Honor among Thieves:
Negotiation of the Haiduc in Ceaușescu’s Romania (1968-1982)

THESIS

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Abstract

In Nicolae Ceaușescu’s Romania, the haiduc enjoyed an elevated status in the national pantheon alongside the greatest rulers and revolutionaries of the past – celebrated through film, songs, literature, and architecture. Romania’s producers of culture (particularly privileged intellectuals working within the highly-centralized state) used the haiduc figure as an embodiment of the ideals espoused by the regime – a protector of national identity; a guarantor of social justice and economic equality; defender against foreign oppression; an embodiment of paternity, masculinity, fraternity, and morality; and a champion of righteous revolutionary principles. However, the haiduc also served a practical purpose for the regime. The narratives of the two most renowned haiduc figures – Baba Novac (1530-1601) and Iancu Jianu (1787-1842) – were used, especially, to vilify ethnic minorities and the large peasant population in Romania. This thesis focuses on how these two figures were used most malleably in order to maximize public displays of national chauvinism via flamboyant glorifications and representations.
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Introduction

The ideology of Nicolae Ceaușescu has been a topic of ample analysis since his inception as the General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) in 1965. Over the course of his twenty-four years in power (1965-1989), Ceaușescu’s image changed (domestically and abroad) from that of a liberalizer and Romanian patriot to a tyrant worthy of execution by his own military for “genocide against the Romanian people.” Abroad, the Romanian leader’s image challenged paradigms of isolationist dictatorships behind the Iron Curtain, due to his self-presentation as a comparably liberal statesman committed to diplomacy with Western governments. Inside Romania, though, Ceaușescu’s public spectacles exalting Romanian national pride concealed his increasingly repressive domestic policies – particularly after 1971. It was the exaltation of national pride within a communist state, perceived by many to be ideological antitheses, and, later, the internal repression revealed by more and more Romanian emigres, which made Ceaușescu the subject of both academic scrutiny and polemical discourse.

The glorification of national heroes and history under Ceaușescu reached heights scarcely matched by any other head of state in Eastern Europe during the Cold War. While heroic personas, defined by their unique, individual successes, stood at the
forefront of the national pantheon, the figure of the haiduc emerged alongside the most revered of heroes. The haiduc is not unlike the Robin Hood figure of Western literature: a righteous outlaw who steals from the corrupt rich and gives to the abused peasantry. A key divergence between the Robin Hood figure and the haiduc, though, is the overwhelming emphasis placed on the haiduc and peasantry as Romanian, while the rich are always foreign or in collusion with non-Romanian authorities.

Throughout Ceaușescu’s administration, different manifestations of the haiduc image dominated Romanian historical cinema, with no less than twelve different films being made about them, which, in turn, solidified the careers of some of Romania’s most celebrated actors and directors, such as Amza Pellea, Florin Piersic, Adrian Pintea, and Dinu Cocea. The most popular protagonist of these film representations, Iancu Jianu – the archetypal, early nineteenth century haiduc who rejected his noble origins to combat the abuses of the exploitative, foreign authorities – was also commonly featured as an educational figure in children’s books. A large statue was erected in 1975 in the historical Transylvanian capital, Cluj-Napoca, exalting Baba Novac – the late sixteenth century Serbian-Romanian haiduc who became immortalized for his role as the most devoted and fearsome captain in the army of Michael the Brave – alongside other revered heroes of Romanian history, such as Matei Corvin and Avram Iancu. Likewise, a semi-fictional haiduc, Andrii Popa – valorized in the poetry of nineteenth-century Romantic, Vasile Alecsandri – was resurrected by “etno-rock” pioneers, Phoenix, on their iconic 1974 album, Mugur de Fluier (Flute Bud), as a concession to Ceaușescu’s directive of making authentic Romanian music.
This thesis addresses how the haiduc was presented as a symbol of national identity in Ceaușescu’s Romania. My argument is that the image of the haiduc was a more malleable one than those of other national heroes in several ways. Despite the return to the nation as the focal point of political discourse, the haiduc was negotiated by Romania’s producers of culture to combat the subversive elements of interwar historiography. I have chosen to focus on these two haiduci (Romanian plural form) – Baba Novac (1530-1601) and Iancu Jianu (1787-1842) – because the way in which their respective histories were revised made them the most widely visible in Romania. The narrative of Iancu Jianu was reinterpreted to marginalize the role of peasant life in Romanian culture, as an impediment to progress (i.e. to rapid industrialization). Likewise, Baba Novac was reinterpreted in official historiography as a mechanism of Romanian chauvinism specifically to vilify the Hungarian minority of Transylvania. By examining the modes through which these two figures were reinterpreted, I argue that the malleability of the haiduc was uniquely beneficial in shaping Romanian national identity in a manner favorable to the Ceaușescu regime.

In Chapter 1 of this thesis I will foreground the relationship between nationalism and communism outside of Romania. This chapter serves two functions: to problematize the misconception that these ideologies are (or ever were) antithetical – in form or foundation – and to suggest, rather, that they informed and altered the position of one another. Chapter 2 traces the development of nationalism in Romania and the formation of Romanian national identity, up to the interwar period, to foreground the importance of national heroes prior to and during the Ceaușescu administration. Chapter 3 addresses the
etymological origins of the term *haiduc* and how the figure evolved as a social revolutionary figure emerging from common political conditions in the Ottoman Balkans. Chapter 4 presents the ideological changes attributed to the haiduc during Romania’s Stalinist period (1948-1960) and in the emergence of national communism.

Chapter 5 focuses particularly on the two most visible *haiduci* (pl) in Ceaușescu’s Romania – Baba Novac and Iancu Jianu, respectively. The first part of this chapter will introduce brief biographies of both haiduci. The second part of the chapter will analyze two monographs about Baba Novac which represent the official, academic historiography during the Ceaușescu period. In the third part of the chapter, I will analyze the official representation of Iancu Jianu through the mediums of childrens’ literature and a popular two-part film about the haiduc from the early 1980’s. Finally, Chapter 6 focuses on representations of the haiduc, in Romanian rock music, as a figure of contention in the evolving relationship between official and counterculture. In this final chapter I will assess the importance of the haiduc in the evolution of the band Phoenix and its’ usage in the song “Andrii Popa.” I argue that both the band and the usage of this song represent a form of apolitical, alternative culture, which was still suitable to Ceaușescu’s vision of Romanian authenticity and uniqueness as the core of all musical value.
Chapter 1: Theory: National Ideology under Communism

Since at least the 1980’s, international and domestic commentators have interpreted the union of nationalism and communism in Ceaușescu’s Romania as something truly anomalous. Scholars have only recently started to challenge the idea of Romanian uniqueness during the period of national communism (1965-1989) by focusing on the interplay between the two ideologies in the context of other communist regimes in Eastern Europe. Much of the recent literature on this topic has shown that, while national discourse was often subverted in the immediate postwar communist (Stalinist) period (1947-1956) in favor of proletarian internationalism, loosely based on the rhetoric of the Soviet Union, remnants of nationalism still informed many policies enacted by the new regimes. A brief survey of more recent scholarship, then, shows that the unification of nationalism and communism after 1965 was a result of the two ideologies subtly and gradually influencing one another since the end of World War II, creating a novel, yet hardly contradictory, ideology.

The idea of a foundational dichotomy between nationalism and communism did not originate from its premier ideologues. As Martin Mevius interjects, Karl Marx himself was never a blatant opponent of nationalism. Marx exalted the anti-bourgeois principles of the French Revolution as tenets of liberalism foremost. Creating a “leading
“class of the nation” was the goal of communism in its ultimate aim of eliminating an oppressive, bourgeois ruling class. Additionally, Vladimir Lenin was also not the opponent of nationalism which he is often thought to be. Lenin advocated a “healthy” or “liberating nationalism” in defiance of the “official nationalism” which promoted the oppression of minorities by an aristocratic elite along national lines. In the writings of Marx and Lenin, then, there is ample evidence of conceptual congruency between nationalism and communism as ideas in opposition to a common enemy – the ruling elite.

The polarization of nationalism and communism was solidified through interwar political discourse. As Mevius correctly asserts, nationalism was not bogeyman for the Soviets but, rather, “national deviationists” were vilified for straying too far from the party line or thinking too independently. Similarly, Nazi propaganda stigmatized communism as an alien, inherently anti-German ideology espoused by foreign antagonists – Jews and the Soviet Union – who would threaten and corrupt the realization of an ethnic or national state. This latter line of thinking was applied throughout most of the governments in Central and Eastern Europe, and, often, led to the banning of communist parties during the interwar period. The condemnation of both communism and nationalism, respectively, was more polemical and rhetorical than ideological but effectively demonized both.

