the 1936 Constitution of the Soviet Union. The document consists of ten titles and 105 articles.

As the fundamental law of the Romanian state, the 1948 Constitution enshrined several core principles of the new regime, including the abolition of political pluralism, the elimination of the separation of powers, and the violation of fundamental civil rights and liberties—even though such rights were formally included in the constitutional text. It also established the dismantling of private property rights.

The highest state authority was designated as the Great National Assembly (Marea Adunare Națională), while the government functioned as the executive and administrative organ of power, accountable to the Assembly.

The judiciary was composed of the Supreme Court, Tribunals, and People's Courts (Judecătorii Populare). A key institutional change was the elimination of judicial irremovability, which had previously guaranteed that judges could not be arbitrarily transferred, dismissed, or replaced. According to Title VII – Judicial Organs and the Prosecutor's Office, the Romanian justice system was reorganized in alignment with the political goals of the new regime.

„**Art. 86.** – The judicial bodies are: the Supreme Court, one for the entire country, the Courts of Appeal, the Tribunals, and the People's Courts.

Art. 87. – By law, special courts may be established for certain branches of activity.

Art. 88. – In all courts, with the exception of the Supreme Court, trials take place with the participation of people's assessors, except in cases where the law provides otherwise.

Art. 89. – The First President, Presidents, and members of the Supreme Court are appointed by the Presidium of the Great National Assembly of the People's Republic of Romania, at the proposal of the government.

Art. 90. – The Supreme Court supervises the judicial activity of the courts and judicial bodies, under the conditions of the law.

Art. 91. – In all courts, proceedings are public, except in cases and under conditions provided by law.

Art. 92. – The right to defense before all courts is guaranteed.

Art. 93. – Judges of all ranks are subject, in the exercise of their duties, only to the law and apply the law equally to all citizens.

Art. 94. – A law shall determine the organization and functioning of the courts, as well as the manner of appointment and removal of judges of all ranks.

Art. 95. – In the People's Republic of Romania, the Prosecutor's Office supervises the enforcement of criminal laws by both public officials and all other citizens.

Art. 96. – The Prosecutor's Office especially oversees the investigation and punishment of crimes against democratic order and freedom, economic interests, national independence, and the sovereignty of the Romanian State.

Art. 97. – The Prosecutor's Office consists of a General Prosecutor of the People's Republic of Romania and several prosecutors. A law shall determine the organization, duties, and functioning of the Prosecutor's Office.

Art. 98. – The General Prosecutor of the People's Republic of Romania is appointed by the Presidium of the Great National Assembly of the People's Republic of Romania, at the proposal of the government". (Monitorul Oficial, No. 87 bis, April 13, 1948)

The 1948 Constitution of the People's Republic of Romania represented the key legal instrument through which the Romanian Workers' Party prepared the transfer of the entire national economy under state control. As the fundamental law of the state, the Constitution replaced the principle of national sovereignty with that of popular sovereignty, thereby legitimizing the Soviet Union's involvement in Romania's political and economic affairs.

The state was organized according to the principle of the unity of power, with leadership exercised exclusively by the Romanian Workers' Party. Economic provisions took precedence over political ones, serving as the seemingly legal mechanism for bringing the entire economy—including banks, enterprises, means of production, and both domestic and foreign trade—under state ownership.

For instance, Article 11 of the Constitution stipulates that the means of production, banks, and insurance companies could become state property when the general interest required it. Article 14 establishes state control over both domestic and foreign trade, while Article 15 introduces the principle of centralized economic planning. The constitutional principle of the inviolability of private property was thus eliminated, laying the groundwork for the eradication of private ownership, which had been guaranteed under the 1923 Constitution.

Furthermore, under Articles 103 and 104, the Constitution could be amended at any time, as an ordinary law, either at the proposal of the government or of one-third of the deputies (Article 103), and even during an ordinary session of the Great National Assembly (Article 104). These articles demonstrate the abandonment of the concept of constitutional revision, which traditionally required a more complex and rigorous procedure.

The constitutional text also notably omits any mention of the Legislative Council, which had previously reviewed the constitutionality of draft laws. This omission reflects the regime's disregard for legal safeguards and its prioritization of political concerns. The omission was deliberate, as the Legislative Council—composed of highly qualified legal experts—had previously created obstacles for the Petru Groza government during the December 20, 1947 session of the Chamber of Deputies, when it returned two draft laws to the Ministry of Justice with sound and well-reasoned objections.

1. The first [draft law] concerned the amendment of Article 265 of the Penal Code, regarding the illegal crossing of the state border. It

proposed disproportionately severe penalties and included logical absurdities, such as the notion of attempting to commit unintentional offenses.

2. The second involved the amendment of Articles 1 and 2 of Law No. 877 of December 9, 1940, whereby the communists, despite their declared opposition to the Iron Guard—their mortal enemy—chose to revive a law enacted by that very regime. The law originally provided for the revocation of Romanian citizenship from individuals abroad who demonstrated behavior contrary to the duty of loyalty to the country. The proposed amendment added provisions not only for the revocation of citizenship, but also for the denial of reentry into Romania upon the expiration of one's passport, along with criminal penalties.

The Great National Assembly, disregarding the negative opinions issued by the Legislative Council, nevertheless passed the two proposed bills. To prevent such obstructions in the legislative process, the regime adopted Decree No. 3 on the Abolition of the Legislative Council following the enactment of the 1948 Constitution of the People's Republic of Romania.

Thus, the economic objectives set forth by the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party, and embedded in the 1948 Constitution, were rapidly implemented. This process resulted in a forced economic equalization of the population—albeit at the lowest possible level of subsistence.

Following the adoption of the Constitution, the General Prosecutor's Office was reorganized through the dissolution of the Legislative Council and the restructuring of the Supreme Court. On April 22, 1948, Gheorghe C. Stere was appointed as the new Prosecutor General of the People's Republic of Romania. He was later replaced on September 17, 1948, by Alex. Voitinovici (Tărăbîc, 2019, p. 218).

Beginning in 1948, new laws supplementing the Penal Code became significantly more punitive. For instance, Article 184 of the Penal Code prescribed life forced labor as the punishment for "high treason." Moreover, Law No. 16/1949 introduced the death penalty for the offense of "treason against the homeland."

Under this law, capital punishment could also be imposed for a range of offenses deemed to threaten state security. These included the procurement or transmission of state secrets to a foreign or enemy power (Article 1, letter b); conspiracy against the internal or external security of the People's Republic of Romania (Article 1, letter c); acts of terrorism committed either individually or in groups, as well as the formation of bands for terrorist or sabotage purposes (Article 1, letter d); and the theft of weaponry or military equipment.

Additionally, the 1948 Penal Code of the People's Republic of Romania introduced under Article 209 the crime of conspiracy against the social order (uneltire contra ordinii sociale), which was sanctioned with severe penalties.

The 1948 Penal Code of the People's Republic of Romania, under Article 209, introduced the offense of conspiracy against the social order, an offense that was punished with severe criminal sanctions as defined by the regime.

Article 209 of the 1948 Penal Code stipulated that the offense of conspiracy against the social order was punishable as follows:

I. A punishment of six months to three years of imprisonment, a fine ranging from 2,000 to 20,000 lei, and a corrective interdiction for one to three years was applied to the act of advocating—verbally—the change of the democratic form of government of the state.

II. A punishment of three to seven years of imprisonment, a fine ranging from 2,000 to 20,000 lei, and a corrective interdiction for three to five years was applied to the following acts:

(a) engaging in propaganda for the violent overthrow of the existing social order of the state;

(b) founding or organizing secret associations with the aim outlined in the previous point, whether or not such associations had an international character;

(c) acting by violent means to alter Romania's economic or social order;

(d) establishing contact with individuals or international associations, whether abroad or within the country, with the purpose of receiving instructions or assistance of any kind to prepare for the overthrow of the democratic order of the state;

(e) offering any form of support to domestic or foreign associations whose purpose was to combat the economic or social order of Romania by the means indicated in points (a) and (c);

(f) affiliating with or becoming a member of any of the associations mentioned under point (b) and (c).

III. Individuals who initiated, organized, were active in, or participated in fascist-type organizations—whether political, military, or paramilitary—were punished with 15 to 25 years of forced labor and civic degradation for 2 to 10 years.

IV. Those who, although not formally affiliated with the organizations listed under point III, engaged in propaganda or undertook actions in favor of such organizations or their objectives were punished with corrective imprisonment from 3 to 10 years, a fine ranging from 4,000 to 40,000 lei, and corrective interdiction from 1 to 3 years. (Penal Code of the People's Republic of Romania, 1948: 67)

It is important to note that Article 209 of the Penal Code facilitated the imprisonment of a large number of political opponents of the regime, supported by the secret police, police forces, prosecution offices, and the courts. This article became a cornerstone for politically motivated convictions. Furthermore, Law No. 16 of 1949 marked a period of increasingly harsh penalties, particularly aligned with the onset of the forced collectivization of agriculture in Romania.

After the establishment of the totalitarian regime, the Banat region became a symbolic and strategic bridge to the West, primarily due to its border with Yugoslavia. Thousands of Romanians, seeking to escape the communist regime, attempted to cross this border illegally. As a result, a distinct category of political prisoners in communist prisons consisted of individuals charged with illegal border crossing. The 1948 Penal Code, under Article 267, punished this offense with 3 to 10 years of imprisonment and fines ranging from 4,000 to 400,000 lei. The same

punishment was applied to those who facilitated such border crossings. Decree No. 134 of July 14, 1948 was issued to establish penalties for preparatory acts and for assisting in the illegal crossing of the border. (Ciuceanu, 1991: 324)

Also in 1948, a series of harsh laws emerged targeting economic sabotage, speculative trade, and quota evasion, all framed within a political logic. Some of these laws, dating back even to 1945, empowered the authorities to suppress Romanian peasants, particularly in the context of forced collectivization and the destruction of the traditional rural society. For instance, Decree-Law No. 351 of May 1945, published in the Official Gazette No. 101 of May 3, 1945, established the legal framework for repressing economic speculation and sabotage.

A new ideological dimension appeared with Law No. 16 of January 15, 1949, which introduced the concept of proletarian internationalist solidarity. (Official Bulletin, No. 12, January 15, 1949) This law explicitly mandated the punishment of any dissidents or opponents of the socialist state, described as a state "ruled by those who work." According to Article 6, paragraph 1, individuals such as instigators, accomplices, facilitators, or concealers were to be punished alongside direct offenders. Article 2, letter e, stipulated the death penalty for "setting fire to or otherwise destroying industrial or agricultural products or forests." Additionally, Article 4, paragraph 1 stated that persons accused of instigation, complicity, concealment, or the preparation of any acts related to such crimes were to receive the death penalty. Paragraph 2 added that "failing to report knowledge of the preparation or commission of the above crimes shall be punished with forced labor of 5 to 10 years." According to Article 5, the jurisdiction for judging the crimes described in this law was vested in the Military Tribunals.

Based on the reading and interpretation of legislation enacted during the period 1949–1953, it becomes evident that the central government in Bucharest encountered significant resistance from peasants who refused to join the collectivist structures. In response to this opposition, the communist authorities launched a campaign of forced collectivization, employing brutal methods of coercion—arrests, beatings, convictions, deportations, and even killings—all of which were carried out under a legal framework established by Law No. 16 of January 15, 1949, and subsequent legislation. It is clear that these laws violated the fundamental rights and freedoms of Romanian citizens.

In rapid succession, the economic objectives defined by the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party, and enshrined in the Constitution of the People's Republic of Romania of April 13, 1948, were implemented. This process resulted in the economic equalization of the population—albeit at the lowest possible level. The regime's next priority was the restructuring of the justice system, leading to the enactment of Law No. 5 of June 3, 1952, on Judicial Organization, and Law No. 6 of June 19, 1952, on the Establishment and Organization of the Procuracy of the People's Republic of Romania (Official Bulletin, No. 31 of June 19, 1952; Official Bulletin, No. 8 of March 4, 1953).

Under Law No. 5 of June 3, 1952, enacted by the Great National Assembly, the Supreme Court (formerly the Court of Cassation and Justice) was renamed the

Supreme Tribunal, a title it would retain until the fall of the communist regime. According to Articles 35–42—which remained unchanged in the republished version of the law (Official Bulletin No. 8, March 4, 1953)—the judicial system in the People's Republic of Romania was to be organized around a single Supreme Tribunal, headquartered in Bucharest, led by a President, supported by one or more Vice Presidents, and divided into three chambers: the Civil Chamber, the Criminal Chamber, and the Military Chamber. Each chamber was composed of judges and headed by a president.

The Supreme Tribunal served as the court of appeal for decisions rendered at first instance by regional tribunals, military tribunals of military regions and the Navy, territorial military tribunals, and the Tribunal of the Capital. Additionally, the Supreme Tribunal acted as a court of first instance in cases specifically assigned to its jurisdiction by law. The court also exercised judicial oversight over lower courts through its adjudication of petitions for correction and through guiding rulings issued by the plenary session of the Supreme Tribunal, attended by the Minister of Justice and the Prosecutor General.

Law No. 6 of June 19, 1952, on the Establishment and Organization of the Procuracy of the People's Republic of Romania, was adopted with the purpose of ensuring the supervision and enforcement of the laws of the People's Republic of Romania "by local organs of state power, central and local organs of state administration, institutions, state organizations and enterprises, cooperative organizations and enterprises, as well as by civil servants and all other citizens; for the defense of the social order and the state system of the People's Republic of Romania; and for the protection of the legal rights and interests of citizens" (Article 1). Upon its publication in the Official Bulletin No. 8 of March 4, 1953, the procuracy became, in legal terms, an instrument of the totalitarian communist regime in Romania and a loyal ally of the other enforcement bodies, all of which were subordinated to the central and local organs of state power.

With regard to its responsibilities, Article 5 of the aforementioned law specifies the functions of the procuracy as follows:

Article 5 – The Procuracy shall have the following responsibilities:

a) It supervises that the orders, instructions, decisions, provisions, and other normative acts issued by the local organs of state power, by the ministries and other central organs of state administration, by institutions, organizations, and state economic enterprises, as well as by cooperative organizations and enterprises and other public associations, are in compliance with the laws of the People's Republic of Romania, with the decisions of the Council of Ministers, and with other normative acts;

b) It ensures that any criminal offense is identified in a timely and complete manner and that it is justly punished;

c) It oversees the protection of individual liberty, supervises and controls the legitimacy and legality of the detention or preventive arrest of citizens, and takes measures to release those who are detained or arrested unlawfully;

d) It monitors the uniform and fair application of laws by the courts throughout the entire territory of the People's Republic of Romania, supervising their judicial activity;

e) It oversees the activity of bodies responsible for the enforcement of judicial decisions (verdicts), as well as the institutions in which sentences and medical or pedagogical measures are executed, ensuring the legality and proper conditions of such enforcement.

Furthermore, the district courts (judecătoriile de ocol), which had limited jurisdiction and were located close to rural settlements, were abolished. They were replaced by people's tribunals (tribunalele populare) with full jurisdiction, including in criminal matters, located in the administrative centers of each district (raion).

The appeals process was eliminated by abolishing the courts of appeal and replacing them with regional tribunals (tribunalele regionale), located in regional capitals. These tribunals had jurisdiction to hear appeals against decisions rendered by the people's tribunals. The former Court of Cassation and Justice, renamed the Supreme Tribunal (Tribunalul Suprem), was charged with adjudicating extraordinary appeals against final rulings and issuing guiding decisions.

