Home in Motion:
The Shifting Grammar of Self & Stranger

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Strangers and Aliens in Romanian Medieval World

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Abstract
This chapter gathers the contributions of researchers in the Image Management Methodology Special Seminar in the Faculty of Communication and Public Relations of the National School of Political and Administrative Studies in Bucharest and comprises an essential part of the processed information used for the Topical Dictionary of Romanian Historical Imagology – Part 1. The Middle Ages, under a Grant from the Romanian Academy. Our chapter aims to define the categories of stranger and alien in Romania’s 14th-16th centuries and to point out the relations between these categories and natives. We took into consideration the agrarian societies, which were the most numerous in the era, as well as the urban ones. Special attention is given to ethnic, religious and occupational aspects. In addition, the image of the stranger and the alienated are analyzed from the viewpoint of their relation with the natives’ self image. Our approach starts from the idea that image is a framework interpretation of reality, formed unconsciously at individual level and through social mimesis and mental contagion at group level. This is the reason why we pay special attention to the reference systems, considering that we can speak about similar social images only when the communication receptors’ reference systems are similar.

Key Words: Aliens, strangers, social image, Romanian medieval world.

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The aliens’ issue in Romanian medieval times is a topic less dealt with by Romanian research. The experts’ reserve to this theme is most probably due to the scarce sources to substantiate the research. If, in terms of historical sources we can admit our helplessness, we believe we can have a real contribution in decoding the reactions to aliens with the help of historical imagological instruments.

From the historical imagology perspective, societies are primarily defined by the challenges they have to face (of natural causes and caused by human activity), as well as by their capacity to adapt to such challenges. Accordingly, the occupational structure/prevailing occupation of the respective society is essential. This generates the ‘Paradise’ and the ‘Realm of fear’, theogonia, anthropogonia, collective mentalities and adequate social behaviours. In our model, religions do not generate new types of societies, but rather shape the types of societies, modifying the interpretation horizon filters, by interposing specific values. For the era we deal with in this chapter, two types of societies are relevant for the Romanian space: agrarian societies and urban societies. These will coexist and


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