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2 Ibid, 383.
3 Ibid, 384.
Malgorzata Fidelis and Irina Gigova have argued elsewhere that the compatibility of nationalism and communism is best exemplified by the alliances which postwar communist leaders made with interwar, right-wing activists and their subsequent efforts to achieve many of the same goals pursued during the interwar period. It should not come as a surprise, then, that the early postwar communist regimes successfully engaged in ethnic cleansing along the lines of plans laid out by radical nationalists of the late interwar period. The rhetoric justifying ethnic cleansing was changed accordingly: the national minorities whose presence was loathed in the interwar became class enemies in the Stalinist model of vilification. Predictably, those groups who could now be deemed “fascist collaborators” were all too often ethnic Germans or Hungarians driven out of areas where the dominant, titular nationalities had historically been subjects of the Austro-Hungarian or German/Prussian empires (Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, etc). Thus, reigniting interwar tropes of nationhood as part of the communist experience produced narratives which were more easily understood and consumed by society.

Of course, popular support and legitimacy were not paramount priorities for many of the Stalinist leaders in postwar Eastern Europe once they consolidated power. With some exceptions, coercion and repressive terror tactics were the preferred methods of control for the first cadre of leaders in postwar Eastern Europe. However, Stalin also realized the benefit of cultivating popular support through the prism of patriotism and national discourse. David Brandenberger has described the “pragmatic rather than

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6 Ibid, 13.
genuinely nationalist” shift towards more populist propaganda as an exercise in “state-building” for the etatist circle around Stalin.\footnote{David Brandenberger, National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity, 1931-1956 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 62.} To mobilize support in the event of potential conflict, Stalin’s rhetoric grew increasingly national and russocentric. Soviet officials and educators, already in the late 1930’s, began presenting history as a rigidly linear phenomenon which promotes the contemporary ideology (and, by extension, the ideologue) as a direct inheritance from the revered national heroes of the past. In the Soviet context, Brandenberger deems this practice “pedagogical ‘formalism’” – the desire for stronger political centralization exhibited by Ivan the Terrible was directly inherited by Peter the Great, and in turn, by Stalin as a necessary trait of a good Russian leader.\footnote{Ibid, 64-67.} Stalin, then, in creating his cult of personality, used national discourse to incite a Russo-Soviet form of patriotism which was loyal to his persona as devotion to the Russian nation and its \textit{glorious} past.

According to Jan C. Behrends, in 1941, Stalin recognized the need to install a Polish communist government – a fateful decision which precipitated an explicit and pivotal rectification of communism and nationalism by Comintern leader, Georgi Dimitrov, who promoted the need to combine “‘a healthy, properly understood nationalism with proletarian internationalism.’” As discussed earlier, Stalin had already begun to develop an appreciation for the usefulness of nationalist ideology as a tool for mobilization. Poland, like Hungary and Romania, already had a strong sense of national
identity and, therefore, could serve as “a laboratory for this strategy.”\textsuperscript{9} Genuine conviction notwithstanding, national and communist rhetoric were anything but mutually exclusive ideological applications. Rather, the two ideologies were often used in tandem to ensure the consolidation of power by postwar Stalinist leaders. Stalin’s heavy-handed use of nationalism as a means of gaining control was widely implemented by those communists who spent the interwar period in exile in Moscow or imprisoned in their home countries, and would later seize the mantle of power in the new communist regimes of Eastern Europe.

The Communist seizure of power in Romania exemplifies the imbrication of nationalism and communism. Vladimir Tismaneanu has outlined the political importance of national rhetoric in the immediate aftermath of Romania’s liberation by the Red Army in 1944, as the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) “claimed not only to be the only party of the heroic anti-Nazi resistance but also the main guarantor of the country’s break with the fascist past.” The RCP smeared the more popular and widely-accepted National Peasant Party as being one of the “bourgeois” elements responsible for the loss of northern Transylvania to Hungary in 1940 (by order of Hitler, with whom Romania and Hungary were close allies during World War II) – a national trauma for many Romanians.\textsuperscript{10} After 1948, the RCP had gained full control of the government but the leadership was not yet controlled by a single, autocratic figure. Control of the RCP

\textsuperscript{9} Jan C. Behrends, “Nation and Empire: Dilemmas of Legitimacy during Stalinism in Poland (1941-1956),” \textit{Nationalities Papers} 37, no. 4 (July 2009): 446.

\textsuperscript{10} Vladimir Tismaneanu, \textit{Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 87.
essentially rested with three people: Ana Pauker, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, and Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. Gheorghiu-Dej managed to consolidate power, due in large part to both national and anti-national rhetoric. Gheorghiu-Dej first eliminated Pătrășcanu by submitting an highly-distorted speech given by the latter emphasizing “the RCP’s commitment to Romanian patriotic values” to the central committee, which led to his arrest and eventual execution for “chauvinism” in 1952.11 At roughly the same time, Gheorghiu-Dej began slinging allegations from the other side of the spectrum, by presenting himself as the homegrown communist – ethnic Romanian, spent much of the interwar in prison rather than in exile in Moscow – against the Muscovite faction of Ana Pauker (ethnic Jew and interwar Moscow exile) and Vasile Luca (ethnic Hungarian and interwar Moscow exile).12 Gheorghiu-Dej’s exploitation of these foreign elements among his opposition ushered in his ascent to and, consolidation of, power by 1954. Thus, while political discourse on the Romanian nation was harshly subordinated to that of the Party, it was Gheorghiu-Dej’s use of exclusionary, nationalist substance clad in Stalinist class-rhetoric which allowed him to consolidate power.

As is well-documented, Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalin in 1956 had great impact on all of the communist states of Eastern Europe. In Romania, as Dragoș Petrescu has argued, this change meant that “a return to the people…as the ultimate source of legitimacy was the only solution,” since Gheoghiu-Dej and his elite circle could not use

11 Ibid, 114.
12 Ibid, 124.
the repressive and coercive measures they had mastered anymore.\textsuperscript{13} From 1956 until his death in 1965, Gheorghiu-Dej tentatively engaged in what Petrescu has called “selective community building” which reengaged terminology with ethnic and national connotations, such as “the people” and “Motherland.”\textsuperscript{14} While not uniform, complete, or, even, focused, the regime and those few intellectuals who were allowed activity did draw closer to the nation as a focal point of discourse.

The importance of national rhetoric was indispensable to the communist regimes of Eastern Europe after World War II. The thorough construction of Romanian national identity prior to World War II and the outlawing of the already-miniscule Communist Party in the interwar period impeded any significant influence of Marxist ideology on the majority of Romanians. Additionally, while the RCP grew monumentally in a short time by the early 1950’s, the brutal implementation of collectivization policies and restrictions of personal freedoms under the Gheorghiu-Dej regime had greatly disenchanted both the rural and urban populations in Romania. Arguably, the Stalinist period in Romania (1948-1964) had adversely strengthened the ardently exclusionary form of nationalism promoted by Romanian intellectuals since the nineteenth-century presented their national history as a continuous struggle between the oppressed Romanian nation and its’ foreign rulers – a narrative in which the haiduc remarkably exemplifies. The durability of Romanian national consciousness was crucial to the initial popularity of Ceaușescu and his ideology centered on his own approximation to the national heroes of the past.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, 528.
Therefore, a sketch of Romanian national identity, and the heroes who personified it, is necessary to understand the *reawakening* which Ceaușescu prided himself on facilitating.
Chapter 2: Romanian Nationalism, National Ideology and Identity

National identities are constructed, foremost, around three shared aspects: language, religion, and the conceptualization of a shared history. Benedict Anderson cites the emergence and spread of print-capitalism as a prerequisite for “the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation.”\(^{15}\) The printing press was, perhaps, the most important catalyst for the formulation of the Romanian identity due to the immediate impact it bore on both language and religion. The Metropolitan Varlaam of Moldova published the first religious polemic composed in Romanian, *Response to the Calvinist Catechism* (Răspunsul la cătehism călvinesc), in 1645 with the intention of reaching a wider Romanian Orthodox readership, particularly in Transylvania, where Calvinists feverishly, yet unsuccessfully, proselytized to the Romanian community.\(^{16}\) Thus, while this example should not necessarily be interpreted as a manifestation of national consciousness, it evidences the definitive attachment of Romanian speakers to Orthodoxy.