Alongside professional judges with legal education, people's assessors (asesori populari) were appointed at all levels of the judiciary. These were typically workers and, more rarely, peasants—individuals without legal education, and often not even high school graduates. They were appointed after completing a six-month special legal training program. Judges were thus accompanied by these assessors, introduced through Law No. 341 of December 5, 1947, on Judicial Organization, which created the appearance of popular representation similar to that of a jury court (Monitorul Oficial, Part I A, No. 282 of December 5, 1947).

Moreover, the term "parchet" (public prosecutor's office) was replaced by "procuratură" (procuracy), with a hierarchical structure matching that of the judiciary—regional procuracies and the General Procuracy, the latter being empowered to file extraordinary appeals against final rulings and to request the Supreme Tribunal to issue interpretive decisions.

Regarding the legal profession, starting in 1948, its practice was primarily governed by Decree No. 39/1950 and later by Decree No. 281/1954. In 1950, based on Articles 44(2) and 45 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Romania, and pursuant to Decision No. 99 of the Council of Ministers (February 11, 1950), the Presidium of the Great National Assembly issued Decree No. 39 of February 13, 1950, concerning the legal profession. In the first chapter—General Provisions—the first 14 articles addressed the practice of law, the Coll ege of Lawyers, and the criteria determining who could or could not practice law, even if they held a legal degree.

„Article 1.

The legal profession in the People's Republic of Romania is tasked with defending the interests of litigants in accordance with the material truth and based on the principles of socialist legality.

Article 2.

Only members of the Colleges of Lawyers (Colegiile de avocați) are permitted to practice law.

Article 3.

The Colleges of Lawyers operate in the capitals of the counties and are placed under the guidance and supervision of the Ministry of Justice. These institutions possess legal personality.

Chapter II: Admission to the College of Lawyers

Article 4.

To be admitted to a College of Lawyers, a candidate must be a Romanian citizen, possess full civil and political rights, and meet the professional training requirements established by decision of the Minister of Justice. Graduates of the one-year legal schools may enroll in the College of Lawyers under the conditions set forth by this decree.

Article 5.

The following individuals are deemed unworthy of becoming lawyers:

a) Former landowners (moșieri), industrialists, merchants, and all those who exploit or have exploited wage labor;

b) Persons convicted of crimes that undermine the political, social, or economic foundations of the People's Republic of Romania, or any other crimes that the Council of the College considers to render the individual unsuitable for the legal profession.

Article 6.

The practice of law is incompatible with:

a) Active military service;

b) The status of priest or any other ecclesiastical office;

c) Any remunerated public office;

d) Being a salaried employee, except for those employed in legal roles;

e) The status of pensioner.

Article 7.

The practice of the legal profession is not incompatible with the status of:

a) Member of the teaching staff at Faculties of Legal Sciences and legal schools, as well as a professor of constitutional law or other legal subjects in secondary schools;

b) War invalid pensioner. The Council of the Colleges may evaluate the re-admittance into the College of lawyers whose incompatibility has ceased. In the event the re-admittance request is approved, the prior period of professional activity before the incompatibility will be counted toward seniority within the College.

Article 8.

Lawyers are required to undergo an effective internship at the beginning of their legal practice. During the internship period, they are designated as trainee lawyers (avocați stagiari).

Article 9.

Enrollment in the College is executed through a decision of the Council, confirmed by the Ministry of Justice. The content of the enrollment request and the accompanying documents will be established by decision of the Minister of Justice.

Article 10.

Trainee lawyers are assigned by the Council of the College to collective law offices, where they are then further assigned by the director of the office to work under the supervision, guidance, and responsibility of permanent lawyers. There, they will perform tasks appropriate to their stage of professional training.

Article 11.

Trainee lawyers are obliged to carry out their professional duties effectively. Their obligations include:
a) Attending court hearings to become familiar with judicial procedures;

b) Observing important trials and preparing reports on them;

c) Delivering lectures and producing legal studies according to the instructions of the supervising lawyer or office director, and attending all internship seminars;

d) Fulfilling assignments related to legal aid services;

e) Carrying out any other duties or responsibilities assigned by the Ministry of Justice, the College, or their supervising lawyer.

Article 12.

The internship period lasts two years. The internship is extended:
a) Automatically by one year for those who fail the final qualification exam;
b) By a period not exceeding one year, based on a decision of the College Council for failure to meet legal obligations or upon a ruling by the Disciplinary Commission. The internship is suspended during military service or in cases of unforeseen or force majeure events.

Article 13.

After the completion of the internship period, the trainee lawyer shall undergo a final qualification examination. The examination boards, along with the date, location, and conditions of the exams for trainee lawyers, will be determined by the Minister of Justice. A candidate who fails to appear for the examination upon the conclusion of the internship, or who fails the exam twice, shall be automatically expelled from the Bar based on a decision of the Council. Exceptions are made for cases of unforeseen events or force majeure that prevented the candidate from attending an examination session, subject to the evaluation of the College Council.

Article 14.

Passing the final examination entitles the candidate to be registered as a fully qualified lawyer (avocat definitiv) in the Bar, in accordance with the

provisions of the subsequent articles. Registration is made by decision of the Council and confirmed by the Ministry of Justice. (…) (Decree No. 39 of February 13, 1950 on the Legal Profession)

Testimonial — Lena Constante, Evadarea tăcută (The Silent Escape): Lena Constante, in her memoir The Silent Escape, describes the post-1950s legal defenders with deep disillusionment:

"Our lawyers? Pitiful creatures, frightened and servile puppets. Their pleadings? Cheap tricks. They begin by admitting without the slightest doubt all the charges brought against their so-called clients. They not only declare them committed, but also fully proven. Yet they go even further. They pour salt on the wound. They express deep indignation provoked by the 'crimes of the accused.' Not one of them even attempts to defend the client." (Constante, 1992: 111)

In addition to career judges with formal legal education, all judicial bodies also included "people's judges," usually workers or, more rarely, peasants, who generally lacked legal education and, in many cases, even secondary schooling. These individuals were appointed to the bench after completing a six-month special legal training course. Thus, judges were flanked by lay assessors (asesori populari), introduced through Law No. 341 of December 5, 1947, concerning Judicial Organization, simulating a form of popular representation akin to jury systems. (Monitorul Oficial, Part I A, No. 282, December 5, 1947) Judicial institutions were subjected to intense political pressure. Notably, the text of the Constitution omitted any mention of judicial tenure (inamovibility), which enabled political interference by party authorities in the appointment and dismissal of judges.

Between 1948 and 1952, after the regime implemented its economic plan and carried out the new judicial reform based on the 1948 Constitution of the People's Republic of Romania, it became necessary to draft and adopt a new Constitution to realize the political vision of the Romanian Workers' Party. This led to the enactment of the 1952 Constitution of the People's Republic of Romania, published in Buletinul Oficial No. 1 on September 27, 1952. Political power became virtually unlimited, a fact evident both in the legal provisions and in their abusive enforcement. These laws were often ambiguous, allowing wide margins for arbitrary interpretation. The will of leading political figures, such as Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej—General Secretary of the Romanian Workers' Party (1948–1964)—or of state officials, became in practice the supreme law in the totalitarian Romanian state.

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CULTURAL LIFE IN BANAT AND COMMUNIST CENSORSHIP ANALYZED FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ORAL HISTORY

Mirela TĂRĂBÎC

Abstract: Beginning in 1948, Romanian society underwent profound transformations modelled after the Soviet system, which significantly impacted the country's political, economic, legal, cultural, and religious spheres. These changes included the abolition of private property and its replacement by state ownership, the suppression of political pluralism and freedom of association, the establishment of a one-party dictatorship, the dismantling of civil society and indigenous structures, and the decimation of the interwar elites—cultural, political, administrative, and otherwise. The reorganization of cultural life at the national level was carried out under the strict supervision of communist authorities and in alignment with their ideological objectives. Consequently, only a few cultural institutions from the interwar period were able to continue their activity post-1948, while others were dissolved for promoting "bourgeois mentalities" and replaced by institutions that endorsed communist ideology. Moreover, both nationally and regionally—in Banat—communist authorities actively targeted the Romanian intellectual elite from the interwar period, especially those opposing the Marxist-Leninist totalitarian ideology.

For any community, recovering its past is essential, as national identity is built around a collective memory that must be preserved and cultivated. The interviews conducted with two prominent figures in the cultural life of Banat—Professor Deliu Petroiu and Professor Damian Vulpe—provide vital testimonies about cultural and artistic life in Banat during the communist regime. These oral accounts complement written documentary and narrative sources.

Engaging with individual or collective memory is particularly important given that the historical discourse during the communist dictatorship was significantly distorted. For this reason, the recovery of memory forms a foundational aspect of oral history. Historiography in various capitalist countries shows a marked interest in oral history, recognizing it as a crucial means of recovering the past—especially in nations where totalitarian regimes have falsified history and collective memory. Prominent historians such as M. Finley, P. Chaunu, E. Renan, and H. Bergson have emphasized memory as a tool for recording, systematizing, analyzing, and reconstructing past events. Whether individual or collective, memory must serve justice—it should not be imprisoned by the past but should instead be harnessed in the service of the present and future, without inciting hatred or revenge.

Keywords: communist regime, cultural life, Banat, individual or collective memory, oral history, communist ideology.

Introduction

The complete seizure of power by the communist regime in 1948 had profound repercussions on Romania's political-ideological and literary-artistic life. The oldest and most prestigious cultural institutions established during the interwar period were either forced to cease their activities or were dismantled and restructured according to the Soviet model. This was done deliberately to sever ties with the past and ensure absolute loyalty to the single-party system and its ideology. The first step in the campaign against the Romanian intellectual elite was the destruction of cultural institutions.

This article aims to analyze—drawing on specialized literature, documentary sources, and testimonial interviews—the manner in which the communist regime reorganized cultural life in the Banat region after the Second World War, following directives issued by the communist authorities in Bucharest. The testimonies collected through interviews, or oral sources, are regarded as lived history and can serve as both alternatives and complements to traditional historical sources. In contemporary times, appealing to individual or collective memory is both vital and urgent, as time passes quickly, witnesses vanish, and memory itself becomes susceptible to distortion or alteration. The role of individual or collective memory is to preserve the past in such a way that it serves the present and the future—not to incite hatred or revenge. Memory must serve justice without becoming imprisoned by the past.

Following August 23, 1944, Romania entered a period commonly referred to as the "witch hunt," characterized by denunciations, blacklists, and the arrest of all those who opposed the Marxist-Leninist totalitarian ideology. Simultaneously, a cultural restructuring took place, consisting of state intervention into the "intimate laboratory of conception and artistic creation, with its various components: themes, motifs, techniques, purpose, message, role, meaning, and finality" (Selejan, 1993, p. 247).

Among Romania's intellectual elite, the primary targets of the totalitarian regime were cultural figures. This was due to the regime's belief that "foreign influences infiltrate most easily into the ideological sphere, into literature, art, and science. Therefore, the ongoing ideological struggle against imperialist influences, against admiration for the decaying culture of capitalist countries, and against reformist and revisionist trends in theory and politics, represents a critical task of our party" (Selejan, 1993, p. 247).

One of the most important cultural institutions in the country, the Romanian Academy, was dissolved. On its foundation, by Presidential Decree No. 76 of June 9, 1948, signed by Dr. Petru Groza, the Academy of the People's Republic of Romania (Academia R.P.R.) was established. This decree altered the institution's Statute and Rules of Procedure, leading to its internal reorganization in alignment with Marxist-Leninist ideology. As the president of the R.P.R. Academy, Professor

Traian Săvulescu, stated: "The Academy of the People's Republic of Romania will always look to the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., which serves as the model of an active Academy." Thus, the institution's entire scientific, literary, and artistic activity became the property of the people.

The reorganization of Romania's most significant cultural institution was conducted in full accordance with the principles of Marxist-Leninist ideology. Through the activities of the Academy of the People's Republic of Romania, the communist authorities sought to impose a dogmatic, proletarian culture and to carry out a broad process of ideological control over cultural and spiritual life.

Mass Media and Literary Activity in Banat after the Establishment of Communism

After the union of Banat with Romania in 1919, the region's literary life began to develop under Romanian administration. Between the two World Wars, various literary, cultural, and artistic periodicals gained recognition in Banat through their cultural activities.

The establishment of the communist regime in Romania had negative consequences on Banat's cultural life. These included the imposition of censorship, the purging of prominent intellectuals labeled as part of the "intellectual bourgeoisie," the creation of the so-called homo sovieticus—an intellectual indoctrinated with Marxist-Leninist ideology who was not allowed to deviate from the official line—as well as the rise of proletcultism.

Despite this, some literary journals such as Vrerea, Făclia, Viața Bănățeană, and Temesvar Zeitung continued to exist. Beginning in September 1944, new publications were launched, such as Luptătorul Bănățean, the official organ of the Banat Regional Committee of the Communist Party, and in 1946, the daily Banatul, led by Professor Ilie Murgu. That same year also saw the publication of Făclia Banatului. In 1947, a magazine affiliated with the Teachers' Union, Școala Bănățeană, began circulation. These publications highlighted the so-called "revolutionary" and "democratic" achievements of the Communist Party, although they also included a few pages dedicated to the "new literature."

After August 23, 1944, Romanian cultural journalism lacked genuine public debate. Readers of the press encountered not open polemics, but orchestrated press campaigns that quickly silenced dissent. These campaigns included "culture for the masses" versus the "ivory tower" (1944–1945), accusations of intellectual betrayal (1946), attacks on Crețianu and his followers (1946–1947), the implementation of Soviet cultural models (1947–1948), and finally, the targeting of "enemy writers of the people" (1947–1948). The goal was to enforce a single ideological direction in literature, achieved through young critics, ideologues, and party propagandists backed by the Union of Artists, Writers, and Journalists' Unions (U.S.A.S.Z).

The year 1948 marked the consolidation of communist dictatorship, the domination of the proletariat, and the institutionalization of so-called "mass culture," a form of culture based on ideological conformity. That year, following

instructions from the leadership of the Romanian Writers' Society, writers were sent to industrial and agricultural worksites—Apaca, Salva-Vișeu, Ana Pauker, Agnita—where they produced "worksite literature."

At the national level, literary critics played a significant role in cultural ideologization. Critics such as Ovid S. Crohmălniceanu (Contemporanul, Revista Literară), Ion Biberi, Al. I. Ștefănescu, Mihai Petroveanu (Contemporanul), Paul Cornea, Radu Lupan (Revista Literară), and Mihail Cosma (România Liberă) were actively involved in denouncing "decadent" foreign literature and promoting a new literature grounded in realism and social engagement.

By 1947, cultural policy was no longer confined to party newspapers. Cultural magazines such as Contemporanul and Revista Literară were repurposed to serve ideological functions, while România Literară and Scânteia (primarily a political newspaper) also included cultural sections aimed at popularizing officially sanctioned literature.

Beginning in 1948, the communist regime introduced class struggle into the cultural domain. Writers were expected to turn their pens into ideological weapons. That same year, the Romanian Writers' Society (S.S.R.) was renamed the Society of Writers of Romania, with Zaharia Stancu appointed as its head. He emphasized that the new society would promote progressive literary creation, support ideological struggle against imperialism, combat artistic decadence, establish Marxist-Leninist literary criticism, and ensure writers lived and worked among the laboring masses.

In the spring of 1949, under the auspices of the party and state, a branch of the Writers' Union was founded in Timișoara. Its members were encouraged to reflect the life and struggles of the working people in their writings. In August 1949, the literary journals Scrisul Bănățean, Banater Schrifttum, and Bánsági Írás were launched in Timișoara to support the regime's vision for a "new literary creation."

Scrisul Bănățean, later renamed Orizont, became the official publication of the Writers' Union, publishing fiction, poetry, drama, and translations of world literature by authors such as Franyó Zoltán, Lucian Blaga, A. Buteanu, Ștefan Augustin Doinaș, Vladimir Bârna, George Bulic, V. Ardelean, V. Birou, C. Bogdan, S. Dima, O. Metea, and Th. N. Trîpcea.