The foundations of a shared historical experience for Romanians lie at the point where language and religion meet because it bears witness to a crucial uniqueness – that

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of Latinity and Orthodoxy. Lucian Boia eloquently expressed that the “aim pursued by means of history was the demonstration of noble origins and of a glorious past.” Thus, their Latin ethnolinguistic origins provide “the Romanian nation a respectable place in the concert of European nations” alongside France, Italy, Spain and Portugal.\textsuperscript{17} At the same time, while Latinity connected the Romanians with Western Europe through a common Roman legacy, their pre-Roman ancestors, the Dacians, gave them the benefit of geographical primacy over their Slavic and Hungarian neighbors.\textsuperscript{18} While the Slavic influence has never received the same exaltation as Latinism or Dacianism in the Romanian national narrative, often due to unstable political relations with Russia, the Orthodox faith to which they converted in the ninth-century under the Bulgarian Empire remains a crucial marker of Romanian identity.\textsuperscript{19} The vanguard of the Romanian nation, then, became the historical figures who were conceived as defenders of Latinity and Orthodoxy.

Already in the eighteenth century, members of the nobility in Moldova and Wallachia were writing to Russian authorities, during their wars with the Ottoman Empire, emphasizing their Roman origins as reasoning for their inclusion in Europe.\textsuperscript{20} Autonomy from unjust rule was the common theme linking Romanian intellectuals in Moldova and Wallachia to those in Transylvania, and increasingly became more central to a shared Romanian identity. The theme of autonomy based religious, cultural,

\textsuperscript{17} Lucian Boia, \textit{History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness} (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), 46.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, 52-53.
\textsuperscript{19} Hitchins, 17.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid, 70.
linguistic, and historical particularism was fervently pursued by nineteenth-century Romanian historians. In fact, they were the architects of the Romanian national narrative and, by extension, national identity.

The consolidation of the Romanian national narrative was part of a current known Forty-Eightism (*pașoptism*) – named such because many of the historians writing in this time were the leaders of the 1848 Revolutions in Wallachia and Moldova.\(^{21}\) The two most renowned intellectuals of this epoch were Nicolae Bălcescu (1819-1851) and Mihail Kogălniceanu (1817-1891). Both revolutionary historians completed monographs about Michael the Brave (1558-1601) during the 1840’s, which for the first time, conceived of Michael’s brief unification of Wallachia, Moldova, and Transylvania as the result of a popular revolution, rather than merely the military conquests of an ambitious ruler.\(^{22}\) The haiduc, Baba Novac, was used to strengthen this narrative of revolution against Ottoman hegemony as being representative of the will of the people. Popular revolution was also used as the primary theme in constructing Tudor Vladimirescu’s 1821 Oltenian Uprising, of which the haiduc, Iancu Jianu, was an integral part. Although neither the 1821 nor the 1848 (much less Michael’s conquests in 1599-1600) were directly successful in facilitating immediate independence, backlash from the 1848 Revolutions, contemporaneous with the outbreak of the Crimean War (1853-1856), were paramount to

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\(^{21}\) Ibid, 88.

\(^{22}\) Ibid, 90.
the unification of Wallachia and Moldova in 1859, which began the *de facto* decline of
Ottoman suzerainty in Romania, culminating with their independence in 1878.\textsuperscript{23}

Thus, the period of 1599-1848, beginning with Michael’s victories and ending with the 1848 Revolutions, has been conceived of as a continuous struggle for Romanian independence. Romanian national identity, then, has been articulated as the popular resistance of *Romanians* against those who are not *Romanian*. The haiduc emerged as a Romanian hero throughout the development of this resistance to unjust rule by non-Romanians. This articulation of the Romanian national narrative, then, places the haiduc as an agent of popular revolt in the name of the voiceless masses. Thus, it is beneficial, to engage the haiduc narrative in a Balkan, rather than *national* context.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, 100-101.
Chapter 3: The Haiduc in the Balkan Revolutionary Tradition

Properly defining a haiduc is a tall order, as the figure appears with nuanced differences throughout the cultures of Central and Southeast Europe. Nonetheless, the Romanian haiduc emerged from similar social, political, and historical settings as elsewhere in the Balkans and, thus, some definitional context should be provided. Romanians typically translate the word *haiduc* (pl. *haiduci*) simply as “outlaw” in English. Some similar variations are the Bulgarian *haydut*, Serbian *hayduk*, and Hungarian *hajduk*. Though a matter of some dispute, Rossitsa Gradeva contends that the origin is the Hungarian *hajdu* (pl. *hajduk*), meaning “an armed soldier, professional landless mercenary.”

Eric Hobsbawm has offered some important theoretical framework concerning the general phenomenon of social banditry – a practice which the haiduc strongly exemplifies. A characteristic common to all social bandits, Hobsbawm contends, is that one resorts to outlawry “because he does something which is not regarded as criminal by his local conventions, but is so regarded by the State or the local rulers.” As such, the outlaw is deemed “‘honorable’ or non-criminal by the population”

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and they will show their gratitude by willfully harboring him and providing protection against the pursuant authorities. The social bandit becomes the defender of “‘our’ (peasantry) laws…against ‘theirs’ (the ruling class).”

Hobsbawm’s theorization is most useful in that it demonstrates how social bandits – regardless of the context – operate similarly because they themselves create a particular atmosphere in which they are forced to function no matter primary motivations and goals.

Of particular relevance to this discussion, is Hobsbawm’s acknowledgement that “the most startling characteristic of social banditry is its remarkable uniformity and standardization.” Insofar as one can place the haiduc in the cadre of social banditry, they naturally share more commonalities with others in the same social and political context. Dimitrije Djordjevic and Stephen Fischer-Galati have postulated that there exists a common Balkan revolutionary tradition from which the haiduc and other social bandits emerged. The doctrine of the Pax Ottomanica (Ottoman Peace) conceives of Ottoman rule in the Balkans as a phenomenon which introduced comparable social and economic stability to the region for the masses by limiting the excesses of the indigenous nobility and aristocracy. As such, Djordjevic and Fischer-Galati contend that the “wars of liberation” of the latter sixteenth-century, which have often been portrayed as “holy wars” pitting oppressed Christian masses against a tyrannical Muslim overlord, hardly stemmed from any popular social discontent, much less the religious differences between

26 Ibid, 17.
27 Ibid, 14.
Orthodoxy and Islam.\textsuperscript{28} The origins of a Balkan revolutionary tradition – with which the haiduc is closely associated – may be framed, foremost, as a result of the unstable diplomatic relationship between the great powers in the latter part of the sixteenth-century: the Ottomans, the Habsburgs, and the Kingdom of Poland.

It was the comparably lenient form of Ottoman governance in parts of the Balkans, rather than an overly oppressive style, which anticipated the magnitude of participation in the “wars of liberation.”\textsuperscript{29} The Holy League, led by Habsburg Emperor Rudolf, viewed the irregular military units under Ottoman rule as worthy resources which could prove an effective nuisance for the Sultan. Thus, the “hajduks” sought to gain personal wealth through brigandage and eagerly accepted the weapons and supplies offered by the allies in the Holy League. The haiduci, then, did not to act “as the vanguard of the revolutionary Balkan peasantry,” nor were their motives fueled by “any patriotic notions.” As mercenaries, they fought alongside those with whom they were paid to do so and as a destabilizing force, their banditry did not discriminate between peasant and noble. Indeed, they may well have repulsed the indispensable support of the peasantry by their regular looting.\textsuperscript{30} The “mass discontent” reflected in the ongoing uprisings and rebellions in the Balkans throughout the seventeenth-century were manifested primarily in the growing participation of the peasantry who began joining

\textsuperscript{29} “Wars of liberation” is the terminology of Djordjevic and Fischer-Galati, and refers to the common orientation used by Romantic writers throughout the Balkans to refer to the various military engagements between the expanding Habsburg and Ottoman empires.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid, 14.
bands of haiduci. Thus, while the “wars of liberation” came to include the peasantry, at their core, they were fueled not by popular (peasant) discontent but by the political motivations of aristocrats. Furthermore, once the peasantry became more active in these uprisings, motivation came from a belief in the deterioration of living conditions rather than any religious or ethnic differences.

Russian intervention in the Balkans, beginning in the eighteenth-century, altered the nature of revolution in the region, particularly in the Danubian Principalities of Moldova and Wallachia (future Romania). As vassals of the Porte, the Principalities had enjoyed far more political freedom than elsewhere in the Ottoman-controlled Balkans. However, after 1711, following Moldovan Prince, Dimitrie Cantemir’s failed attempts to conduct foreign diplomacy with Tsar Peter the Great led to the abolishment in Moldova and, later, Wallachia, of rule by native princes – a policy which the Ottomans had left untouched throughout the duration of the Principalities’ vassalage. The subsequent installation of the Phanariot regime – wealthy, influential Greek families from Constantinople – in the Principalities was catastrophic for the native nobility, yet, proved mildly beneficial to the peasantry in the form of fiscal and agrarian reform. Over the course of the eighteenth-century, two important developments emerged which would prove definitive for the haiduc and the Balkan revolutionary ethos, in general: the crisis of Ottoman power and the development of national identities.

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31 Ibid, 49.
By the early nineteenth century, the “enlightened despots” of the ruling Phanariot regime active in the previous century, such as Constantin Mavrocordat (1711-1769) and Alexandru Ypsilanti (1725-1805), became the scourge of the Romanian nobility in the Principalities. The reforms of Phanariot Princes such as Mavrocordat and Ypsilanti abolished serfdom and codified Wallachian law. To be sure, not all Phanariot rulers in the Principalities were progressive and beneficial to the living conditions of the masses. However, generally, their reforms hurt the noble and burgeoning middle classes, not the peasantry. This explains the fact that most haiduci were of noble origin and contradicts the traditional Romanian (and Balkan) narrative of Phanariot misrule and abuse. Nonetheless, this narrative was never seriously challenged in Romania and became most definitive in consolidating the haiduc image, all the way up to World War II. In The Illustrated Encyclopedic Dictionary (Dicționarul enciclopedic ilustrat), published in 1931, “haiducia” (the actions and activities conducted by haiducs) was defined as an “ordinary mass phenomenon, owing to the uncommonly harsh conditions of the Phanariot period.”

The definition of the haiduc from 1931 – as an agent of popular revolt against the foreign rule of a specific antagonist – had already been solidified for quite some time. After World War II, however, the whole history of Romania was reoriented to favor the new communist leaders and the Soviet Union. Throughout the course of Romania’s communist period (1948-1989), the haiduc would become an intellectual commodity

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32 Hitchens, 66.
which, eventually, had to be molded into a figure which served both national and class consciousness.
Chapter 4: The Haiduc, Cultural Production and National Communism in Romania

In the intermediate aftermath of capitulation to the Soviet Union, the Romanian political situation (not unlike those in the rest of the future East Bloc) was one of uncertainty – that is, at least, for most Romanians. Already in 1945, the leadership of the newly-installed communist regime had begun waging internal battle for control of the Party and, thus, the country. However, a formidable anti-communist resistance movement showed ample determination to ensure that the fate of Romania did not fall into the hands of its new, Moscow-trained “heir apparents.” One paramilitary resistance group was “The National Defense Front – The Haiduc Corps.” The resistance group existed in the Apuseni Mountains in some form until 1954 but were neutralized by their own infighting following Securitate (secret police) penetration among the ranks. The haiduc, a beloved national hero just a few years earlier had, with the major changes brought to Romania by the installation of Soviet-style communism, become a vilified, class enemy.

As described earlier, Gheorghiu-Dej and the Party elite engaged an uneven policy of liberalization from 1956-1964. One of the major changes from this period was the regime’s relationship with intellectuals. Another wave of historical revisionism is

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strongly reflected in a 1964 definition of the haiduc. *The Romanian Encyclopedic Dictionary* (Dicționarul enciclopedic român) contained an altered, though not contrary, definition of *haiducia* more befitting of the time period: “a form of class warfare, frequent in the Romanian lands and in the Balkan Peninsula…carried out by bands of rebels, recruited most often from among peasants, called haiducs, against the oppressors.”36 Thus, following the trend of liberalization already under way during the latter years of Gheorghiu-Dej’s rule, Ceaușescu inherited a most useful haiduc for his own style of bolstering legitimacy and mobilizing support.

Undoubtedly, the means of legitimizing communist rule in Romania shares many of the hallmarks of the other East Bloc states during the period of “national communism.” Katherine Verdery describes three different, yet, often overlapping “modes of control” in communist societies. This discussion has addressed the “symbolic-ideological” mode, though, all of the countries have also used “remunerative” and, to be sure, “coercive,” measures additionally.37 The symbolic model appeals, most often to patriotism and self-sacrifice. The ardent patriotism cultivated up to the interwar period made this the most effective mode for Ceaușescu’s preferred form of control.

One form of regime legitimation which Verdery discusses at length is a literary movement called *protochronism*. The term was coined by literary critic, Edgar Papu, as a solution to his belief that Romanians saw themselves as “backward” and, thus, did not

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36 Barbu, 7.
fully appreciate their philosophical and literary impact on the rest of the world – particularly the West. Verdery finds Soviet influence in this notion of “temporal priority” – an aspect of “pedagogical formalism” which placed the titular nationality (Romanian in this case) as the forbearers of culture and civilization in a particular region. Furthermore, the Romanian idea of protochronism claimed to anticipate not only this Soviet mechanism but also “the Baroque, Romanticism, the revolutionary values of 1848” and other internationally recognized literary and philosophical movements. Additionally, protochronism was influential enough an idea that Ceauşescu included “exhortations” referencing its crucial role in Romanian society in his “July Theses” of 1971.

The phenomenon which I discussed earlier that David Brandenberger refers to, in the Soviet context, as “pedagogical formalism” is a method which was regularly used by Nicolae Ceauşescu and his closest intellectual and polemical circles. Petrescu has rightly argued that Ceauşescu’s brand of “national communism” strategically placed the “Romanian party-state” in the lineage of the medieval Romanian principalities (Wallachia and Moldavia). If the communist regime was the political descendant of those rulers which Romanians so revere as their national heroes, allegations that communism was alien or un-Romanian could be silenced without the coercive, often violent measures employed by Ceauşescu’s predecessor, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej.

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38 Ibid, 174-175.
39 Ibid, 176.
40 Petrescu, 523.
Petrescu further describes the nation, in the Romanian context, as both “an organized solidarity and an imagined community.” Borrowing from the concept from Alexandru Duțu, Petrescu defines “organized solidarity” as a process “developed and continuously reinforced from above within the framework of the party-state (through education, internal migration and common socialization in large state enterprises, etc.).” Furthermore, the Ceaușescu regime built on the concept of the imagined community which was commonly accepted by most Romanians already before the communist seizure of power as a means of legitimation “from below” to reinforce the solidarity which it structured “from above.”

In their respective discussions, both Verdery and Petrescu emphasize the role of historians, in particular, in bolstering legitimacy for Ceaușescu. The goal of the “co-opted” historian, Petrescu contends, was foremost to highlight “four fundamental historical myths of the Romanians…ancient roots; continuity on the present-day territory; unity; and struggle for independence.” Similarly, Verdery states that “history…undergirds the very foundations of rule,” in Ceaușescu’s Romania. Developing a strong, politicized corpus of historical monographs served Ceaușescu’s mission of asserting himself and his actions in the lineage of the nation.

Verdery’s acknowledgement of the special role of intellectuals as “occupants of a site that is privileged in forming and transmitting discourse” is reflected in the power
and priority which producers of culture often enjoy in highly-centralized societies. Producers of culture do not bear the stigma of being the regime but do contribute as extended members of the state. I understand culture, fundamentally, as the product resultant of the activities of a group of individuals with shared norms and values. Beyond this definition, the imposed designation of what constitutes high or low forms of culture emanates from a privileged position of authority. In a highly centralized political system such as Romania’s, high culture became inextricably linked with, though not solely constitutive of, official culture. The relationship between high and official culture during this period in Romania is most eloquently explained in Verdery’s definition of the “politics of culture,” which she defines as “processes of conflict and maneuvering” which occur within communities of the producers of “high culture,” such as “artists, writers, musicians, and scholars,” and “between them and the political sphere ‘proper,’ dominated by the Communist party, as it sought to manage and shape the culture being produced.”

Thus, while still problematic, “official” is a more useful concept than “high” or “low” since the value of cultural production weighed more upon the subject of the products’ substance than the form through which it was delivered.