Literary criticism, theory, and history were cultivated by academics from Timișoara such as Gh. Ivănescu, V. Iancu, E. Todoran, Gh. Tohăneanu, N. Pîrvu, St. Munteanu, S. Mioc, V. Vintilescu, and Lucia Atanasiu. Other notable names include A. Lillin, Tr. L. Birăescu, N. Ciobanu, S. Dima, S. Foarță, and N. Tirioi.

Local party press in Banat was represented by publications such as Drapelul Roșu, Neue Banater Zeitung, Szabad Szo, and Banatske Novine, all official Communist Party media. From 1970 onward, monthly publications such as Forum Studențesc, Orizont, and Neue Literatur also emerged. All publications were subject to strict party control, which limited press freedom and kept journalist numbers low. The 1956 census recorded only 111 press workers in Timișoara; by

1977, the number had increased to 228, including those in the print and film industries.

In the mountainous regions of Banat, such as Caraș-Severin County, the local press was also subordinated to the party after 1944. In Reșița, the newspaper Stavila was published from November 1944 to April 1945. On August 11, 1946, the first issue of Carașul Liber appeared—an organ loyal to the Romanian Communist Party that promoted the Bloc of Democratic Parties (B.P.D.) during the 1946 elections. Following the elections, the paper ceased publication.

The successor to Carașul Liber was Flamura Roșie, whose first issue was published on December 30, 1948, as the official press organ of the Communist Party. In the town of Bocșa, Drum Nou was published between 1923–1938 and then from 1946–1947. In the same locality, Curentul Nou appeared between 1935 and 1947, describing itself as an "independent political publication" defending the interests of the people.

In Caransebeș, Uzina și Ogorul was launched after August 23, 1944, and in Oravița, the local publication was Junimea.

On November 22, 1951, the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party (P.M.R.) notified the Banat Regional Committee that several local newspapers—officially party publications—had violated state discipline and ignored press laws specific to the popular democracy. Unauthorized papers and bulletins, such as Siderurgul (Câmpia Turzii), Cătunele Păcii (Petroșani), 30 Decembrie (Arad), and Flacăra (Piatra Neamț), were published without approval from the General Directorate of Press and Printing, the only authority allowed to issue publication licenses. Regional and district committees were ordered to verify compliance, and state authorities were warned that any breach would be met with severe punishment.

In conclusion, after the installation of the communist regime, democratic-oriented newspapers in Banat were banned. Press topics were tightly controlled and censored, with free thought and democratic expression suppressed. Renowned Banat journalists such as Sever Bocu, Aurel Cosma, and Petru Sfetca were arrested and imprisoned or sent to labor camps.

As for broadcast media, Radio Timișoara began broadcasting in 1955, airing six hours daily in Romanian, German, Hungarian, and Serbian. In 1985, the communist authorities shut it down, and it resumed operations only at the end of December 1989.

The Activity of the Committee for Culture and Socialist Education of Timiș County

In addition to literary and artistic activities, mass media, publishing houses, and educational institutions, during the totalitarian years in Banat, other cultural institutions also operated under the directives of the Communist Party. These included libraries (at the county, municipal, communal, and village levels), Houses of Culture, Cultural Centers, the Committee for Culture and Socialist Education,

the Writers' Union – Timiș Branch, the Romanian Academy – Timiș Branch, the Banat Museum, cinemas, and others.

After 1944, responsibilities related to art and culture were assigned to the Ministry of Culture, which initially became the State Committee for Culture and Art, and later the Council for Culture and Socialist Education. At the county level, this functioned first under the name Inspectorate for Education and Culture, and from 1982 onwards, it was restructured as the Committee for Culture and Socialist Education. It had dual subordination: centrally, to the two aforementioned committees, and locally, to the Regional People's Council, and from 1968, to the County Council.

Ideologically, the activity of the Committee for Culture and Socialist Education of Timiș County was guided by the Propaganda Section of the Timiș County Committee of the Romanian Communist Party. Under its supervision operated various institutions of art and culture, including: the Romanian National Opera in Timișoara, the National Theatre of Timișoara, the German State Theatre, the Hungarian State Theatre, the Puppet Theatre of Timișoara, the Banatul Philharmonic, the Banat Museum, the County Library, local and village libraries, municipal and city Houses of Culture, the Timișoara House of Creation, the Popular School of Art, the Union of Visual Artists – Timișoara branch, the socio-political magazine Orizont, the Timișoara Printing Enterprise, Facla Publishing House, bookstores, the Timiș Cinematographic Enterprise, the Composers' Union – Timișoara branch, and various associations such as the Philatelists' Society, the Numismatists' Society, and the Amateur Photographers' Society.

Visual Arts in Banat during the Communist Period

In the final decades of the 19th century, Timișoara experienced a genuine ascent in its theatrical life. A city with a longstanding theatrical tradition, Timișoara was among the few Romanian cities to host a permanent theatre (Ilieșiu, 1943, p. 247). In 1920, the lyrical theatre "Maximilian-Leonard" opened its season in the old theatre building in Timișoara, but its activity was soon interrupted when the theatre building caught fire. Reconstruction began in 1923 and was completed in 1927.

In 1928, the theatre in Timișoara reopened with a performance by the National Theatre of Craiova. Between 1930 and 1939, theatrical life in Timișoara flourished, marked by remarkable performances from the National Theatre of Bucharest, the National Theatre of Cluj, and again from the National Theatre of Craiova. In 1934, A. Nicolau attempted, without success, to establish a permanent theatre in Timișoara. In this context, Maria Cinsky Nicolau reported in the journal Generația Nouă (no. 26, 1934) that the plan was to organize a mixed troupe dedicated to drama, comedy, comic opera, and operetta (Munteanu & Munteanu, 2002, p. 335).

During the Second World War (1940–1945), the National Theatre of Cluj, in exile in Timișoara, gained recognition through five theatrical seasons. In the

same period, amateur artistic ensembles emerged, including those affiliated with institutions like C.F.R., I.E.T., and Prima Banat.

In 1945, a permanent and stable theatre was officially established in Timișoara under the name "The Workers' People's Theatre," later renamed "Matei Millo" Theatre. Over time, this theatre staged works by prominent Romanian playwrights such as I.L. Caragiale, V.I. Popa, M. Sebastian, T. Mușatescu, A. Kirițescu, G. Ciprian, V. Eftimiu, A. Baranga, M. Lovinescu, A. Mirodan, and M. Ștefănescu. It also presented plays by local playwrights such as Radu Theodoru, D.R. Ionescu, and M. Adam. From the international repertoire, performances included Haiti by W. Dubois, The Bedbug by Mayakovsky, and works by Chekhov, Brecht, Goldoni, Ibsen, Nušić, Racine, Schiller, Shaw, and Shakespeare.

After 1945, Timișoara's theatres gained visibility, particularly in other communist states such as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the People's Republic of Poland, the German Democratic Republic, the People's Republic of Korea, the People's Republic of China, and the Soviet Union.

During the communist regime, visual artists from Banat exhibited their work in cultural magazines such as Contemporanul, Előre, Scrisul Bănățean, Tribuna, and Utunk.

Banat's musical life had already distinguished itself before the First World War through the existence of long-established musical ensembles in Timișoara, Chizătău, Arad, Reșița, Sânnicolau Mare, Orșova, Bocșa, and Lipova. The region's musical culture was enriched by the work of prominent local figures such as I. Vidu, Sabin Drăgoi, Tiberiu Brediceanu, Iosif Velceanu, Alexandru Mocioni, Liviu Tempa, N. Popovici, Trifu Lugojanu, Timotei Popovici, Ioachim Periam, and Zeno Vancea (Munteanu & Munteanu, 2002, p. 335).

In 1940, as a result of the Second Vienna Award, the Cluj Opera relocated to Timișoara, where it delighted audiences with its performances. After the opera returned to Cluj in September 1945, discussions began about establishing a State Opera in Timișoara. The institution was officially founded in March 1946. On April 27, 1947, the Timișoara State Opera inaugurated its first season with Verdi's Aida.

Also in April 1947, the "Banatul" State Philharmonic was established in Timișoara, marking a significant milestone in the city's musical development. In 1951, the Philharmonic's choir was founded under the direction of conductor Mircea Hoinic. The enduring success of the Philharmonic over the decades can be attributed to a series of distinguished conductors, many of whom also served as directors of the institution. These included George Pavel, Mircea Popa, Paul Popescu, Nicolae Boboc, Mircea Hoinic, and Ion Românu. The Banatul Philharmonic collaborated with a number of prominent soloists and conductors, including George Georgescu, Alfred Mendelson, Dumitru D. Botez, Mircea Basarab, Iosif Conta, P.H. Rogalski, Radu Aldulescu, Ion Voicu, Ștefan and Valentin Georgescu, and Dan Iordăchescu (Munteanu & Munteanu, 2002, p. 348).

At the end of the Second World War in 1945 and in the following years, several distinguished artists devoted themselves to the stage of the "Workers'

People's Theatre" in Timișoara, which was later renamed the "Matei Millo" Theatre. Notable contributors included Lilly Bulandra—actress and professor at the Conservatory—director and first manager of the theatre Dem. Moruzan, Gh. Damian, Dan Nasta, Gh. Leahu, and Ștefan Iordănescu. After the Communist takeover, the theatre's actors, directors, and stage designers were obliged, in addition to their regular performances, to participate in various state celebrations, national events, and so-called socio-educational activities.

In 1953, in addition to the Romanian State Theatre in Timișoara, German and Hungarian-language sections were established. By 1956–1957, these two sections of the "People's Theatre" became independent institutions, each with its own administrative leadership.

Alongside the thriving theatrical scene, the city was also home to the State Opera, the "Banatul" Philharmonic, the Faculty of Music and the Music High School, as well as the local branch of the Union of Composers. Banat's musical culture continued to flourish, enriched by the contributions of prominent local figures such as I. Vidu, Sabin Drăgoi, Tiberiu Brediceanu, Iosif Velceanu, Alexandru Mocioni, Liviu Tempa, N. Popovici, Trifu Lugojanu, Timotei Popovici, Ioachim Periam, and Zeno Vancea (Vancea, 1957, p. 28; Filaret Barbu, 1942, pp. 67–68).

Regarding the activity of Banat's visual artists, Professor Deliu Petroiu, a distinguished art historian and academic, offers insightful reflections:

"To begin with, it is important to note that the communist regime can be divided into distinct phases: the 1950s, often referred to as 'the obsessive decade'; the 1960s, which mark the final years of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's leadership and the early years of Nicolae Ceaușescu; and finally, the post-1971 period, following Ceaușescu's return from China, characterized by a tightening of control over intellectual life.

I was not in Timișoara during the first period, but the situation was likely similar to that in the rest of the country. In the 1960s, during the so-called 'thaw,' there was a relative relaxation of the strictures imposed by the regime. It was during these years that artists and writers in Timișoara began turning their attention to the Western world. There was significant experimentation, and by the end of the decade, a new attitude among many artists began to crystallize. A notable example is the exhibition held by Timișoara artists in Novi Sad and Belgrade—cities already enjoying closer contact with the free world. That marked the beginning of a new phase, and throughout the next decade, several painters and sculptors from the region held exhibitions in Central and Western Europe, invited by foreign galleries.

In this context, official vigilance began to subside. It had become a widespread phenomenon, increasingly difficult to restrain. Of course, there were some well-known artists who complied with party commissions. As a result, artworks emerged depicting the struggle for peace, industrial landscapes, and official visits by political leaders. Portraiture of party figures also flourished. After 1989, in conditions of complete freedom, some artists—such as Diodor Dure—

hesitated to reappear publicly, feeling guilt over works created on commission for the regime.

There was no formal censorship in place, even though propaganda secretaries expressed opposition to neo-expressionist and especially abstract influences. A major moment of national significance was the grand exhibition at the Dalles Gallery in Bucharest, which showcased the new face of Timișoara's art scene." (Interview with Prof. Dr. Deliu Petroiu, 2005, Timișoara – TM)

When asked about Banat artists who may have sympathized with the totalitarian regime through their work, Professor Deliu Petroiu responded:

"It is difficult to speak of genuine sympathy, but in order to exhibit their more daring works, artists often had to include in their repertoire scenes depicting workers, collectivists, pioneers, members of the Union of Communist Youth (UTC), and heroes of socialist labor.

In each county, the person directly responsible for ideological compliance was the Secretary for Propaganda. In addition to this official, others were also tasked with ensuring adherence to communist ideology, including the County Committee for Culture, editors and directors of newspapers and journals. These individuals sometimes modified or appended short passages to texts in order to better align them with the ideological expectations of the publications. There were cases in which the author of a controversial article was not allowed to publish a rebuttal or defense against press criticism. However, such instances were relatively rare, in part due to the widespread practice of self-censorship.

Official institutions generally did not encourage exhibitions abroad. Approval was granted only when invitations came from prestigious associations or galleries. For exchanges with other socialist countries, artists were either selected or granted permission to participate in workshops, creative camps, or experience exchanges.

From Timișoara, sculptors such as Gaga, Xenia, and Leon Vreme, among others, had established connections with institutions in Italy (Modena) and Switzerland. Constantin Flondor participated in the well-known meetings held as part of Documenta Kassel, a prominent contemporary art exhibition in Germany. Some artists had the opportunity to establish contacts with galleries and studios in Paris, such as painter Vasile Pintea, who worked in the Atelier La Courière.

Artists typically exhibited their work in the galleries of the Fine Arts Fund (Fondul Plastic) or in other public venues in county seats. Exchanges between cities were also common, and there were instances where three regional branches were invited to showcase their works at the Dalles Gallery in Bucharest.

In principle, artists were free to choose their themes. However, during national holidays or the birthdays of political leaders, the party leadership would issue general thematic directives. These were often seen as a form of tribute, in exchange for which artists were then allowed to present other types of work. In general, the Party also recommended other subjects such as historical figures and scenes, the "happy life" of peasants in agricultural cooperatives, portraits of communist fighter-heroes, socialist labor heroes, industrial landscapes, and more.

For monumental art, works had to be submitted as models or sketches to a central commission. For instance, in the case of the decorative-monumental art planned for the new university building, multiple sessions were held in which improvements to proposals were discussed. A particularly unfortunate example is that of painter Ștefan Szönyi, whose project initially passed the commission's review but was later rejected by the Ministry of Education, which imposed a new thematic framework altogether." (Interview with Prof. Dr. Deliu Petroiu, 2005, Timișoara – TM)

Regarding the activity of Banat painters who gained prominence after the Second World War—Romulus Nuțiu, Gabriel Popa, Aurel Brăileanu, Traian Bona, Leon Vreme, and Constantin Flondor—Professor Deliu Petroiu noted:

"I have spoken and written extensively about this group over the years. It is difficult to define the specific character of their art in just a few lines. However, I would mention that Traian Bona was a physician who, owing to his exceptional skill in watercolor, was accepted into the Fine Arts Fund (Fondul Plastic) but not into the Union of Visual Artists. Among those listed in your question, most also served as professors at the Faculty of Arts, with the exception of C. Flondor, who was teaching at the Art High School in Timișoara at the time." (Interview with Prof. Dr. Deliu Petroiu, 2005, Timișoara – TM)

When invited to speak about himself and his distinguished career as a teacher and art critic, Professor Deliu Petroiu, with characteristic modesty, shared the following:

"As for myself, I taught Art History as a full-time faculty member at the Faculty of Philology in Timișoara. For several years during the 1970s, I also taught art history on a supplementary basis at the Faculty of Arts in the same city. Additionally, I was invited to deliver elective courses at other faculties, including the Polytechnic and the Faculty of Medicine. Like all my colleagues, I was required to participate in political education programs as part of my teaching role. Professionally, I spent two weeks in a specialization program under Professor Vătășeanu at the University of Cluj.