Additionally, official and popular culture were also remarkably negotiable in Romania, particularly during the late 1960’s-1970’s. Romanian rock music, while counterculture in form, came to be seen by the regime as a potentially useful form of expression which could compel Romanian youth to adopt the substance of official culture as a form of alternative culture. Here I differentiate alternative culture as a form of

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46 Verdery, 12.
counterculture which is often not in direct opposition to official culture, but is ultimately apolitical. The flexibility of the interplay between these cultures was only possible to such an extent because of the ultra-national rhetoric of Ceaușescu and, as Madigan Fichter has argued, the unique form which Romanian counterculture took in comparison with other movements in the United States and Western Europe: generally apolitical, insular and nationally-oriented (if not staunchly nationalist). In the following two chapters, I conceive of academic monographs, children’s literature, and film as official culture – as the means of production for these mediums was directly controlled by the state. At the same time, the production of Romanian rock music was also tentatively controlled or, at least, approved, by the state, yet was a form of alternative culture which did not explicitly challenge the official forms promoted by the regime.

Chapter 5: The Haiduc in Ceaușescu’s Romania: Two Case Studies

The image of the *haiduc* in Romanian national mythology has been symbolized as a rebel, freedom fighter, defender of the peasantry, and the embodiment of the Romanian national spirit in the face of foreign influence and oppression. In Ceaușescu’s Romania, particularly, the *haiduc* enjoyed an elevated status in the national pantheon alongside the greatest rulers and revolutionaries of the past – celebrated through film, songs, literature, and architecture. The producers of culture used the *haiduc* figure not as a representation but, rather, as an embodiment of the ideals espoused by the regime – a protector of national identity; a guarantor of social justice and economic equality; defender against foreign oppression; an embodiment of paternity, masculinity, fraternity, and morality; and a champion of righteous revolutionary principles.

However, there were also ample historiographical and ideological obstacles for intellectuals to overcome in order to maximize the utility of the haiduc figure. One such impediment – in the atmosphere of Ceaușescu’s obsession with the production of cultural works which explicitly exalted Romanian authenticity and uniqueness – was the *national* ambiguity of the earlier haiduci, such as the late sixteenth-century *Serbian* mercenary-haiduc, Baba Novac. Examining the ways in which Romania’s producers of culture navigated this seeming conundrum is a step towards better understanding the nuances of
national hero construction in Ceaușescu’s Romania and authoritarian regimes, in general. As a means of engaging this discourse, my paper focuses on the portrayal of Baba Novac in two official historical monographs — written in 1975 and 1980, respectively — during a period in which the Party elite were maximizing public displays of national chauvinism via flamboyant glorifications of national heroes. First, a brief biographical engagement is necessary to foreground the context of the “Old” Novac.

Baba Novac: Biography

Baba Novac was born sometime between 1520 and 1530 in Poreci (now Donji Milanovac) on the Serbian side of the present-day border with Romania. The details of Novac’s early years are largely undocumented, but most sources agree on his noble origins — a trait common to most haiduci in Romanian lore. Additionally, as such, there is a similar consensus that Novac was well-educated as a youth, speaking Serbian (his mother tongue) and Old Church Slavonic fluently, but also some degree of Romanian and Greek. Romanian historiography in general, accords him optimal importance only beginning in 1594, when Novac was already at least sixty-five years old, as this marks the his first recorded activity part of Michael the Brave’s military campaigns in Transylvania and throughout much of the Balkans.  

Nineteenth-century Romanian historians — namely B.P. Hasdeu — have stated that Novac and his ceata (band of haiduci) had been active for “decades” prior to Michael’s campaigns, during which time they took refuge in mountainous areas of Bosnia. After building a rather large ceata, during his

twenty-thirty year period of *haiducia* (outlawry or haiduc activities) in the mountains of Montenegro and Bosnia. Novac met with Michael in route to what would become their first major joint military victory – the Battle of Calugareni. From 1595-1600, Novac played a major role as Captain in Michael’s army – culminating in the seizure of Sibiu.

The Official Historiography of Baba Novac

Colonel George Marin’s monograph, *Baba Novac: Captain in the Army of Michael the Brave*, was published in 1975 – shortly before a statue was erected in Cluj-Napoca to commemorate the haiduc. Previously, in 1936, in the city of Cluj-Napoca, there was only a small, commemorative plaque acknowledging the sacrifices made by Novac, for his loyal service in battle alongside Michael the Brave at the turn of the seventeenth-century. The plaque had been constructed on the location of his impalement (which took place the day after he was burned to death on February 5, 1601) and where Michael allegedly raised a flag in his honor, in the city center of Cluj-Napoca in what is today *Bastionul Croitorilor* or “The Tailor’s Bastion.” However, in accordance with the ostentatious commemorations typical of Ceaușescu’s hubris, a large statue, designed by sculptor Virgil Fulcea, was erected in 1975 further exalting Novac alongside other heroes of Romanian history in the “City of Monuments,” such as the widely-celebrated Hungarian King “of Romanian origins,” Matei Corvin and the leader of the 1848-49 Romanian National Uprisings in Transylvania, Avram Iancu. The statue was cast in

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49 Ibid, 8.
bronze on the 375th anniversary of Novac’s death as “a symbol of the solidarity and friendship between peoples…in service to a common ideal.” (See Figure 1 in Appendix A).  

Addressing the source base on Novac in the intro of his monograph, Marin references two contemporary texts about the haiduc – one by a Venetian ambassador, Ciro Spontoni, and the other by Transylvanian-Hungarian nobleman, Stefan Szamoskozy. After minimal discussion, Marin concludes that the biographical information given by Szamoskozy could not be trusted as “with malcontent, from the position of the noble class, never reconciled with the ideals of revolt on the part of those below (him in class).” Thus, Spontoni, who, “as the biographer of (Giorgio) Basta (the Habsburg General credited with the assassination of Michael the Brave and, likely, responsible for Novac’s death)” was an acceptable, less problematic source because he wrote “with more objectivity.” Marin’s intentions are quite powerfully foreshadowed here as to which ethnicity will play the villain in the story of Baba Novac.

Marin contends that, according to Serbian folklore and legend, Novac “took to the road” (became an outlaw) out of financial necessity as a means to fund an armed resistance against Ottoman authorities, for whom he would never “remove his cap” (respect as legitimate rulers). Novac’s poverty, Marin concludes, is evidence that “his comrades” must have pledged allegiance to him out of “the respect and admiration” for

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51Marin, 5.
his “suffering and ideals,” and “the fevered love of the popular masses.” In spite of the absence of reliable biographical information, Marin foremost emphasizes the aspect of popular support for the anti-Ottoman actions.

However, at the conclusion of Marin’s account of Baba Novac, the Ottomans are not the antagonists. Contemporary accounts of Novac’s actions in 1600-1601 attest that, in Michael the Brave’s absence while in Vienna, Novac intended to “sell” the conquered cities of Caran-Sebeș and Lugoj to the Ottomans. Marin interjects that this was merely a “pretext” for the Hungarian nobility – led by Ștefan (Istvan) Csaky and Moise Szekely – to wrest control back from Michael the Brave. Marin treats Szamoskozy’s account – from which comes the narrative of Novac’s attempted betrayal – as propaganda meant to justify the haiduc’s arrest and subsequent death. Szamoskozy, Marin concludes, was a devoted follower of Sigismund Bathory (Hungarian Prince of Transylvania who opposed Michael’s rule there) and, as his interests lie with the nobility, his account cannot be trusted. Thus, in Marin’s monograph, the narrative of Hungarian treachery against Baba Novac – and, by extension, Michael the Brave – strongly underlines the commemoration of the haiduc in Cluj-Napoca, a city replete with cultural and historical importance for Hungarians.

Ion Georgescu opens his monograph about Baba Novac with a telling quote from Ceaușescu himself, which speaks to the importance of the less-celebrated national heroes

52 Ibid, 8-9.
53 Ibid, 78.
54 Ibid, 78-80.
of Romania: “In the golden book (chronicles, history) of the country (Romania) have remained the great, immortal commanders…But also there are the more anonymous heroes, the broad masses of the population, which, for hundreds and hundreds of years, have built a wall in the path of the invaders, keeping through the ages, like a sacred flame, the liberty of the ancestral land.” \(^{55}\) Georgescu’s monograph, like Marin’s, is more focused on reframing the identity of Michael the Brave’s antagonists than adding any new biographical information to the narrative of Baba Novac. However, the exaltation of a non-Romanian figure such as Novac serves another specific purpose: to highlight the contribution of Romanian heroes to the liberation of all the oppressed peoples under foreign rule.

According to Georgescu, the Serbian Novac shared with the Romanians “the disdain for Ottoman tyranny,” and the imposition of “the Muslim religion.” This vehemence fueled Novac’s rejection of the established order and influenced his commitment to being a haiduc. \(^{56}\) Thus, from the start, Georgescu outlines Novac’s motives as ultimately sociopolitical, infused with a religious element. However, Georgescu spends almost no time discussing Novac’s life prior to his introduction into the army of Michael the Brave – a period of time which would surely place Novac more decisively as an enemy of the Ottomans. To best suit the narrative of Michael the Brave, though, Novac is better utilized as a crucial component in the struggle against the Hungarian nobility and clergy in Transylvania.

\(^{55}\) Georgescu, 6.  
\(^{56}\) Ibid, 24-25.
To be sure, the Ottomans are always bogeyman in Romanian historiography. However, it was Iancu Jianu, rather than Baba Novac, who the regime and producers of culture used to vilify the Ottomans and their appointed rulers in Romania, the Greek Phanariots. While opposing Ottoman decadence and corruption, Jianu also served as a custodian of the peasantry. Yet, in the official cultural products of the 1970’s and 80’s, Jianu was not only the protector of an impoverished and abused peasantry, but also one which could not defend itself due to their own backwards commitment to their traditional way of life, which stood in the way of the progress Ceaușescu intended to make in the Romanian countryside.

Iancu Jianu: Biography

Perhaps the most recognizable haiduc to Romanians is Iancu Jianu. Jianu’s visibility is primarily due to the time period of his activities. Jianu was born in 1787 to a prominent boyar (noble) family whose credentials are documented back to at least the mid sixteenth-century. The Jianu family came from Oltenia, a region in western Wallachia from which began the Uprising of 1821, led by Tudor Vladimirescu and a momentous occurrence in which Jianu took large part. Thus, as an important figure in one of the pivotal points in the Romanian national awakening, the Romantic historians and poets of the nineteenth-century exalted the folk image of the haiduc.

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57 Barbu, 13.
The majority of the primary sources written about Jianu by his contemporaries – namely members of his own family, Fană Jianu and Dincă Izvoranu – contend that his period of outlawry, which Barbu dates as 1809-1817, was prompted by personal reasons. As a lesser boyar from a family who had apparently fallen out of favor with the Phanariot regime, upon his father’s death, Jianu faced a substantially less wealthy life than to what he was accustomed. Similarly, French scholar, J.A. Vaillant, after spending some years amid the revolutionary movements in Muntenia, in 1844 came to a similar conclusion, while adding that Jianu’s young age and vigor also fueled his actions. To be sure, many indigenous, noble families of the Danubian Principalities negatively impacted by the careless reign of the later Phanariot princes, which directly affected their holdings and financial status. However, as Barbu contends, there is little evidence to support the narrative that Iancu Jianu resorted to thievery purely as a means of survival because, even as lesser nobility, the Jianu family were never impoverished as this logic would imply. The narratives characterizing Jianu’s motives as social and national found much greater resonance with both scholar- and readership.

Generally, throughout the remainder of the nineteenth-century, Iancu Jianu was portrayed by contemporary writers as a haiduc who was motivated by his own sense of moral, social, and political justice. Some of the more romantic sources from this period were built on the rich folklore surrounding Jianu; that his personal battle against injustice

58 Ibid, 7.
59 Ibid, 36-37.
60 Ibid, 37.
61 Ibid, 41.
stemmed from individual acts of mistreatment towards a woman close to him – in some
sources the woman is a lover while others claim it was a family member whom he
witnessed being accosted.\(^{62}\)

As a general trend, most historians moved away from the more romantic
interpretations of the early- and mid-nineteenth-century towards a more scientific
approach to the discipline. This meant that, while the narrative of the scorned
lover/brother remained a constant, historians imbued Jianu with more national awareness.
Certainly, this period in Romanian historiography produced the essential elements of a
national hero – an ethnic Romanian of noble birth who became an haiduc out of a spirit
of patriotism stemming from the abuses of foreign overlords or treacherous Romanians.
In both children’s literature and the acclaimed films of the Ceaușescu period, in which
Jianu is the titular protagonist, his interactions with the peasantry are dubious.
Collectivization in the countryside was often a brutal venture for the peasantry but
heavily emphasized by the regime as a crucial component in modernizing Romania.
Thus, Jianu’s portrayal in official children’s literature and popular film was as an agent of
change who could still be a traditional Romanian – countering the backwardness of the
peasantry while being their protector and mercilessly combatting their exploiters.

The Official Iancu Jianu in Children’s Literature

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\(^{62}\) Ibid, 37, 40.
Beyond the academy, the Jianu image became synonymous with that of the haiduc. In this way, Jianu remained a folk hero from whom Romanian youth could learn life lessons and proper values. Of course, the lessons and values taught through the medium of children’s books offers a unique glimpse into how the haiduc was used as a pedagogical mechanism representing Romanian morality in a simple, formalized manner. In a children’s book from 1976, simply entitled, Iancu Jianu, for instance, Jianu is simplified into a more personable character through a composite of both poetry and folk ballads which informed many of them. As a gleaming example of the protochronist style, the book presents the contemporary sociopolitical tropes in the dialogue and context of the original prose of the nineteenth-century.

The bucolic imagery throughout Iancu Jianu places the haiduc in contrast to his urban antagonists who, in some form or fashion throughout the story, are always at a disadvantage because of both their greed and unfamiliarity with the countryside. In one scene, Jianu and his haiduci come upon a group of merchants whose carriage is tipping over from the weight of their gold.63 In the next sequence, as Jianu returns to his camp with the merchants’ gold, he reprimands his men for being “absent-minded” and wasting their bullets.64 After stealing a horse from a rich shepherd who refused to sell it to him, Jianu rides to the Olt River, where he shoots a ferryman trying to prevent his free crossing of the river.65 Jianu then finds refuge in a village where he is given ample food

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64 Ibid, 7.
65 Ibid, 10-15.
and drink in gratitude for his actions on their behalf. As Jianu leaves the village, all the young girls woefully bid him farewell, wishing they could be with the rugged haiduc.66

While the social, political and moral lessons taught in the book are perspicuous, the national can indeed be read between the lines. For Jianu, the countryside is quite literally his life force, just as it is for the Romanian peasant on whose behalf he fights. The traditions, customs, and values of the peasant have always formed the imaginative bedrock of Romanianness – whether exalted or undermined – due to their history of being a primarily agrarian society. The artwork in Iancu Jianu portrays the peasant as the most authentic embodiment of the Romanian both in moral constitution and physical appearance while, conversely, those who come into conflict with Jianu serve as the antithesis of the Romanian essence. Jianu, his haiduci, and the villagers (implicitly depicted as the Romanians of the story) are shown to be thin while the main antagonists (the merchants, shepherd, and ferryman) are overweight – the underlying message being that Romanians are hard-working, disciplined, moderate and traditional, as opposed to their lazy, indulgent, exploitative overlords.

Furthermore, Jianu’s encounter with a horse-breeder (“mocan”) is somewhat peculiar if one views the historiography of the haiduc as a fairly static continuation of the interwar narrative. In Romanian historiography, the term mocan seldom appears in a pejorative sense in the same way as negustor (merchant) or ciocoi (exploiter) – terms intimately connected to foreignness or non-Romanian character. Therefore, it appears

misplaced for Jianu – as the defender of the peasantry (of which \textit{mocani} are quite representative) – to steal from the shepherd. Misplaced, that is, unless the narrative is put in the context of Stalinist, rather than singularly nationalist, ideology. A more common denigration of the \textit{mocani} is that they are uncivilized and, therefore, present an impediment to aggressive modernization.

To be sure, even in the regional folk tales about Jianu, \textit{mocani} are not safe from the actions of the haiduci. The great poet, Vasile Alecsandri, who is largely responsible for the solidification of the haiduc as a Romanian national figure, rather than a regional legend, wrote the following about Jianu: “He takes lambs from shepherds/Stallions from horse breeders (\textit{mocani})/Without pay! Without money!/Lurking in the straits/To plunder merchants/And catch all nobles/To strip them of wealth!”\textsuperscript{67} While Barbu explains that this portrayal is not a common literary tradition of the haiduc ballads,\textsuperscript{68} the discontinuity of the morality narrative suggests authenticity instead of the absolute ideology of the Ceaușescu period.