I was also very active at the Students' Cultural Center (Casa de Cultură a Studenților), where I had access to a more comprehensive range of illustrative materials. My courses were supplemented by slide projections and documentary art films, which I borrowed from the cultural departments of various embassies in Bucharest—France, the Federal Republic of Germany, and Japan. I maintained a regular column on visual arts criticism for a time in Orizont magazine, and later in the newspaper Drapelul Roșu. I frequently wrote exhibition prefaces and spoke at exhibition openings, not only in Timișoara but also in other major artistic centers such as Arad, Reșița, Lugoj, Oradea, Cluj, Iași, Bârlad, Bucharest, Craiova, and Drobeta-Turnu Severin.

I participated in creative camps such as the one in Oravița, delivering lectures and later publishing my reflections. I also wrote brief monographs and prefaces for art catalogues, and I spoke at exhibitions featuring foreign artists visiting from France, Germany, Hungary, and the United States. Alongside fellow

painters and graphic artists, I supported the amateur art circle that later became the Romul Ladea Association, with which I also attended artistic retreats.

After 1989, I was invited back to the newly established Faculty of Arts as one of the few specialists in aesthetics—a subject that, during the communist era, had been excluded from academic curricula because aesthetics was considered part of the social sciences. I subsequently taught general aesthetics at the Faculties of Music, Architecture, and Acting. I explored the entire landscape of artistic creation in my lectures and writings, addressing topics such as folk art, naïve art, and children's art.

From 1990 onward, for approximately seven to eight years, I taught at the private Tibiscus University in Timișoara, at the Faculty of Design, and for a time at the Faculties of Journalism and Philology." (Interview with Prof. Dr. Deliu Petroiu, 2005, Timișoara – TM)

During the communist regime, Banat's visual artists exhibited their works in cultural journals such as Contemporanul, Előre, Scrisul Bănățean, Tribuna, and Utunk. These platforms provided one of the few remaining spaces for artistic visibility, even as creative freedom was constrained.

We can conclude that, in Banat—as in the rest of the country—cultural life after the Second World War was thoroughly reorganized in line with the ideological objectives imposed by the communist authorities. While some cultural institutions and organizations were allowed to continue their activities after 1945, others were dismantled because they evoked "bourgeois mentality and culture." New institutions were established with the explicit aim of promoting communist ideology. In this process, all the foundational values of a democratic culture were systematically undermined and ultimately destroyed.

Among the acts that led to the destruction of Banat's traditional cultural values, one of the most significant was the "hunt" orchestrated by local communist authorities against cultural figures from western Romania—writers, journalists, professors—who had formed the intellectual elite of Banat during the interwar period. The methods used by the communist regime to dismantle these elites included physical and psychological violence, manipulation, isolation, corruption, and imprisonment. Cultural figures were the primary targets, as the regime believed that foreign influences could easily infiltrate the ideological domain, especially through literature, art, and science. For this reason, the communists strongly advocated for the ongoing ideological struggle against imperialist influences.

Through the activities of the Academy of the People's Republic of Romania, the communist regime aimed to enforce a dogmatic, proletarian culture and to carry out the systematic ideologization of cultural and spiritual life. To achieve this goal, many of Romania's most prominent cultural figures—philosophers, historians, writers—were expelled from the Academy, arrested, and imprisoned. In their place, based on Decree No. 1454 of August 12, 1948, the regime appointed active and honorary full members to the Section for the Science of Language, Literature, and Art, including George Călinescu, Gaal Gabor, Geo

Bogza, Emil Isac, Iordan Iorgu, Alexandru Rosetti, Mihail Sadoveanu, Alexandru Toma, Gala Galaction, and Victor Eftimiu.

Under the program titled "Science, Literature, Art and Their Servants in the People's Republic of Romania," presented by the Academy's president, Professor Traian Săvulescu, all members of the institution were formally committed to serving the Romanian Workers' Party, contributing to the ideological transformation of culture, and assisting in the "reorganization of the new Soviet-type human being."

The Communist Party closely monitored, controlled, and intervened in all cultural activities and manifestations, directly contributing to the ideological distortion of their content. Cultural acts themselves were subjected to censorship throughout the totalitarian period until 1989. For instance, according to the Resolution of the Plenary Session of the Composers' Union held on February 4–5, 1952, musicians were tasked with the "thorough adoption of the method of socialist realism" and with opposing the "liberal and tolerant attitude toward the influences of bourgeois ideology" (Scrisul Bănățean, no. 6/1952, p. 157).

In June 1960, during the Congress of the Romanian Workers' Party, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej emphasized that all cultural creators had "the duty to produce works that meet the Party's high artistic and ideological standards" (Gheorghiu-Dej, 1962, p. 187).

As for literary life during the totalitarian years—namely, the era of proletcultism—it was deeply shaped by the dogmas of communist ideology, which left a lasting imprint on literary production. In Timișoara, literary activity during this period was primarily concentrated within the city's major cultural institutions, including the Timișoara branch of the Romanian Writers' Union, the journal Scrisul Bănățean (renamed Orizont in 1969), and the Faculty of Philology. These institutions operated under the strict control and censorship of local communist authorities, who followed directives issued from Bucharest.

The interviews I conducted with two prominent university professors—Prof. Dr. Deliu Petroiu and Prof. Dr. Damian Vulpe—stand as significant testimonies that enrich our understanding of cultural life in Banat during communism. Their recollections, as components of lived history, play an essential role in revealing historical truth, especially as they bridge the gap between personal memory and documented history. Following the events of 1989, the reconstruction of contemporary and near-contemporary historical events became a priority for historians, who increasingly turned to the testimonies of participants. These oral sources offer substantive insights into what we now refer to as lived history.

During the totalitarian period, Banat—like the rest of Romania—faced what Virgil Ierunca described as a cultural crisis: a crisis of individual freedom, a crisis of the poet's right to be a poet, a crisis of the critic's freedom to be critical, a crisis of the artist's freedom to speak on behalf of the people, and not least, a crisis of the right to confront imposture. All the transformations imposed by the communist regime on Romanian society—political, economic, legal, cultural, and religious—resulted in a radical rupture from the interwar Romanian tradition.

The utopia of communism, centered on the belief in building a new society and a "new man" atop the ruins of civil society, morality, and religion, proved to be dangerously seductive for nations underdeveloped in terms of capitalism and liberal democracy. At the same time, its ultimate consequences were tragic—marked by failure, dehumanization, and social decay.

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THE CLASSROOM AS A SITE OF MISSION: POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE IN THE FORMATION OF SOCIAL CONSCIENCE

Bogdan ANDREI

Abstract: *In contexts where structural violence is a defining characteristic of the society that literature remains one of the most potent means for humanization to be realized, for the marginalized and dehumanized to become conversational partners with those who represent the powerful forces of a given society. Indeed, South African authors who have been able to chronicle the havoc wrought by apartheid, such as Sindiwe Magona and Zakes Mda, have also been able to conceive of the process of renewal that could lead to the transformation of society. Through the portrayal of the inner turmoil suffered by a black South African woman while she is coming to terms with the fact that her son has killed a white American student, Magona, in Mother to Mother, offered a quite honest representation of the condition of that mother by the novel which was also a social critique that deconstructed the stereotypes of victims and evildoers.*

Keywords: *post Apartheid literature, memory, South Africa*

INTRODUCTION

The fall of apartheid in South Africa was a historical turning point that also ushered in a lengthy cultural, moral, and religious struggle to grapple with the aftereffects of systemic oppression, marginalization, and violence. The issue of education, in particular, and the function of literature, specifically, as a medium of instruction, have played a significant role in a country where the collective memory should be reactivated, empathy be fostered, and the national identity be remoulded. Through their aesthetic nature, literature took on a new duty when they also became instruments of morality, diagnostic tools for historical trauma, and reflectors of the future possibilities and past injustices. Therefore, the local educational scenery was by no means passive rather it actively directed public theology and a musical and ethical critique, because the conversations around fiction were to a large extent intertwined with the building of ethos and civic responsibility.

In contexts where structural violence is a defining characteristic of the society that literature remains one of the most potent means for humanization to be realized, for the marginalized and dehumanized to become conversational partners with those who represent the powerful forces of a given society. Indeed, South African authors who have been able to chronicle the havoc wrought by apartheid, such as Sindiwe Magona and Zakes Mda, have also been able to conceive of the process of renewal that could lead to the transformation of society. Through the

portrayal of the inner turmoil suffered by a black South African woman while she is coming to terms with the fact that her son has killed a white American student, Magona, in *Mother to Mother*, offered a quite honest representation of the condition of that mother by the novel which was also a social critique that deconstructed the stereotypes of victims and evildoers.

On the same note, in *The Heart of Redness*, Mda puts colonial imprint that has grown into contemporary moral complexities side by side, thereby, inviting the readers to downplay the legendary aspect of history and the resultant effect of moral infractions on society at large. These acts of rewriting the stories are not merely narratives but rather dialogic spaces that empower the reader, and in particular, the student, to grapple with their intricate ethical standpoints, interact with historical memories that have become the flashpoint of rivalry among different groups, and finally explore the practicality of ethical judgment.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this regard, the study aims to find out what the present classroom in South Africa, which has already gone through the apartheid period, can really be in terms of both a pedagogical setting and a space of special mission (of literary engagement to promote societal awareness in the classroom). It is only that the intention of this study is not simply to be a mere discussion of examples of post-apartheid literature, neither to be an analysis of the texts through a theological lens, but there is a desire to dig deeper into the possibility of reading and teaching of these works as the realization of the mission-understood here not as the Church's initiative to convert the world, but as the Church's commitment to justice, reconciliation and human development. This paper builds the very place that intersects with the fields of missiology, pedagogy, and literary studies, suggesting that the classroom when infused with culturally relevant literature can also be the marginal space where moral learning and social conscience can occur.

As we address the issue, we are drawing on a theoretical framework, according to which both education and mission are, in fact, having a transforming effect themselves and particularly in situations that are defined by the violence and fragmentation of society in the past. Here the missiological viewpoint (referring to what the study of mission implies) is based on a perspective of a postcolonial theology that envisions the Church not only as a teaching institution but as the body of the witness deeply involved in the world's struggle and potential. In this light, education, as a theological act, is the process of educating individuals consciously and collectively for the common good, with a sense of pain and suffering, hoping for good end achievable through faith.

As we turn to the ideas presented by David Bosch in *Transforming Mission*, we are told that the author unfolds a mission model that is not triumphalist, but dialogical and kenotic, that listens before it talks and walks alongside the others instead of fighting and defeating. Such aspects provide an excellent ground for possessing the classroom as a palace of ethical imagination while the victims'

narratives are being overwhelmed by the empowerment of the unauthorized, and the displaying of empathy and determination.

LITERATURE AND THE LEGACY OF APARTHEID

One of the most important things here is the concept of a social conscience- it is not just a matter of basic civic duty but a change of ethical attitudes incorporated with the help of historical memory and prophecy. Thus, moral training is a process of moulds that constitute perceptions, identify the ethical nature of social life, and involve being prepared to act with sympathy and bravery. In this way, literature is a key to such kind of training since it invites people to the world of stories in which they must not only understand but also resolve the moral issue, assert human dignity against inhuman conditions, and in which the other person has a face no more. In that case, post-apartheid South African literature functions as a moral laboratory where the truth-telling and reconciliation processes are being verified.

The combination of pedagogy and theology with postcolonial literary studies presents a direct view of text's influence on individuals' minds and its potential to challenge previously accepted paradigms. We can see the transformation brought about by the female characters in the absence of the male hero through their suffering, silence, waiting, and submissiveness in the Njabulo Ndebele writings *The Cry of Winnie Mandela*. Through this narrative technique, the gender-oriented lacunae can be seen in the apartheid and nationalist discourse, presenting the scholars with an opportunity to participate in discussions about power, sacrifice, and historical remembrance's ethicality. Postcolonial pedagogy, in this regard, has become another way used by people that reject them, not just a performance of teaching.

Indeed, the influence of the post-apartheid era of South African literature is not only a research topic but also the painful memory and evidence of such traumas that are ongoing and hence it needs interpretation, and further attention. Writers of that epoch, who tell their stories full of suffering, provide hope in their attempts to heal the broken and share their testimonies of the survived, this is just but part of the literature that was there those days with the students offering them information about their kind of history and the role that they are to play. The practice of just analysing without getting involved is far gone and is the challenge they need to face and emerge victorious. This lit the way for both, students, and educators to engage not only in discussions but also in the actual process of uplifting the country. Thus, the classroom has evolved to be a platform of experiencing the mission of reconciliation, justice, the harnessing of individual characters at a time.

THE CLASSROOM AS A MISSIONAL SPACE

South African society has been more than just reformed at the institutional level, politically restructured, and morally reoriented after the collapse of apartheid. It has been a slow and delicate process and required the social fabric to be reweaved through the engagement where not just knowledge was passed but

ethical responsibility was also awakened. Therefore, in the big project, the educational duties of the Church, particularly through its network of faith-based schools, have become paramount in the cultivation of a liberated moral imagination (Higgs & van Wyk, 2007: 338). By implication, the classroom is not a teaching place only, but where theology, ethics, and pedagogy cross each other in game-changing ways. Education in a missional outlook of justice, peace, and reconciliation, serves as not only a shaping but also a healing function (The word of Farley, 1983: 198). This process opens us the way to the story of the Christian mission which cannot be completed without a nod to Africa. However, this mission has often been seen as a part of the colonial regime, and yet, at the same time, it has provided us with a witness, whom we, our children, and our children's children can count on for the love, the tender care, and the new social order that instructional schools based on religious faith can revive as their present role in society (Walls, 2002: 230).

The context of such educational spaces, where the study of literature happens, resonates the very much alike sentiment of what is going on in the lives of the African people and becomes the front line in combating the informational opium of the colonizers. The representative texts, which are mute witnesses to the awful events in the past and are shouting the worth of human dignity, for example, *Disgrace* by J. M. Coetzee and *July's People* by Nadine Gordimer, encourage their readers to approach their violent roots and puzzle out their stand in the systems of the centre or the periphery (Attwell, 1993: 36). We also understand that a parallel narrative exists in the novel, *No Time Like the Present*, where Zakes Mda sheds light on the disillusionment of life of people after freedom and somehow, enlivens the semblance of hope, the possibility of making a compromise, and ethical fatigue in the light of arising inequality.

It is the contention of the paper that if the students encounter such works in a way that is not merely descriptive or the deconstruction of the thematic stipulations in the content or linguistic structural analysis, but as provoking questions into the moral complexity of the historical people, then it is literature that is being utilized here as the tool of conscience-formation and the platform for spiritual discernment (Viljoen, 2013: 102). Thus, reading is gradually stripped of its epistemological function and becomes an existential exercise that is an uninterrupted alternation of one's experience with that of others.

To utilize the classroom as a missional space, an individual needs to design some approaches of which the main characteristic is reaching out only to the surface of ideas and issues, and through that allow literature not only to create consciousness but also to instil the virtues. It is the teaching practices that make space for silence, for listening, for critical dialogue that goes beyond the students' role as mere text-interpreters to learners who recognize in the moral issues a text raises, their own identity (Freire, 1996: 87). The method is one that is against the exploiting of literature for the interests of a certain ideology and instead it attests to the fact that the literature has the ability to bring the opposite of the very spaces

that it closes; the new spaces of ambiguity and tension where ethical formation can occur (Nussbaum, 1997: 89).

Among the actions are the ones where a guided discussion uses students' own experiences to compare with the stories from people that are outside the social margins; reflections of writing that make connections between the fiction story and socio-related realities; and projects on which the student and the community through literary knowledge take real acts of service or commitment to humanity (Jansen, 2009: 45). Such practices, if performed with theological intentionality, start to transform the classroom into the meaning of the mission through the Holy Spirit, not in narrow ecclesiastical terms, but as a vessel of human transformation powered by the Spirit of justice and reconciliation (Bosch, 1991: 432).

As an addition to the above, the use of religious vocabulary and Christian anthropology within the pedagogical framework of teaching can be a helpful factor in these conversations if they are not reduced to dogmatic teaching. The humility- and openness-contextual insights from theology, for instance, can pose some more profound questions on themes like forgiveness, alienation, and redemption typically found in these stories of literature. (Volf, 2006: 212). For instance, one will be struck by the idea that in *The Long Journey of Poppie Nongena* by Elsa Joubert, the bravery of the mother is reflected in the way she becomes the center of strength and moral certainty in a violent world that is shattered, echoing the theological manifestation of kenosis and resistance (Devarenne, 2006: 74). Keeping all these aspects in mind, we can see that employing a missional perspective in the interpretation of the readings would lead to the holistic development of the students' intellectual, ethical, and spiritual growth, where faith is not reduced to an abstract idea but it is a commitment to the truth and justice (Palmer, 1998: 19).

Here, literature is read as an ethical act; thus, the Church's educational vocation is implicitly congruent with the reading of literature. The classroom is where the Gospel is not preached as a set of propositions but actually is lived out through such practices as hospitality, solidarity, and the development of a deep feeling of compassion concerning suffering (Kelsey, 2009: 312). It is that setting in which pedagogy and mission, story, and sacrament come together that faith-based schools, not through presenting ready-made solutions but by forming students who can bear the weight of complex histories and who can imagine the future based on compassion, memory, and justice, can take a stand in the rebuilding of South Africa (Moloney, 2004: 61).

ANALYSIS OF POST-APARTHEID TEXTS

The classroom becomes an ethical melting pot when literature is used not only to teach stylistic elements or cultural diversity but to reveal the deeper issues of fairness, identification, and healing in societies that have been affected by historical violence. In the context of the post-apartheid era in South Africa, books like Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying*, Sindiwe Magona's *Mother to Mother*, and Njabulo Ndebele's *The Cry of Winnie Mandela* provide the type of literary

assistance that would engage students in the kind of work that would require them to delve into the psychological and social roots of the problem while they remain imaginative in the search for social solutions. *Ways of Dying* by Mda is a perfect example. Toloki, a self-proclaimed professional mourner, is the character who walks through a society in transition that is still traumatized by history. He is not only the healer of the community, but also not the prophet, thus students are compelled to figure out the role of crying in societies that have been destabilized by political violence (Mda, 1995:47).

When *Mother to Mother* by Magona enters the conversation in the classroom, the most common reaction is a physical one, as the story is that effective in altering the narrative of the only one who suffers. The narration of the novel gives a new moral dimension that forces students to distil the underlying systemic conditions-multi-generational dispossession, racialized poverty, and psychological fragmentation-that lead to the incident of violence (Magona, 1998:89).

Texts falling under the study of literary and cultural studies such as the one mentioned above by Meg Samuelson, cause the disruption of national stories of calm through the presentation of mourning and ambivalent female identities and their refusal to accept easy reconciliations (Samuelson, 2007:113).

The Cry of Winnie Mandela by Ndebele introduces another element by portraying the lives of four women in search of their identity, who are passed through quite a number of stations which include a fictional episode from the figure of Penelope as she is recast in the South African scenario. The novel facilitates learning because it urges the students to deal with or discuss the distance between historical mythologizing and lived experience. The novel accounts for the structure thereof-a personal testimony, a fictional intervention, a historical commentary-confirms the inability of either reader to conclude Winnie Mandela as an icon or a criminal, but rather it raises the readers' attention to an ethical one (Barnard, 2007:163).

Informing the subject matter via the use of these texts in an educational setting, especially in a faith-based school or an institution where a social justice curriculum is employed, has been observed to be the best way to achieve the necessary objective of creating a new generation of people-to-people. Employing these materials in the classroom for various purposes, such as reflective journaling, structured debates, or comparative essays that bring out the relationship between text analysis and current social problems like xenophobia, economic exclusion, and gender violence is a method that has been tested and found working. Students, once they were directed to the ethical and intertextual connections, were found to often be able to exhibit an increased level of critical empathy as well as moral discernment.

From an educational viewpoint, the gains are not just in the area of cognition and understanding, but extend to the emotional and spiritual aspects of the person. For example, on many occasions, students communicated that their way of understanding social responsibility was changed; it was not abstract or institutional anymore but deep and personal and had a lot to do with their historical

setting. Such reactions imply that literature, when considered through a missional perspective, not only becomes a repository of stories but also a tool that shapes readers by engaging them in the narrative, struggle, and redemptive imagination.

CONCLUSION

Despite the fact that literature has the power to change the way of thinking, the use of literature as an instrument of justice and reconciliation in educational institutions often comes across as colliding with the inflexibility of curricular designs and the political sensitivities that dominantly influence cultural fields. Especially in state-controlled systems of education, the curriculum tends to focus on language proficiency, the classic works of literature, and examination-based tasks rather than on the main idea of engagement with historical injustices or social trauma.

The situation is getting worse as the teachers' knowledge of the ability to work with the students is questioned. This is particularly true when it comes to young people who are faced with a number of conflicting situations in the story. Many teachers do not know how to work in a way that is trauma- or interdisciplinary education-informed and this is the one major factor leading to even the most carefully chosen texts not having much impact

As well, the institutions often do not think of arranging regular seminars to support educators from integrating literature to social and political themes, thus, surely, the teachers who would like to work along the aforementioned lines are isolated. In the absence of strong back up system-combine both administrative management and within the people themselves-literature studies are at the risk of being deprived of any process of intellectual inquiry and eventually turning into a sort of self-righteous moral sermon or a tacitly neutralized aesthetic exercise rather than becoming a vivid platform where ethical issues are discussed.

However, these issues may also provide the impetus for multidisciplinary collaboration, in particular, amongst the faculties of theology, literature, education, and culture. If the institution's governing body is open to new ideas, joint projects can arise which redefine the classroom as a democratic space in which hermeneutical, ethical, and spiritual interpretations merge. This is also what we get from John de Gruchy, in his work *Theology and the Modern World*, who advocates for such partnerships by underscoring the role of literature for representing a link between the prophetic critique and the public conscience (de Gruchy, 2007: 133).

Thus, when literature classes are co-taught or are embedded in a dialogue with theocentric and sociological perspectives, their potential for not only imparting knowledge but also promoting imagination is fully realized, a virtue that has been missing from those societies adversely affected by the forces of disunity and inequality.

From a missional vantage point, the classroom is not only the space of cognitive instruction but also the field of action where people can encounter each other, exercise their discernment, and instil optimism. Literary works that have as their theme the plight of oppressed and downtrodden offer students a language to speak the truth of their condition without losing sight of the possibility of grace.

If literature is to be more than poetry devotional to the Church in education over the mothering of the masses, it is necessary to have it taught not only as a depository of values but as a form of discernment as well. It should be a way of being attentive to the other and of engaging in a dialogue of lament and of perpetuating the moral faculty required for healing the wounds of division.

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ROMAN ANTIQUITY IN SLOVENIA: ITS PLACE IN HISTORY AND TOURISM TEXTBOOKS AN UNEXPLORED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY?

Alenka DIVJAK
Lea-Marija COLARIČ-JAKŠE

Abstract: *This interdisciplinary-orientated article focuses on two principal issues: 1. the treatment of the Roman era in today's Slovenia in history textbooks for gymnasiums and secondary technical schools, and 2. the position of cultural tourism in tourism textbooks in secondary schools of catering and tourism, which immediately raises the question of how much attention is paid to the Roman era in Slovenia in the context of cultural tourism in the discussed textbooks. The history textbooks for gymnasiums present the Roman era in Slovenia in sufficient detail. In contrast, the textbooks for secondary technical and vocational schools present the era - seen as a whole - in too general outlines and omit certain important facts. Cultural tourism is covered in sufficient detail in tourism textbooks for secondary schools to highlight its prominent role within tourism as a whole, but the Roman era in Slovenia is hardly ever mentioned. This reticence is understandable given the purpose of the tourism textbooks in question: to present the structure of modern tourism, and in this context, cultural tourism, together with ancient monuments in Slovenia, has a limited role. The fact is that secondary school tourism students do not get enough knowledge about the tourism potential of antiquity in Slovenia from general tourism textbooks, and those students who are interested in this period and would like to choose cultural tourism as their career option should look elsewhere for adequate knowledge in this field.*
Keywords: *cultural tourism, Roman era in today's Slovenia, gymnasiums, secondary schools for catering and tourism, textbooks*

INTRODUCTION

Slovenia is famous for its natural beauty and rich cultural and historical tradition, which has its roots already in prehistoric times. Thus, the country can boast of being the site of the oldest flute in the world, which was most likely made by a Neanderthal from a bear bone approximately 60,000 years ago. Another prehistoric artefact is a bone needle, made approximately 35,000 years BC and

considered the oldest bone needle in the world until 2016,[1] and finally, we need to mention the oldest wheel with an axle, created approximately 5,200 years ago. Already in the Neolithic and especially later, in the Copper Age, people built pile-dwelling settlements on the Ljubljana Marshes, which were then covered by a lake, in the vicinity of Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, and lived there from approximately 5000 to 1500 BC. The Early Iron Age (c. 800-450 BC), closely associated with the Hallstatt culture, also left a deep mark on the Slovenian territory which in this very age experienced an extraordinary economic and cultural boom, based on iron ore deposits. This age is also famous for the glassware and especially bronze situlae, cult vessels decorated with scenes from the court life of the time, found in the graves of the Hallstatt-era nobles. The settlement of the Celts on today's Slovenian territory in the 3rd century BC coincides with the Late Iron Age or La Tène culture, which was based on iron processing. Among the Celtic tribes, the Norici were particularly renowned as excellent ironworkers, who in the 2nd century BC founded their own kingdom of Noricum on the territory of present-day Austria and partly Slovenia, which was annexed to the Roman state without a fight around 15 BC.

The prehistoric period, which left a noticeable mark on the Slovenian cultural memory, came to an end with the Roman conquest of today's Slovenia which began in the 2nd century BC and ended in the first decade of the first century AD. This article pursues two principal goals: 1. to determine the degree of attention devoted in Slovenian history textbooks (gymnasiums and secondary technical and vocational schools) to the Roman era in today's Slovenia, and 2. to explore how much attention is allocated to Roman monuments in Slovenia in tourism textbooks for secondary schools. Why does this article devote a significant portion of its attention to the discussion of the Roman era in Slovenian history textbooks for secondary schools? The fact is that the Romans integrated the territory of today's Slovenia into their empire whose political and cultural heritage continues to influence Western civilization to this very day. Apart from that, the Roman era left a lasting mark on today's Slovenia in the form of many cultural monuments and our area witnessed some pivotal events in Roman history as a whole. Also, many Slovenian towns, Ljubljana, Celje, Ptuj, Vipava, Ajdovščina etc., are built on Roman foundations, and in view of all these facts, the question if the aforementioned era is properly evaluated in the history textbooks for secondary schools hardly needs defence. After all, it is the secondary level of education which provides future Slovenian tourists and visitors with the most grounded knowledge of Roman antiquity, and the most comprehensive understanding of the Roman era within the Slovenian school system. Also, tourism textbooks used by secondary schools for catering and tourism require careful consideration. How much space do they devote to the Roman tradition? Do future Slovenian tourism workers gain

1 Slovenija ni več dom najstarejše šivanke na svetu (Slovenia is no longer home to the world's oldest needle); https://www.zurnal24.si/slovenija/slovenija-ni-vec-dom-najstarejse-sivanke-na-svetu-276713#google_vignette (28. 4. 2025).

enough insight into the tourism potential of this era at the secondary school level? In other words, in both types of textbooks, for gymnasiums and secondary technical and vocational schools on one side and the textbooks for secondary schools for catering and tourism on the other, the common denominator is the discussion of the Roman era in today's Slovenia, with gymnasiums and secondary technical and vocational schools emphasizing the general educational aspect and with the secondary schools for catering and tourism emphasizing the tourism aspect of this era.

I. GYMNASIUMS AND SECONDARY TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

Both gymnasium students and students of secondary technical and vocational schools gain some knowledge about the Roman era in today's Slovenia already in primary school,[2] where they familiarize themselves with the following historical facts: the finalization of the Roman conquest of today's Slovenia during the reign of Emperor Augustus, the establishment of provinces, the foundation of towns, Romanization, the integration of our territory in the ancient Mediterranean culture, the introduction of more advanced agricultural techniques, crafts and mining. In the chapter dedicated to religious events, primary school pupils are told basic facts about all three religions that prevailed in the Roman Empire: polytheism, Mithraism, and Christianity. The emphasis is on Christianity, which is explained in the most detail, but there is complete silence on the Battle of Vipava, 394, whose outcome left no-one in doubt about the final victory of Christianity in the western part of the empire. For the sake of clarity and necessary precision, the article will focus first on the survey of the textbooks for gymnasiums, and then it will concentrate on the textbooks for secondary technical and vocational schools.

Let us first point out that Slovenian history textbooks for gymnasiums[3] deal with the general history of Rome appropriately and in sufficient detail. Thus, they report on the changing social order in the Roman state, its expansion and development, military victories, and social conflicts, and finally they deal with the

2 Olga Janša-Zorn, Darja Mihelič, *Zgodovina za 6 razred osnovne šole*, Ljubljana: DZS, 1994, 76-78.

Olga Janša-Zorn, Darja Mihelič, *Stari in srednji vek, 6. razred osnovne šole*, Ljubljana: DZS, 1998, pp. 76-78.

Olga Janša-Zorn, Darja Mihelič, *Stari in srednji vek, 6. razred osnovne šole*, Ljubljana: DZS, 2000, pp. 76-77.

Olga Janša-Zorn, Darja Mihelič, *Stari in srednji vek, 7. razred devetletne osnovne šole*, Ljubljana: DZS, 2005, pp. 71-72.

3 Alenka Cedilnik, Gordana Popovič Lozar, Sonja Škrl Počkaj, Maja Vičič Krabonja, Mirjam Oblak, Irena Paradžik Kovačič, Mojca Kukanja Gabrijelčič, *Zgodovina 1, Prazgodovina in stari vek. Učbenik za zgodovino v 1. letniku gimnazij*, Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2018, pp. 155-166.

Vilma Brodnik, Robert Jernejčič, Srečko Zgaga, *Zgodovina 1*, DZD, 2009, pp. 193-204.

Janez Globočnik, Milena Globočnik, Adriana Segalla, *Zgodovina na maturi 2010*, Ljubljana: Intelego, 2009, pp. 41-50.

collapse of the Roman Empire and its causes. This article, however, focuses on the Roman era in Slovenia and asks the question of how thoroughly this era is dealt with in the relevant textbooks. On the basis of the review of individual history textbooks for the first year of gymnasiums, when the Roman era is dealt with, it is possible to present the following comprehensive picture of the Roman era in Slovenia.