Since the children’s book, \textit{Iancu Jianu}, is synthesized from selected portions of numerous different ballads and poems – mostly written or collected by Alecsandri – not only written about haiduci or Jianu but also the plight of the Romanian peasantry and the beauty of nature, the representation is designed to conform with Ceaușescu’s brand of stalinist doctrine. Trond Gilberg has noted that Ceaușescu’s goal of collectivization through the elimination of individualism was a rudimentary element of his ideology.

\textsuperscript{67} Barbu, 109.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid, 110.
which extended beyond economic policies, deep into the arena of arts, literature, and education. The contradiction, then, is that all national heroes are individuals and their biographical narratives (much like Ceaușescu’s) typically have substantial personal and unique qualities. Thus, in selecting the mocan as an antagonist, the narrative influences the reader to revere the *traditional* while also acknowledging the deleterious lifestyle of the peasant as an impediment to *necessary* change (i.e. rapid industrialization through the collectivization of agriculture).

The Official Iancu Jianu in Film

On March 5, 1971, Ceaușescu addressed an assembly of directors, screen-writers, film critics, and others in the film industry with concerns over the quality of and, more so, the frequency with which good films were being produced. Despite the irony that the two most successful Romanian historical films still to date were released prior to this speech (*Dacii* (The Dacians – 1967) and *Mihai Viteazul* (Michael the Brave – 1970)), the conducător believed that “educational media,” in the form of cinema, “must start from the ethical and aesthetical principles of socialism” if Romanian cinema was to

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71 Petreșcu, 535.
compete with “foreign films,” if Romanian cinema was to overcome the deficiencies which Ceaușescu believed them to have.\textsuperscript{72}

Historical films formed the foundation of Romanian cinema, particularly during the 1970’s. Of all the historical figures featured in these films, the haiduc was the most visible with no less than twelve films made about them from 1965-1982. With only one major exception, Dinu Cocea directed all of these films. As the “father of the haiduci,” Cocea had already made five films in the popular “Haiducii” series by 1971, when Ceaușescu made his mandate to exalt Romanian uniqueness in the July Theses.\textsuperscript{73} The bulk of these early films were centered on an otherwise insignificant haiduc in Romanian historiography who was allegedly a comrade of Iancu Jianu, Anghel Pantait or, as he is better known from these films, “Șaptecai.”\textsuperscript{74} The repetition of Cocea as director and renowned actor, Florin Piersic, as the star, served a most important function for the education of the audiences. Kevin Platt, in the context of Soviet cinema, has argued that the repetition of actors and directors in historical films legitimized them as “experts” – not only in the production of these films but also in their knowledge of the historical themes themselves.\textsuperscript{75} Both Cocea and Piersic resemble this formula; all major films about haiduci continued, into the 1980’s, to either be directed by Cocea or feature Piersic as the main protagonist.

\textsuperscript{72} Ceaușescu, 80-81.
\textsuperscript{74} Dan Cărlea, http://ziarullumina.ro/de-la-haiducie-la-eroism-78592.html.
Cocea’s first haiduc film outside of the “Haiducii” series, however, was his most successful – both in public reception and in the immortalization of the haiduc figure. Released in two parts in 1981, Iancu Jianu, zapciul and Iancu Jianu, haiducul featured Adrian Pintea as the eponymous protagonist. It is worth mentioning, if only anecdotally, that the first major haiduc film not to be directed by Cocea, Pintea (1977), centered on the famous Transylvanian haiduc, Grigore Pintea, who was portrayed by the previous face of Cocea’s “Haiducii” series, Florin Piersic.

Taken as one complete story, the first of the two films, zapciul, details, as the title indicates, Jianu’s years as a tax collector prior to his haiduc activities, which are the focal point of the second film, haiducul. As Barbu has interjected, the films are clearly meant to personalize Jianu rather than emphasize his most important contribution for which he has historically been most renowned in Romanian historiography – as a captain in Vladimirescu’s 1821 rebellion. To be sure, Vladimirescu, played by Emanoil Petruț, plays a crucial role in the films as the voice of dissent for Jianu, reinforcing the growing disdain he has building for the (foreign) authorities due to their constant mistreatment of the native population. Otherwise, the character of Vladimirescu plays a role of secondary importance in the overall plot of the film.

In Zapciul, Jianu begins the film as a carefree tax collector who accompanies the Ban (Count) Andronache to the princely court to deliver the collections to the Phanariot

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77 Barbu, 174.
Prince Ioan Caragea. Jianu observes the lavish, foreign dress and ostensibly crude conversation of the nobility, not with disgust (at first) but curiosity – conveying the noticeable divide between lower nobility and those greedy noblemen who have been Ottomanized. Jianu then pursues a mocan – per direct orders from the Ban – who owes back taxes. A shootout then occurs when the mocan tries to evade Jianu’s capture, only to be wounded. The mocan flees into a cave where Jianu finds him and asks “Why would you not surrender to a man such as me? You owe the Prince money,” to which the mocan replies that he has been taxed too much already and will not pay “the Sultan’s agents.” Jianu then brings him in to be jailed.

Throughout the film, Jianu’s demeanor portrays deep thought when he sees abuses of the peasantry at the hands of the nobility. Jianu’s growing disdain turns to rage after he inadvertently kills Vârlan, the father of his peasant lover, Stanca, in an altercation which occurs after Vârlan sees Jianu and Stanca together in a playful, yet intimate, manner. Vârlan (played by the renowned actor, Ilarion Ciobanu) starts the fight with Jianu because he forbade the two lovers from seeing each other several times, as he would never allow his daughter to be with someone who “works for the ciocoii (exploiters).” After accidentally killing the Vârlan, Jianu rides off in a fury to meet with Tudor. After explaining the event to Tudor, Jianu confides that he is very upset with himself for everything that has occurred. Tudor then incites Jianu by emphasizing the responsibility that the Phanariots and nobility hold for the feelings Jianu is experiencing: “They (the authorities) have forced you to steal the bread from your people! You are not like them, yet they have convinced you so! Who will you kill next, Iancu? Your lady
(Stanca)? Your family?” Jianu then decides to take revenge on the nobles. (See Figure 2 in Appendix A).

After the news is relayed to Ban Andronache that he is to be besieged by Tudor and Jianu, the nobleman has a stroke and the last thing he sees is the famous portrait of the Prince Ioan Caragea. The Ban’s daughter, Tincuța – who Jianu was originally to marry – finds him dead and rushes office below where all the wealth is stored, only to find the room on fire (started by Tudor and Jianu). The next shot is of Jianu in a field admiring a herd of horses roaming free – a sign that he has severed all ties to the life of a noble and that he now runs free as a haiduc. In this series of events, the peasants are portrayed as weak and ultimately at the will of Jianu – Vârlan is killed after not being able to protect his daughter, Stanca, who herself is so enamored with Jianu that she exudes very little agency throughout the film. Likewise, the nobility is portrayed as corrupt, hawkish, and the ultimate authors of their own demise as a result of their greed. Through the narrative of the story, then, both peasantry and nobility bear the responsibility for their misfortunes, even though Jianu has directly caused the tragedies.

The focus of the film, then, is to engage Jianu’s sociopolitical relationships with the peasantry and nobility. Jianu occupies a privileged place as a symbol of morality (juxtaposed with the corruption of the foreign nobility) and, simultaneously, a defender of a helpless peasantry who must rely on the advanced cleverness of the haiduc. Thereby, the film further consolidates the image of the haiduc as an icon of sacred righteousness and necessary change. However, as the haiduc’s representation by Romanian rock band,
Phoenix, shows, the malleability of the haiduc was not always a directly beneficial or educational figure.
Katherine Verdery has rightly argued that, already by 1967, Ceaușescu had begun to manifest what she calls the “symbolic-ideological mode of control,” which would be the primary characteristic of his rule. The introduction of a Commission on Ideology within the Central Committee signaled the twilight of any cultural détente Romanians had previously enjoyed.\(^7\) In a speech from December 13, 1968, delivered at the General Meeting of the Composers and Musicologists, Ceaușescu resolutely urged that “what confers prestige and authority on our music in the eyes of the other nations, what makes its value grow internationally is not a submissive imitation or copying of trends or schools ‘in the fashion’ abroad, but the faithful expression of the physical and moral personality of our people, of its spiritual characteristics, of the supreme aims to which it devoted its elan and creative forces.” Romanian musical uniqueness could only be achieved “by paying homage to our forerunners…a sacred duty both to them and to our people.”\(^7\) Furthermore, the emphasis on rejuvenated ideological activity as exhorted by Ceaușescu himself transcended the traditional bounds of “high” or, even, “official” culture.