For the Romans, the Slovenian territory became interesting after 181 BC, after the foundation of Aquileia (Slov. Oglej), at the *north-eastern tip of the Adriatic Sea,* close to the western border of the Republic of Slovenia, as a starting point for their penetration into the Alpine lands, Istria, and the Danube region, from where they obtained slaves and many strategic raw materials. In addition, by conquering all these territories, they wanted to reduce the security risk for northern Italy, which was threatened by tribes from the Danube region and the Alpine lands. The Slovenian territory played a key role in the Roman strategic considerations as it was seen as the fastest route to northern Italy which might have been used by potential enemies of Rome coming from the east. The territory of today's Slovenia was equally important for trade, serving as a junction of two lucrative trade routes: the west-east route that ran from Aquileia as far to the Danube, and the Amber Route running from the Baltic to the Adriatic Sea. The Romans conquered the territory of modern Slovenia in the course of two centuries. A few years after founding Aquileia in 181 BC, they conquered Istria with the aim of preventing the invasions of the Histri, whom they defeated in 177 BC, in Caesar's time they defeated the Celtic tribe of Taurisci, who controlled today's central Slovenia, and during the Illyrian Wars (35-33 BC) and the Dalmatian-Pannonian rebellion (6-9 AD), they used the territory of today's Slovenia as a starting point for their penetration into the Western Balkans. The Romans divided our territory into three units: Region X (Venetia et Histria), which was part of Italy, Noricum and Pannonia.

The textbooks point to a well-developed road network, which consisted of the following roads: 1. Aquileia-Poetovio-Sirmium-Singidunum, 2. Aquileia-Virunum, 3. Aquileia-Tergeste-Tarsatica, 4. Emona-Siscia, 5. Celeia-Virunum (in Noricum), 6. Pultovia (Stražgonjca, near Ptuj)-Flavia Solva (Lipnica, Leibnitz, in Austria). The focus of their attention is also on the Claustra Alpium Iuliarum barrier system, built in the 3rd and 4th centuries, which stretched from the Julian Alps to the Rijeka or Kvarner Gulf in modern Croatia, its purpose being to protect Italy from invasions from the Balkans and the Danube region. The economic aspects of the Roman rule are not ignored either: the introduction of more advanced agricultural techniques, such as the use of the plough and the two-year crop rotation, the latifundia system, and the introduction of new agricultural industries, such as viticulture, oil production, fruit growing, and gardening, all these innovations and activities receiving due attention, and in terms of crafts, the textbooks list the activities that were most established in our area: pottery, brickmaking, stonemasonry, glassmaking, carpentry, blacksmithing, and textile crafts.

To better control and dominate the territory of today's Slovenia, the Romans founded towns, which became centres of Roman power and Romanization, being populated mostly by people of Italic origin, mainly from Aquileia and its surroundings. Textbook writers stress the importance of Latin as the language of administration and culture and the rapid Romanisation of the social elite in particular. Among the towns founded by the Romans, the textbooks highlight in particular Emona, today's Ljubljana, which obtained the status of a colony in the time of Emperor Tiberius (14 AD - 37), and Celeia, today's Celje, which became a municipium in the time of Emperor Claudius (41 AD - 54), then the municipium of Neviodunum, Drnovo near Krško, an important river port on the Sava, and the most important Roman town on the Slovenian soil, the colony of Poetoviona, Ptuj, which was promoted to this status by the Emperor Trajan (98 AD - 117), while other settlements are mentioned only in passing. A partial exception is the textbook by J. Globočnik et al. (2009, pp. 44-45), which, in addition to Emona, Celeia, Neviodunum and Poetoviona, emphasises the importance of Vrhnika (Nauportus) near Ljubljana as an important trading post on the route from Aquileia to the Danube.

For those gymnasium students who might later develop an inclination for cultural tourism, with an emphasis on the Roman era in Slovenia, the most relevant chapter is the one which deals with Roman cultural traditions, which are discussed in all the textbooks aimed at the gymnasiums. The textbooks state, based on preserved tombstones and archaeological excavations, that Greco-Roman deities were worshipped on the Slovenian territory during the Roman era, while at the same time, indigenous cults were preserved. The inhabitants worshipped, for example, the goddess Ekorna, the protector of the Ljubljana Marshes, the god Savus and the goddess Adsaluta, who protected river transport on the Sava, and in Poetoviona they worshipped the divine wet nurses Nutrices. Mithraism, which was favoured especially by soldiers and officials, left its traces in today's Slovenia in the form of mithraeums, especially in Poetoviona, which could boast of as many as five mithraeums, which made the town one of the most significant centres of Mithraism in the Roman empire. Christianity spread to the present-day Slovenian area from Aquileia, with textbooks mentioning episcopal centers in Emona, Tergeste, Celeia, which collapsed during the migration period. As the most notable spiritual representatives of Christianity, textbooks mention Victorinus of Ptuj, a bishop, martyr and church writer from the 3rd century, considered the first Latin exegete of the Bible, bishop Maximus of Emona from the 4th century, bishop and martyr Maximilian of Celeia, who was born and died in Celje in the 3rd century. Of course, Jerome is duly mentioned, the author of the Vulgate, the first officially accepted Latin translation of the Bible, who may have been born in Notranjska (southwestern Slovenia) in an unidentified location of Stridon. And finally, the famous Battle of Vipava in 394 AD, which took place on the Slovenian western border along the Vipava River, is also given due attention. Textbook chapters about the Romans in today's Slovenia conclude with a remark that in the late Roman era, in the age of invasions, the inhabitants retreated to fortresses in higher-lying areas,

where they continued to maintain their church organization. The indigenous population survived the Huns, Ostrogoths and Langobards, while the arrival of the Slavs in the 6th and 7th centuries induced the elite to emigrate, and the less wealthy inhabitants to seek shelter in high mountain areas. With the invasion of the Slavs, the early Christian church organization collapsed in our territory.

To summarize, gymnasium textbooks provide a solid overview of the Roman era, all the more so because they include a lot of pictorial material that sheds additional light on the cultural and material achievements of the era. Among the important historical events, the textbooks record the military revolt at Vrhnika in AD 14 (Karge, 1973, 102–103), the support given to Vespasian by the Roman legions at Ptuj in AD 69 in the race for the imperial throne (Božič et. al., 1999, 193-194), and of course the Battle of Vipava in 394 (Divjak, 2010), while they skip many other interesting events from the 3rd and 4th centuries, even though they are worth mentioning because they underline the importance of the Slovenian territory as the shortest access to Italy from the Danube region and the Balkans for emperors, usurpers and invaders alike.

In any case, the history textbooks for gymnasiums successfully fulfil their educational role and provide sufficient basic knowledge to stimulate the students who are interested in this field and willing to deepen their knowledge also in the form of further reading and tourist visits. Apart from the textbooks, gymnasium students can utilize the collections of general matura exam papers (for gymnasiums) which enable them to test their knowledge of the subject, which means that the discussed era carries appropriate weight in the Slovenian school curriculum for gymnasiums.[4] The only deficiency in the textbooks is that they do not give enough emphasis to the fact that it was the Roman writers who integrated central and south-western Slovenia into the myth of the Argonauts and thus put Slovenia on the map of ancient mythology (Divjak, 2020). The textbooks explain that the Argonauts according to the myth also visited our country on their return journey to Greece which began with their sailing into the mouth of the Danube, continued along the river and ended with their voyage into the Adriatic Sea, but the narrative the textbooks provide is so sketchy that it requires a more detailed explanation.

The idea that the Argonauts sailed along the Danube until they reached the Adriatic Sea is found in the poem *Argonautica* by Apollonius of Rhodes, a famous Hellenistic scholar from the 3rd century BC. According to his version, the Argonauts sailed through the straits of the Bosporus and the Dardanelles into the kingdom of Colchis, present-day Georgia, on the shores of the Black Sea, stole the golden fleece and fled the country by sailing into the mouth of the Danube, and then they sailed continuously along the same river until they eventually sailed into the Adriatic Sea. The idea that the Argonauts used the Danube route to sail into the

4 *Zgodovina, zbirka maturitetnih nalog z rešitvami 2005-2010*. Ljubljana: Državnih izpitni center, 2011; Alenka Vugrinec, *Preveri svoje znanje, Zgodovina 1, Zbirka nalog za zgodovino v 1. letniku gimnazije*. Ljubljana: Ataja, 2003.

Adriatic Sea without having to make one single overland journey during the voyage suggests that the Greeks had only the most insufficient knowledge of the river system in the interior of the Balkans. The Greeks had colonies on the Adriatic coast, which they established mostly in the 4th century BC (Dzino, 2014, 51–529), while they founded no settlements in the hinterland and therefore had little knowledge of the interior. Slovenian history textbooks for gymnasiums are unanimous that the Greeks were not present in our area as colonists, except perhaps in the coastal zone, as suggested by the ancient Greek name for the coastal town Koper in Slovenia, Aegida, which is derived from the Greek word for goat, and which is also referred to in the later Latin name Capris (Lat. Capra goat) for Koper, but their influence in the interior was felt only in the form of commerce and the exchange of goods, many of which have been found in the graves of Halstatt-era nobles (Brodnik et al., 2009, 192). A more comprehensive geographical knowledge of our area was available only after the Roman conquest of the Slovenian area, as well as Istria, Pannonia, Dalmatia and the western Balkans, and on the basis of this new geographical knowledge, it was possible to refute convincingly Apollonius of Rhodes' explanation of the Danube's estuary into both the Black and Adriatic Seas.

Two Roman writers, Gnaeus Pompeius Trogus (fl. first century BC), and Gaius Plinius Secundus, Pliny the Elder (23–79 AD), mention our territory in connection with the Argonauts. According to Trogos **(**XXXII, III, 13–15**)**,[5] the Argonauts sailed along the Danube and the Sava until the latter became unnavigable, whereupon they dismantled the ships and carried them on their shoulders as far as to the site of future Aquileia, and then sailed into the Adriatic Sea along the river Natisa, which flows past Aquileia. Pliny the Elder is even more precise, mentioning Vrhnika (Nauportus) as the end point of the Argonauts' voyage on the Danube, Sava and Ljubljanica, after which the Argonauts dragged their ships across the land to the Adriatic Sea, where they reconstructed the ships and re-embarked them somewhere near Trieste (*Historia naturalis*, 3. 22. 18). On this occasion, it is also worth mentioning the Greek geographer Strabo (64/63 BC – ca. 24 AD) who in his *History* (4.6.10) pointed out the exceptional geographical significance of Vrhnika (Nauportus) as an important stage on the ancient trade route from Aquileia to the Danube. The route ran first overland from Aquileia to Vrhnika, within a distance of some 80 or 90 km, where goods were reloaded onto boats and ships and then shipped, first along the Ljubljanica, then along the Sava and the Danube to Belgrade and on to the Black Sea. Apart from commercial role, Nauportus had a vital function as a river port in the military operations conducted by Augustus against the tribes in the West Balkans during the Illyrians wars in 35-33 BC (Šašel Kos, 2011, 112–113; 2013, 193–194; 2012, 97; 2014, 44–46, Istenič, 2009, 860–861). By mentioning Vrhnika, Aquileia and Trieste as staging posts on the Argonauts' return journey to Greece, the Roman writers put on the mythological map of antiquity the central and south-eastern part of today's Slovenia (Zlobec,

5 Historiae Philippicae et Totius Mundi Origines et Terrae Situs (Philippic Histories and the Origin of the Whole World and the Places of the Earth).

1999, 24–27; Ogrin, 2017, 109–110) as well the nearby locations outside the borders of the Republic of Slovenia which are historically and culturally closely linked with our country. All these facts should be included in Slovenian history textbooks in both primary and secondary schools, in order to spread awareness among Slovenians of the extraordinary historical and mythological significance of our territory at all levels of education. However, if we overlook too sketchy an interpretation of the myth of the Argonauts, it can be argued that the Roman era in Slovenia is treated in history textbooks for gymnasiums in considerable detail.

Unfortunately, the Roman era in the textbooks for secondary technical and vocational schools[6] does not receive the same degree of attention. If we start with Berzelak (2000), he focuses primarily on the material culture, crafts, settlements, roads, archeological finds, but he completely ignores the religious life in today's Slovenia in the Roman era, not mentioning either paganism, Mithraism or Christianity. As a result, he passes over in silence the religious implications of the Battle of Vipava in 394 which he sees exclusively as Theodosius' final attempt to preserve the empire in its undivided form (p. 83). Karlovšek and Robnik also encapsulate the era in question in a single chapter, which spans no more than two pages. Basically, the textbook gives a very similar knowledge to that provided by the history textbooks for gymnasiums, but some important details are omitted: Aquileia is not mentioned as the starting point for the Roman conquests, Roman towns are presented on the map, but not handled in the text, nothing is written about the foundation of the towns themselves, but the religions that established themselves in our area in the Roman era are correctly listed: Greco-Roman polytheism, Mithraism, and Christianity. This brevity can be explained by the fact that students in secondary technical and vocational schools have history lessons only in the first two years of schooling, and as a result, the history textbooks aimed at such schools have to handle the material in a much more succinct form. To summarize, history textbooks for gymnasiums pay sufficient attention to the Romans in today's Slovenia, while the history textbook for secondary technical and vocational schools cannot afford to treat the Roman era at the same length due to the demands of the school program.

II. SECONDARY SCHOOLS FOR TOURISM AND CATERING

It is common knowledge that tourism attracts visitors and creates positive economic effects, which is evident in the financial inflows and new employment possibilities, which presents fresh opportunities especially for the hitherto neglected rural areas and smaller towns and market towns (Bole, Bigaran 2014). However, the focus of this section of the article is on cultural tourism as the field

6 Stane Berzelak, Zgodovina 1 za tehniške in druge strokovne šole. Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2000, pp. 81-83.

Metka Karlovšek, Vesna Robnik, Zgodovina za srednje strokovno in poklicno-tehniško izobraževanje, učbenik. Ljubljana: DZS, 2012, pp. 10-11.

which is attracting increasing attention from the experts. According to UNWTO, "Cultural tourism is a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination. These attractions/products relate to a set of distinctive material, intellectual, spiritual and emotional features of a society that encompasses arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries and the living cultures with their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs and traditions.[7] Cultural tourism can greatly increase the appeal of a tourist destination and at the same time remedy at least some excesses caused by the seasonal nature of tourism, which is a major problem for tourist destinations today (Zorko, 2005, 135, 141). As Potočnik Topler (2020, 6) points out, cultural tourism is on the rise in Europe and around the world, where it generates approx. 37% of all tourism activities. Greg Richards also emphasizes the importance of cultural tourism, which generates as much as 39% of tourism revenues according to UNWTO (Černelič Krošelj, Rangus, 457).

But cultural tourism also presents challenges. It is not mass tourism by nature, being rather defined as niche tourism, but the question is whether it has already lost its elite character (Potočnik Topler, 2020, 54) in the face of the masses of tourists who flock to culturally inviting destinations. Another problem, which is pointed out by, for example, Bogataj, the legend in the field of Slovenian ethnology and cultural heritage, is the danger that the misuse of cultural heritage for tourist purposes leads to trivialization, and then he lists some inappropriate practices in this area (2023, 316-317). However, the aim of this section of the article is very limited. Namely, it attempts to answer the question of how much attention the textbooks for secondary schools of tourism and catering in the Republic of Slovenia pay to Roman antiquity in today's Slovenia. However, in order to be able to answer this question in sufficient detail, it is necessary to determine how much attention the textbooks pay to cultural tourism and which chapters deal most consistently with the supply and demand for cultural goods. In other words, we are interested in whether textbooks for tourism and catering recognize the cultural and tourist potential of the Roman era in Slovenia and treat it accordingly.

In this chapter, we will analyze two textbooks on tourism, namely *Introduction to Tourism* by Danica Zorko and *Tourism for Modern Times* by Sebastjan Repnik, which are both classified as textbooks for secondary schools for tourism and catering, targeting as such the schooling population who will hopefully seek employment in tourism. It can be expected that at least one part of it will specialize in cultural tourism. On this occasion, we will raise two questions:

1. How much attention do the two textbooks pay to cultural tourism, especially in the field of tourist offer and tourist demand?

7 (https://www.unwto.org/glossary-tourism-terms), 17. 5. 2025.

2. How much attention do they pay to the Roman era in Slovenia?

The textbook titles make it clear that both textbooks encompass tourism as a whole, in all its aspects, from the definition of tourism presented in the introductory chapter to the chapters on marketing and promotion at the end of the book. Thus, Zorko (2005) first provides the definition of tourism and explains under what conditions it can operate at all (Basic Definition of Tourism), briefly surveys the history of tourism (Historical Development of Tourism), presents the concept of tourism demand and then discusses issues covered by other chapters, namely Tourist Offer, Tourism Market, Functions/Effects/Tourism (Positive and Negative Effects), Directing Tourism Development (Organization, Policy, Statistics), Basics of Tourism Marketing, Dimensions of Tourism (World, Europe, Slovenia). Cultural tourism is discussed primarily in the following two chapters in her textbook: **Tourist Demand** and **Tourist Offer**,[8] which are placed between the chapters Historical Development of Tourism and Tourism Marketing. Repnik (2023) also defines tourism (1 Introduction to tourism), explains the basic terms used in this economic branch (2 Basic terms in tourism), (3. Conditions for the development of tourism), (4. Tourism market), (5. Tourist demand), (6. Tourist offer), (7. Economic and non-economic functions and effects of tourism) ... (12. Factors and methods of pricing). Repnik touches upon cultural tourism in the chapters and subchapters dedicated to (2.5.9 Types of tourism according to the motive), (3.1 Tourist needs), (3.2 Motives for travel), (5 Tourist demand) and (6. Tourist offer) which identify the elements that constitute cultural tourism. To sum up, both authors seem to tacitly agree that there is a sufficiently large number of tourists, domestic and foreign, who value cultural goods and events, thereby generating the tourist demand in this field, which in turn affects the tourist offer.

Tourist Demand

Within the chapter **Tourist Demand** (Zorko), which is further divided into three subchapters: **Tourist Needs**, **Tourist Motivation** and Factors of tourist demand, we will first focus on the subchapter **Tourist Needs** and then we'll continue with the analysis of another subchapter **Tourist Motivation** in the hope that the two subchapters will provide the answers to two questions: 1. what urges so many tourists to visit destinations with the attractive cultural offer and 2. what needs do they wish to fulfil in the process?

Tourist needs

Tourism is – understandably – based on the needs because a person becomes a tourist when he/she feels the need for tourist engagement. Experts often classify needs into three groups, namely: basic needs, higher quality needs, and luxury needs (Zorko, 2005, 52), and cultural tourism is undoubtedly intrinsically linked with the need for higher quality, especially the need for education and

8 All the boldings in the text are the work of the autors.

culture. Apart from this basic classification of human needs, Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, originally used in psychology, is also exploited by tourism professionals who add relevant tourist parallels to the traditional levels in Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, which Zorko, for example, cites in full (p. 52):

1. basic existential needs – travels to satisfy personal needs (travel to work, business trips),
2. safety needs – travels to sustain basic human functions (regeneration of life force, travel for medical reasons),
3. social needs – private and group trips to socialize and communicate,
4. the need for dignity, respect, and self-esteem – prestigious travels and holidays that reflect one's social standing,
5. developmental and creative needs – travels and holidays that provide personal satisfaction and joy.

It is both significant and encouraging that travels and vacations for the sake of personal satisfaction and joy are ranked higher on Maslow's scale than prestigious (expensive) travels and vacations. However, before cultural tourism can reach its full potential, certain conditions must first be met. In addition to the basic need for food, housing and security, more demanding and sophisticated needs must also be fulfilled beforehand, and it is humanities-oriented education in particular, fostered mainly in gymnasiums, which is one of the preconditions for developed cultural tourism. For that reason, the role school systems play in bringing up well-read and knowledgeable generations can never be overvalued, especially in educating those future tourists/visitors who will integrate cultural tourism into their lifestyle, seeing it as one of their priorities. Like Zorko, Repnik also points out that, according to Maslow's scale, cultural tourism satisfies higher needs because it is related to the need for education and learning about the world (3.1 Tourist needs, p. 27).

Tourist Motivation

The predominant motives in tourism are listed already at the very beginning of the textbook (Zorko) in the introductory chapter Basic Definition of Tourism, subsection Concepts, which among others identifies the types of tourism according to the predominant motives of tourist trips or holidays (pp. 24-25), such as health, recreational, cultural, sports, mountaineering, travelling, religious, hunting, fishing, shopping, conference, trade fair, educational, business tourism, etc. Cultural tourism is defined as an activity consisting of: "visiting a cultural event, cultural institution, cultural site (architectural, sacral, painting, sculpture, etc.), collection, etc." (p. 24). Further and more detailed information on the tourist motives is provided in the chapter Tourist Demand, subchapter **Tourist motivation**, where Zorko gives a list of **acquired motives**, such as the change of environment, recreation, cultural and sporting pursuits, health promotion, as opposed to **innate or inherited motives**, such as the inner urge to move, play, and rest. Then she lists several sets of motives which all endeavour to fulfil particular

human needs, for example, motives conditioned by the human psyche and/or the body, by the desire to communicate, socialise, and make friends, by the desire to explore, by the need for change, adventures, education, and shopping. The motives most closely associated with cultural tourism are undoubtedly those which express a desire for exploration, change, adventure, education, and shopping, where the emphasis is on history, culture cultural heritage, customs and traditions (p. 54).

In 2.5.9, Repnik also lists the types of tourism according to motivation: health tourism, recreational tourism, sports tourism, mountain tourism, fishing tourism ... cultural tourism, which he defines as: "the motive of travel is to learn about the history and heritage of other peoples and their modern way of life and thinking. Cultural tourism includes folklore societies and visits to events, museums, and festivals". Repnik again touches on tourist motivation in (3.2 Motives for travel), defining cultural motives as "conditioned by the desire to change the environment to learn about other countries" (p. 28). It may be noted here that Repnik's definition of cultural tourism as an activity linked to visiting foreign countries is somewhat narrower than Zorko's, who does not necessarily associate cultural tourism with visiting foreign countries (p. 24). This more inclusive view of cultural tourism (both domestic and international) is particularly relevant for this article, which endeavours to raise the reader's awareness of the cultural potential of the Roman era in today's Slovenia and to encourage domestic (Slovenian) visitors to properly evaluate the Roman cultural heritage within their own country, not ignoring at the same time the Slovenian cultural heritage as a whole.

Tourist Offer

The chapter Tourist offer, subsection **The elements of the tourist offer** (pp. 73-113) (Zorko), is equally instructive for the understanding of cultural tourism, as it identifies and lists the attractions which constitute the tourist offer in the field of cultural tourism. The tourist offer is generally divided into a) the primary offer (tourist attractions in the strict sense) and b) the secondary offer (infrastructure enabling access to tourist attractions), with the primary offer consisting of 1. natural tourist attractions, which include everything connected with nature: rivers, waters, mountains, parks, gardens, landscape parks, karst caves, the sea, and 2. social or anthropogenic attractions: the material and spiritual values created by man in the past and as well as those which are still being created. The social or anthropogenic assets of relevance are mainly those involving the work of human hands, such as castles, palaces, town centres, squares, villages, secular and sacred buildings, works of art and art collections, archaeological, architectural, urban, artistic and historical monuments, monuments to famous people, especially their birthplaces, cemeteries and tombs, technical monuments, ethnological sites, outdoor museums, and the tangible and intangible assets of folk culture.

However, the list of anthropogenic attractions goes even further than that and comprises also cultural institutions: museums, galleries, libraries, archives, theatres, opera houses, concert halls, congress centres and, rather surprisingly,

zoos, botanical gardens, and aquariums. The category of social or anthropogenic goods would, of course, be incomplete without mentioning events (cultural events, festivals, tourist-cultural events, events reviving customs and traditions, events associated with important anniversaries, important battles, historical events ... sporting events, economic events and fairs, other social attractions) (pp. 73-78). Repnik also distinguishes between natural (natural tourist attractions) and social or anthropogenic assets that have been and continue to be created by man (6. Tourist offer, pp. 36-39). In the subchapter Cultural and Historical Monuments (Tourist Offer), Zorko produces a list of some of the most notable cultural and historical monuments, both international and native. If we restrict our search to native monuments in Zorko's textbook, we see that the references to antiquity are scarce: Rifnik near Celje as a prehistoric and late antique settlement, the necropolis at Šentpeter near Celje, the Roman-era finds at Ptuj, and Ljubljana's monuments from the Emona period (p. 79), but generally castles, palaces, famous personalities, churches, monasteries, pilgrimage sites, etc. are at the forefront of the discussion.

Tourist destinations in Slovenia

Another relevant subchapter is the section **Tourist Destinations in Slovenia**, which is also part of the chapter Tourist Offer (Zorko, p. 116), where the types of tourist destinations are listed according to the criteria of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia: 1. Ljubljana, 2. spa resorts, 3. seaside resorts, 4. mountain resorts, 5. other tourist resorts, 6. other places, while Repnik distinguishes between spa, mountain, seaside and other municipalities and the capital of Slovenia according to the statistical division of Slovenia (2.6.3 Tourist destinations, p. 24). Why is this chapter relevant to the purpose of this article? It directs our attention to the wealth and variety of the tourist offer in Slovenia, which really enables all the tourists and visitors to find the type of tourist engagement which is indeed tailored to their needs. At which tourist destinations can we expect to find the monuments and artefacts from the Roman era? We can assume that Roman monuments and the finds from the Roman era will be dealt with in the subsections dedicated to Ljubljana, other tourist resorts and other places because spa, seaside and mountain resorts are rather unlikely to be associated with the Roman era unless they were either founded by the Romans or somehow or other rooted in the Roman world. In fact, among the types of tourist destinations listed by Zorko, only Ljubljana is associated with Roman antiquity, Roman Emona being regarded as the hallmark of Ljubljana (p. 119), while Repnik does not mention any traces of antiquity whatever in either his presentation of statistical regions or in any other page in his textbook.

Eventually, after analysing both textbooks, we can draw a few conclusions in relation to the knowledge of cultural tourism and Roman-era monuments and artefacts which is provided by Zorko and Repnik. In both textbooks, the role of cultural tourism within the broader structure of tourism is duly recognized. In other words, both authors give an integral view of cultural tourism, so that the reader gets a clear idea of its position within a broader context of tourism. Numerous and

varied social or anthropogenic assets referred to by both authors reveal the enormous potential of cultural tourism, and if such attractions were no longer accessible for tourist visits, the tourist offer would be seriously impoverished and tourism as a whole would lose much of its appeal. Both authors also take note of the prestigious position of cultural tourism on Maslow's scale of human needs, which is positioned at the very top of the scale. They both explain the category of primary and secondary offers and on the basis of statistical regions, they identify different types of tourist destinations in Slovenia. However, in Repnik's textbook, antiquity in today's Slovenia is ignored, nor is there any mention of Ptuj either as an ancient or medieval town, nor of the necropolis at Šempeter near Celje, nor of Ljubljana's Emona or the ancient city of Celeia, which is to be explained with the scope of the textbook, which has to present the basics of the tourism industry in 118 pages. The textbook by Zorko is considerably more extensive (approx. 200 pages), but even here the references to antiquity are rare.

Given the nature and purpose of both textbooks, this sparseness is understandable. Both texts provide a basic knowledge of tourism, from its definition, history, and tourist needs to contracts and marketing. Under such circumstances, it is understandable that cultural tourism, and with it the traces of antiquity in today's Slovenia as part of tourist offer, cannot be at the forefront of the debate, since ancient monuments present only a stone in the mighty and complex edifice of today's tourism. This means that secondary school history textbooks remain one of the primary sources from which tourism and catering secondary school students can acquire a basic knowledge of Roman antiquity. Given the aims and objectives of secondary schools for catering and tourism to provide fundamental information of this economic branch, antique monuments within cultural tourism cannot occupy a central stage, nevertheless, students should be more actively reminded of the potential of antiquity within cultural tourism in the future.

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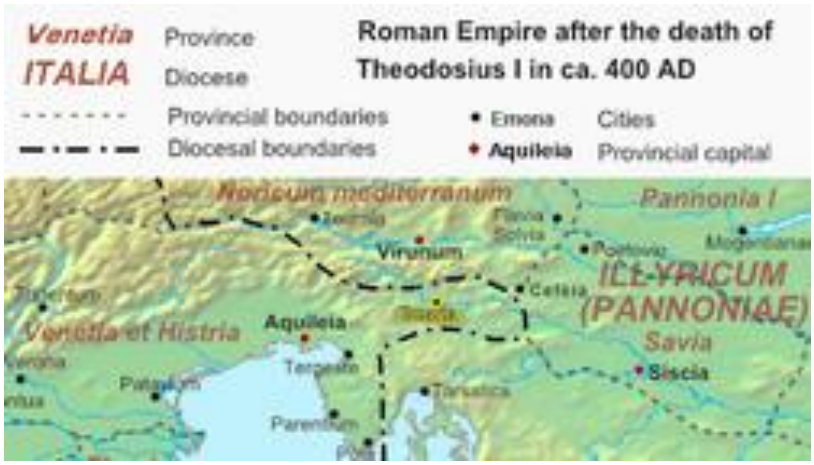
Appendix: photos of some Roman monuments in the Republic of Slovenia

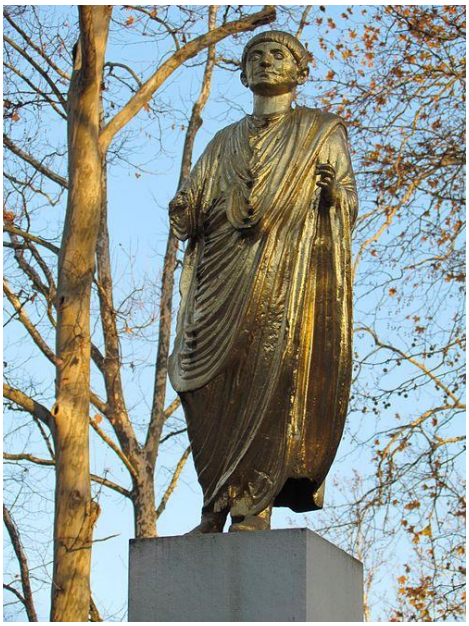
Roman necropolis in Šempeter near Celje: https://sl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rimska_nekropola,_%C5%A0empeter_v_Savinjski_dolini (31. 5. 2025)

Rifnik – archeological finds from the late Roman age,

Pokrajinski muzej Celje: https://www.pokmuz-ce.si/sl/razstave/zunanje-razstave/arheoloski-park-rifnik/ (31. 5. 2025)



The location of Emona within the Province of Italy: https://sl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emona (31. 5. 2025)



The citizen of Emona (replica): https://sl.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slika:Emonec_replika_5787.JPG (31. 5. 2025)

One of the finds in the mitreums of Ptuj: https://sl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitraizem (31. 5. 2025)

St Victorinus of Pettau: https://katoliska-cerkev.si/sv-viktorin-ptujski-skof (31. 5. 2025)

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ENHANCING LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTEMPORARY AND CLASSICAL METHODOLOGIES

Silvia Laura PAȘCU

Tania PETCOVICI

Abstract: *The present paper investigates the impact of modern teaching methods on English language acquisition outcomes, in comparison to those derived from traditional methodologies. Sixty first-year university students enrolled in a bi-weekly English as a Second Language course were divided into two groups. The first group received instruction for one academic year using modern approaches, including Communicative Language Teaching, Task-Based Learning, and technology-enhanced pedagogy. The second group was taught using traditional methods, specifically the Grammar-Translation Method and Audiolingualism. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, the study analyses quantitative data from standardized language proficiency tests and qualitative data from student interviews. Findings indicate that modern methods significantly enhance learners' communicative abilities and intrinsic motivation. However, traditional approaches remain valuable in reinforcing grammatical foundations. The study concludes that an integrated instructional model combining elements of both paradigms may offer the most effective strategy for addressing diverse learner needs.*
Keywords: *traditional/modern teaching methods, language acquisition*

1. INTRODUCTION

Education continues to evolve alongside advancements in technology and thus teaching methods are also changing. Nowadays modern learning often happens online using servers and web browsers, while traditional learning still takes place in physical classrooms where students and teachers interact face to face. One valuable challenge for teachers is how to combine these two approaches in ways that best support student learning and growth.