\(^{78}\) Verdery, 101.
While the aforementioned speech was not directly addressing the long-haired, bell-bottom-clad youth of the burgeoning Romanian rock music scene, their music and influence served as a pivotal bridge between popular and official culture. In fact, Ceaușescu made considerable concessions to the counterculture movement during his period of liberalization from the mid 1960’s into the 1970’s. As Doru Pop has noted, the official youth journal of the Party, Scânteia Tineretului, regularly featured reviews of and articles about bands as internationally renowned as The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, in addition to many budding Romanian musicians whose material initially consisted mostly of cover songs by popular Western acts.\textsuperscript{80} Fichter has soundly argued that, in addition to his internal reforms and relaxation of censorship, Ceaușescu’s denunciation of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 “led to an outpouring of non-conformist support for the regime,” as this act highlighted the “overlap of official policy and dissident goals.”\textsuperscript{81} Few Romanian bands were as impacted by the “mini-Cultural Revolution” which followed the issuing of the July Theses as Phoenix – a band which interpreted the haiduc in a remarkably traditional, yet arguably subversive manner.

My intention here is not to overstate the impact of Romanian rock music as an explicit form of resistance, nor is it to exaggerate the place allotted the haiduc in Phoenix’s lyrical and visual repertoire. Rather, I argue that the haiduc image was an important element of the folkloric themes adopted by Phoenix in their effort to satisfy

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\textsuperscript{81}Fichter, 578-579.
Ceaușescu’s demands for Romanian authenticity and uniqueness as the sole basis for all music produced after 1971. The result of this negotiation was the emergence of a novel musical genre – etno-rock (ethnic rock) – which largely informed the ambiguous relationship between the regime and counterculture.

Formed in 1962 in Timișoara by schoolmates, Nicu Covaci and Bela Kamocsa, Phoenix (or Transylvania Phoenix in parts of Western Europe and the United States) originally went under the name, Sfinții (The Saints). According to co-founding member, Nicu Covaci, the name change to Phoenix occurred in 1964 after the band was “forbidden” to play due to charges of “mysticism.”\(^82\) Original vocalist, Florin “Moni” Bordeianu, recently stated that future, post-communist, Romanian president, Ilie Iliescu (also a close friend of Nicu Covaci), suggested the change.\(^83\) In any case, the switch to the name Phoenix was not immediately concomitant with a change in musical style.

Throughout the 1960’s, Phoenix continued to play a style of pop-rock known as beat, very much inspired by the British Invasion bands – namely The Rolling Stones, The Monkees, The Kinks and The Animals.

The 1970’s brought big changes for the band and for the country as a whole. In 1971, representatives of Ceaușescu (possibly Iliescu) approached Covaci and

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recommended, in light of the new ban on foreign music and music “with foreign elements,” that he use the “rich treasure of Romanian folklore” to influence the music of Phoenix in a way that would potentially make the band less of a target for censorship. Covaci felt, foremost, that the fusion of folk themes and instruments with rock music would set Phoenix apart from any other rock (or folk) music being played in Romania. The combination of historical and folk-themed lyrics with an increasingly psychedelic and progressive style of rock (not vastly different from their contemporaries abroad), folk, and blues produced the unique etno-rock genre which would forever define the sound of Phoenix.

While their first full-length LP, released in 1972 and dubiously titled, *Cei Ce Ne-au Dat Nume* (Those Who Have Named Us), exemplified the commitment to a noticeably different sound and – to a lesser degree – lyrical themes, it was their second LP which cemented the legacy of Phoenix, and their connection with the image of the haiduc. Released in 1974, *Mugur de Fluier* (Flute Bud) featured two songs with lyrics extracted from the poetry of nineteenth-century Romantic poet, Vasile Alecsandri. Both songs – “Andrii Popa” and “Strunga” – deal with the common theme of opposing the exploitation of an oppressive ruling class over the masses (a common theme in many of Alecsandri’s poetry). “Andrii Popa” tells a very familiar story of a haiduc who spends “All day and night riding/Extracting highway taxes” and who “Mocked the (unjust) rule/(just as he did) All of his quarry endlessly.” The refrain of the song further portrays the haiduc as

“the brave,” “renowned,” and “crafty.” In striking similarity with Jianu’s tales, Popa is so deadly that even his horse will “bite the enemies.”

To be sure, Covaci has never endorsed his use of the haiduc as explicitly oppositional to the regime. However, Covaci himself and contemporaries who worked closely with the band in the 1970’s, such as music critic, Daniela Caraman Fotea, and music journalist, Florin Silviu Ursulescu, have stressed how seriously he took the change in musical, lyrical, and thematic direction. A video-clip made for “Andrii Popa” shows the members in an abandoned structure resembling a “hideout” suitable for a haiduc, wearing the authentic attire of an outlaw, which they would regularly continue donning in live performances for the remainder of their stay in Romania. In 1977, Covaci and the rest of Phoenix (with the exception of vocalist, Mircea Baniciu) fled Romania for West Germany, where they stayed until 1990. Some years after their return to Romania, Covaci told a reporter that he “identified with this image (haiduc).” Furthermore, when he was young, the haiduc image was a means of “doing this (a derogatory hand-gesture) to the communists and the capitalists.” (See Figure 3 in Appendix A).

The political ambivalence expressed by Covaci in the aforementioned interview reflects assertions made by Fichter that “Romanian hippies had little interest in serious political activism” and “were attracted to the lifestyle because it gave them a sense of liberty that was unavailable elsewhere in Romanian society.” Similarly, Pop argues that

86 Integrala Phoenix, “Anii 70’s.”
87 “Andrii Popa,” official video-clip. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8LjitEZEfE.
89 Fichter, 570.
rock music in Romania “allowed the formation of subversive social behaviors and the
development of nonconformist opinions and ideas” rather than “mass political dissent” or
anti-communist ideologies.90 Nonetheless, while the haiduc image used by Phoenix was
not a figure meant to explicitly denounce or support the Ceaușescu regime, the apolitical
nature in which it was portrayed as part of a general thematic trend by the band is
important in discussing representations of the haiduc.

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90 Pop, 65.
Conclusion

Perhaps the most endearing trait of the haiduc is his spirit of freedom. Other legendary figures in Romanian history are presented as bound or destined to fulfill a certain mission in a sort of retrospective prophecy. Those heroes who were royalty were meant to defend their country and subjects from foreign invasion and unjust rule. Haiduci often rejected their noble or higher class positions for a greater cause by choice; out of the disdain they developed from witnessing the mistreatment of the Romanian people. The haiduc was bound only by the mission to serve justice for the Romanian people. Michael the Brave had the destiny to unite Transylvania with the Danubian Principalities, while his haiduc contemporary, Baba Novac, never had such direct ambition – it was only his desire to throw off foreign yoke, whether Ottoman Muslims or Hungarian Catholics/Protestants.

The haiduc also served as a manifestation of freedom in an otherwise repressive society, through the imagery and lyrics of Phoenix. Baba Novac was used by historians to represent a symbol of the martyrdom of the overall campaign of Michael the Brave, whose goal was interpreted as the unification of all Romanians – a process halted by Hungarian treachery. Iancu Jianu, as represented in children’s literature and film, engaged the custodianship of the haiduc over the peasantry and resistance to the corruption of the Ottoman-installed Phanariot regime – a necessary force of change to
reinforce the regime’s own portrayal of itself has defenders of the masses (peasantry). The malleability of the haiduc was used as a conditioning mechanism by Romanian producers of culture in the Ceaușescu period. Yet, it also presented problems for the regime as a symbol of individualism – an alternative path to the collectivist visions of Ceaușescu.
Bibliography

Primary Sources


Filmography


Videography


Discography


Secondary Sources


Appendix A: Images of Haidući
Figure 1. Baba Novac
Figure 2. Jianu kills Vârlan
Figure 3. Still from music video: Phoenix-Andrii Popa (circa 1974)