Effective teaching is grounded in learning theories from cognitive psychology which help teachers create learning experiences that match students' needs, taking into account things like assessment, development, subject content, problem-solving skills, and knowledge transfer. (Fourie, Schlebusch, 2024: 65)

According to Ehsanpur, Razavi (2020:8) using strong learning strategies helps students actively participate in lessons and connect new information with what they already know, leading to better and longer-lasting learning. Past studies

on traditional and modern teaching methods have shown mixed results, with many suggesting combining both which can lead to better outcomes.

2. METHODOLOGY

The paper analyzes the comparative efficiency of traditional and modern aproaches in English language teaching. The participants include 60 pre-intermediate level English language learners, aged 19-35, selected from the 1st year of university studies. The participants have been divided into two groups, each being taught for an entire academic year (two semesters) either with classical or with contemporary methods.

As a first step of the research, an initial assessment of a larger group of students (136) was conducted out of which those with a similar language proficiency (pre-intermediate) were selected in order to establish a baseline for comparison. The initial test comprised of a written and oral part, assessing students'understanding and use of English, grammar rules, vocabulary, reading comprehension, listening and speaking skills. The oral part was an interview where students were supposed to introduce themselves and answer different questions. Based on their answers, students' fluency, pronunciation and accuracy were evaluated.

The final purpose of the research is to compare students'improvements for each skill at the end of an academic year based either on traditional aproaches or modern methods.

2.1.Participants exposed to standard teaching practices

As previously mentioned, a group of 30 students enrolled in a bi-weekly English as a Second Language course received instruction through some classical methods such as the Grammar-Translation Method, Audiolingualism and Direct Method throughout an entire university year of study, namely 28 classes.

In a conventional classroom settup, the teacher delivered content through lectures, while the students practiced through drills and written assignments.

a) Grammar-Translation Method

Through direct translation exercises between the target language and native language, as well as vice-versa, the students learned multiple grammar rules and vocabulary. Numerous sets of exercises were used to develop reading and writing skills. The lessons were teacher-centered, monotonous, leaving students in a passive position, without spontaneous opportunities to use the language. The materials were printed textbooks or worksheets while feedback was given either through correcting exercises or tests.

b) Audiolingual Method

Dialogues presented either from a recording or verbally by the teacher were accompanied by drawings to illustrate their meaning. The lines of the dialogues were memorized through group repetition and then students were asked to use them adapting to their own interests by replacing words or phrases. Sentences with specific linguistic structures were removed from the dialogue to form different

pattern drills such as answering questions, replacing new words or grammatical structures, negating affirmative sentences or making morphological chanages from singular to plural and the other way round, all based on the teacher's requests. The follow-up activities consisted of reading, writing and vocabulary activities, based on the dialogues which had been practiced in the class. Some recordings of the dialogues were also used in order to improve pronunciation. The lessons were still teacher-centered, with no opportunities of real-life language use, while feedback was given through immediate corrections.

c) Direct Method

The teacher shared stories or narratives on different topics in order to engage the students and illustrate concepts. They were asked to read them which led to fluency improvement and coprehension, to answer questions for their understanding assesment, to comment upon the texts for their speaking skill enhancement, to engage in simulated scenarios in order to practice communication and problem solving. Some dictation exercises and map drawing exercises based on listening comprehension were also used in the class. All in all, vocabulary and grammar were taught through speaking and listening, with direct exposure to the language but without any translation. The lessons were teacher-led and focused on clear instructions and immediate feedback.

2.2.Participants exposed to modern teaching practices

A second group of 30 students enrolled in a bi-weekly English as a Second Language course received instruction through some modern methods such as the Communicative Language Teaching, Task-Based Language Teaching, Content-Based Instruction and Technology-Enhanced Language Learning throughout an entire university year of study, namely 28 classes.

Modern language teaching methods emphasize communicative competence and students' engagement, enhancing practical language skills through authentic scenarios and tasks.

a) Communicative Language Teaching

Based on topics that interest students, the teacher came up with role-playing activities, where students acted out real-life scenarios and practiced vocabulary and spontaneous responses. Information gap activities and group discussions were also used in the classes, where students shared information to complete a task, promoting collaboration, communication on relevant topics, improving speaking, listening, and critical thinking. Moreover, they practiced language skills through fun activities like vocabulary puzzles, charades, and different games. Through these interactive activities the students developed their ability to think and respond spontaneously. The courses were based on the use of printed and digital tools such as different platforms. They were student-centered, while the teacher offered guiding questions or prompts and provided feedback to ensure a correct language use.

b) Task-Based Language Teaching

The class activities focused on students using the target language to complete purposeful tasks, i.e. situations they could encounter in the real world. These included planning a trip, visiting the doctor, making a phone call, conducting an interview in order to find answers to specific questions, gathering information to make a poster or advertisement, designing a presentation, or solving a problem, all of which encourage authentic language use aimed at achieving a concrete objective. These creative activities promoted real-life language use, critical thinking, and communication. The main purpose of the method was to help students carry out assigned tasks using the knowledge they had already had of the target language. Classes were student-centered and the assessment was based on task outcome.

c) Content-Based Instruction

During these lessons students were focused on learning about a topic of interest such as neuroscience, psychology, economics, law, cuisine, traditions, music, favourite actor or actrice. They learned about these subjects using the language they were trying to study, as a tool for developing knowledge, thus enhancing their linguistic ability in the target language. The selection of the relevant topic of interest was followed by the identification of appropriate sources related to the subjects, from websites, reference books and videos to audio lectures, or even real interviews. During the lessons, students were divided into small groups, each tasked with a specific research assignment and provided with a source in the target language to guide their work. After gathering information, the groups shared and compared their findings, fostering collaboration and critical thinking. The activities concluded with a final product, such as a presentation or report, demonstrating their understanding and synthesis of the material. Classes were student-centered and the assessment was based on the final product.

d) Technology-Enhanced Language Learning

During some of the English classes technology was significantly used introducing interactive, immersive, and collaborative learning experiences. Tools like online games, discussion forums, and video-based resources were ment to boost students' engagement and motivation. Kahoot! or flashcards with Anki were used for gamified vocabulary activities, Padlet or Zoom were used to promote authentic language through discussions and collaboration. Moreover, multimedia resources like TED Talks and YouTube videos offered exposure to real-life language and cultural contexts, while mobile apps like Duolingo and Memris and Tiktok videos supported speaking, pronuncition, vocabulary, even grammar practice anytime, anywhere, offering flexibility and instant feedback.

3. RESULTS

The analysis of data collected from the 60 participants of the two groups revealed valuable findings on the impact of various teaching approaches.

3.1.Students' feedback and interviews

At the end of the academic year, the participants were asked to attend an interview of evaluation and to provide a short written feedback related to their insights on six major aspects of the English courses they had attended. These aspects are students'engagement, language skills' development, teacher's role, use of teaching materials, classroom environment and teachers' feedback.

3.1.1. Control group with traditional teaching approach

The group of students receiving instruction through classical methods admitted being little (18 respondents) or mildly motivated (12 respondents) during the classes due to the repetitive drills and the focus on memorization. They also mentioned boredom, a passive role of the student and the lack of language use in authentic contexts.

Regarding language skills' development, the majority signalled an improvement in grammar and vocabulary (28), as well as in reading (27) and writing (26) but complained about the lack of oral fluency (29) and poor listening (20).

As for the role of the teacher in the class, all the students agreed that in traditional classes it was central, controlling the lesson and rarely giving authonomy to students.

The participants in traditional classes listed among the generally used materials printed textbooks, worksheets, cards, posters, and audio recordings, while the classroom environment was structured and predictable, mostly with teacher-students interactions.

As far as the teacher's assessment and feedback were concerned, students mentioned the focus on grammatical accuracy (27), correctness of exercises and tests (28), all providing a formal feedback.

3.1.2. Control group with modern teaching approach

On the other hand, the group receiving modern teaching approaches revealed being highly motivated during the classes due to interactive and dynamic activities, to the use of technology, familiar to the digital generation, and to the contact with real-life language use. 9 students associated the English course with a challenge, game or entertaining activity.

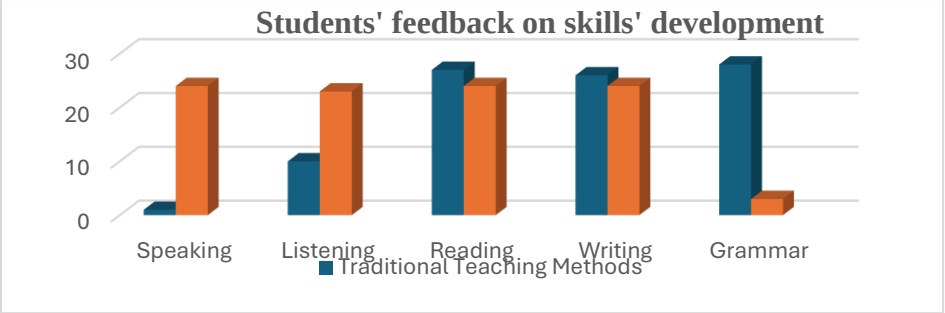
24 students identified improvements in speaking, listening, reading and writing, while 27 were not very aware of the grammar rules they were using.

For the majority of the students in this group, the teacher is a facilitator, a guide who gives students autonomy and encourages collaborative learning.

Among the materials used in a modern teaching approach, students listed multimedia, online platforms, interactive apps, computer games, artificial intelligence, as well as computers, tablets, and smartphones. For the 29 respondents the classroom environment was interactive and dynamic, based on collaborative pair or group work with students having an active role in learning.

Related to the teacher's feedback, 24 students identified a continuous, real time and constructive feedback during the activities, mainly focused on authentic

language use. 3 students also mentioned peer assessment as useful for collaborative learning.



3.2.Teachers' class observations

The teachers who taught the two groups made written observations throughout the whole academic year related to the same six relevant aspects: students'engagement, language skills' development, teacher's role, use of teaching materials, classroom environment and teachers' feedback.

3.2.1. Observations on the group with traditional teaching approach

The majority of the classes based on traditional methods needed continuous encouragements from the teacher for an active engagement of the students. The repetitive drills and strong focus on memorization caused learners to lose interest and led them to passive attitudes.

Improvements in students' grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing skills were visible. However, it was challenging to enhance students' oral fluency and listening abilities due to limited opportunities for authentic language use in the classroom.

Assuming a central and authoritative role, the teacher directed the lesson and controlled the classroom activities, which limited students' autonomy and reduced opportunities for collaborative learning. Moreover, critical thinking and problem-solving skills reached a low level.

The resources typically used in traditional methods, such as printed textbooks, worksheets, posters, and audio recordings, provided structured content, but did not completely engage the students who were accustomed to digital media. Due to the multiple materials available in textbooks, the teacher nedded less time to prepare the courses.

The assessment throughout the traditional classrooms, often emphasized grammatical accuracy and correctness of exercises and tests. The feedback was typically formal and couldn't provide immediate guidance, limiting thus the students' ability to make improvements in their language use.

3.2.2. Observations on the group with modern teaching approach

Interactive activities, the use of technology, and real-life language applications appealed to students, especially those familiar with digital tools, which

increased their engagement and fostered a more dynamic and enthusiastic learning environment.

Adopting modern techniques resulted into a balanced development of all language skills, including speaking and listening. The use of multimedia resources and interactive platforms provided students with multiple opportunities to practice and improve their communicative competencies in real-world contexts.

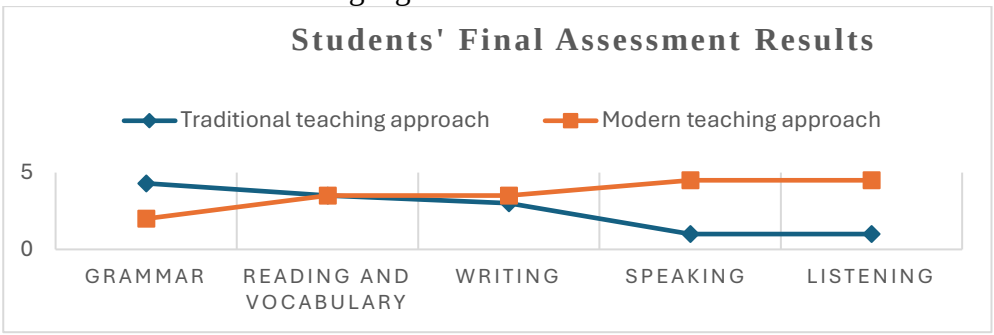
Throught the classes with a modern teaching approach, the educator was a facilitators who promoted students autonomy and encouraged collaborative learning. The students had an active role in their education through group activities and discussions.

The integration of multimedia, online platforms, interactive applications, and devices like computers, tablets, and smartphones, aligned with students' digital experiences, enriched the learning process by providing diverse and interactive content. Due to the great variety and mulitude of teaching materials on different platforms and applications the teacher needed much more time to prepare the classes.

The modern teaching practices involved continuous, real-time, and constructive feedback, and focused on authentic language use. The teacher also encouraged peer assessment and fostered a collaborative learning environment where students could learn from each other's perspectives and experiences.

3.3.Final evaluation test

At the end of the second semester, in addition to providing feedback and participating in interviews, the students from both groups – those engaged in traditional approaches and those who were taught through modern methods - took a final evaluation test. While all students showed progress, the areas of improvement varied. As expected, the students who attended traditional classes enhanced their levels of grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing, while the students who attended modern teaching classes showed significant improvement in speaking, listening, reading and writing. The final evluation test indicated that although traditional techniques remained effective for building core grammar skills, modern strategies offered substantial benefits in enhancing students'oral communication and real-world language use.



4. CONCLUSIONS

The present study comparing traditional and modern teaching approaches in English language learning revealed significant differences in students' engagement, language skills enhancement, and overall learning outcomes. Modern teaching methods, which included technology, interactive activities, and real-life language use, significantly increased students' engagement and motivation. On the other hand, traditional approaches, which relied on repetitive drills and memorization, led to boredom and passivity among students.

The study also found that modern teaching methods promoted a balanced development of all language skills, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Significant improvement was visible in students' ability to communicate effectively in authentic contexts. In contrast, traditional methods mainly focused on grammar and vocabulary, with limited opportunities for real-life language use, resulted in poor oral fluency and listening skills.

The role of the teacher also differed between the two approaches. In modern classes, the teacher acted as a facilitator, encouraging students' autonomy and collaborative learning, while in traditional classes, the teacher assumed a central, authoritative role, directing the lesson and controlling classroom activities. If the first approach allowed students to take an active role in their learning process and to develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills, the later limited students' autonomy and opportunities for collaborative learning.

All things considered, in order to maximize the effectiveness of language instruction teachers should consider blended approach, combining the strengths of traditional and modern methods. By incorporating technology, interactive activities, and real-life language use into language instruction, teachers can create a dynamic and engaging learning environment that serves to different learning styles and promotes balanced language development.

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