

COMMEMORATIVE MONUMENTS DEDICATED TO POLITICAL PERSONALITIES IN BUCHAREST, ROMANIA. AN INTERPRETIVE APPROACH BASED ON POSTCARDS

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ABSTRACT

Monuments in the public forum dedicated to political leaders are an important tool in promoting national identity. Frequently, the political message embedded in public monuments is intended to contribute to propagating and strengthening a sense of national identity by shaping the community's commemorative experience. In addition to the commemorative function related to social memory, public monuments also have an associated ideological function, as the monuments become essential in visually representing the national politics of memory and identity. The ideological function also represents an expression of power by emphasising a series of prominent political leaders. This article analyses the imagology and symbolism of public monuments in the central area of Bucharest as elements that support the construction of national identity. Commemorative monuments dedicated to symbolic national political personalities from the period of the United Principalities and Royalty were analysed in terms of their role in remembering and forming the national identity. The evolution of these monuments and their significance were also analysed based on postcards, which were marked by a series of changes in how power was expressed and the formation of national identity in the communist and contemporary periods.

Keywords: nationalism, the Romanian Principality and Royalty, ideological function, commemorative practices, collective memory, semiotic approach

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INTRODUCTION

People have expressed their origin, meaning, and power through images since antiquity (Resane, 2018). Public monuments, such as statues, play an important symbolic role in people's lives, and each monument is built for specific reasons and meant to serve certain purposes or interests (Resane, 2018). Most statues erected in memory of notable personalities date from the 19th century (Sterckx & Engelen, 2013; Sumartojo, 2015) or from the first part of the 20th century (Edensor, 2019; Petterson, 2019). The 20th century is considered a period of particularly intense commemorative activity, with a "memory boom" that began with the First World War and resulted from new ways of thinking about the role of history in contemporary society (Winter, 2000, 2006, cited by Sumartojo, 2015, p. 7).

Public monuments have different functions, which include the commemorative, political, decorative, aesthetic, educational, and touristic (Alderman & Dwyer, 2009; Light & Young, 2011; Othman, Nisimura & Kubota, 2013; Bellentani & Panico, 2016; Krzyżanowska, 2016; Antonova, Grunt & Merenkov, 2017; Merciu et al., 2018; Lehtinen, 2019; Fekete, 2020; Purici & Mareci-Sabol, 2021). The commemorative function is particularly important, as it is associated with social memory (Othman, Nisimura & Kubota, 2013; Bellentani & Panico, 2016; Merciu et al., 2018), whether it is closely related to the commemoration of positive events (e.g., a victory) or of a traumatic experience of a national/local collective (e.g., epidemics, natural disasters, wars) (Fodor, 2022a; Krzyżanowska, 2016). Public monuments are also built to commemorate representative personalities for a community or those with special significance for its group identity, such as artists, scientists, leaders, and heroes (Engelen & Sterckx, 2011; Merciu & Stoian, 2012; Bellentani & Panico, 2016; Krzyżanowska, 2016; Antonova, Grunt & Merenkov, 2017; Merciu et al., 2018; Resane, 2018; Bucur, 2019; Fodor, 2022a), to emphasise the exceptional importance of their personality and create a feeling of admiration toward them and their deeds (Antonova, Grunt & Merenkov, 2017; Resane, 2018). According to some authors, the erection of public monuments to political leaders who proved to be great warriors, battle strategists, and heroes (overwhelmingly men) combines with the ideological function (Krzyżanowska, 2016; Antonova, Grunt & Merenkov, 2017; Edensor, 2019; Purici & Mareci-Sabol, 2021; Fodor, 2022a).

Erecting public monuments links the past to the present (Krzyżanowska, 2016; Resane, 2018; Kean, 2021; Purici & Mareci-Sabol, 2021) and helps to express and consolidate official power and assimilate official power and the symbols of the past for future generations, indicating a special connection between reality and memory, truth and fiction (Purici & Mareci-Sabol, 2021). Commemorative monuments can also be linked to the promotion of symbolic landmarks such as freedom and independence (Krzyżanowska, 2016) or abstract concepts such as peace (Waldner, 2012, cited by Merciu et al., 2018; Fodor, 2022b), victory, or the nation (Burke, 2001; Fodor, 2022a), which can be represented through allegorical and abstract elements such as female figures (Burke, 2001; Sumartojo, 2015; Fodor, 2022a). The most famous example is the monument of Liberty Enlightening the World (also known as the Statue of Liberty) located on a dedicated island in the Hudson River in New York (Burke, 2001; Krzyżanowska, 2016).

Taking into account the particularly important role of public monuments in expressing the feeling of national identity and its formation by shaping the community's commemorative experience, this article analyses the imagology and symbolism of public monuments in the central area of the capital city of Romania as elements that support the construction of national identity. The main features of the commemorative monuments are highlighted first, along with the ways of interpreting their role in the formation and remembrance of national identity through postcards and old images, in particular in reporting to the prominent political leaders at the national level from the period from the 19th century through the first half of the 20th century (until the communist period). Attention is then focused on the evolution of these commemorative monuments in socialism and in the contemporary period. This evolution was marked by a series of changes related to how power was expressed and the formation of national identity, represented by the destruction of some public monuments during the socialist period and their selective reconstruction in the contemporary period. The capital city of Romania was selected as a case study because it is the most important urban centre in the country from a political, economic, cultural, and educational point of view; its evolution was strongly marked by its status as a political-administrative centre under the direct influence of the political and geographical factors.

To identify the narratives associated with national identity based on the interpretation of postcards of monuments, the following research questions were addressed: who were the political personalities symbolising the Romanian national identity from the period of the Principality and the Kingdom of Romania (1859–1947) who are visually represented in the public space of the capital city and in postcards? For which national values did they campaign, and which did they contribute to realising? What are the main coded messages of the official discourse related to the national identity incorporated in the postcards published in the period 1859–1947, particularly in terms of the representation of the commemorative monuments in the public space of Bucharest? What changes were made in the visual representations of political personalities from the period of the Principality and the Kingdom of Romania in the public space of Bucharest during the communist period? How are the symbols associated with the national identity from the period 1859–1947 visually represented in the public space of Bucharest and in postcards at present?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The erection of commemorative monuments is an extension of national identity (Fekete, 2020). Although it was common for groups of citizens to raise funds to erect public statues in memory of selective figures in the 19th century or the first part of the 20th century (Edensor, 2019), numerous public monuments were built at the initiative of the political elites to highlight various symbolic values from a historical point of view, which gives such monuments both a political function (Light & Young, 2011; Merciu & Stoian, 2012; Purici & Mareci-Sabol, 2021) and a commemorative one (Bellentani & Panico, 2016; Bucur, 2019). As a result, monuments in the public forum become essential in visually representing the national politics of memory and identity through which political leaders express their power (Sumartojo, 2015; Bellentani & Panico, 2016; Fodor, 2019, 2022a; Rusu & Croitoru, 2021).

From this perspective, two aspects are of fundamental importance: the attitude of the political elite towards the historical character of the monument chosen for the public space and the actions undertaken to propagate its symbolism among members of society (Bonțanu, 2010, cited by Merciu et al., 2018, p. 58). The analysis of the politicised nature of public commemoration uses the “arena” metaphor to direct attention to the political struggles and debates related to the representation of the past (Alderman & Dwyer, 2009). Moments of social and political transformations create a favourable context for the expression of power or the promotion of political ideology through the construction, demolition (Bellentani & Panico, 2016; Goodrich & Bombardella, 2016; Rusu & Croitoru, 2021), redesign, and use (Kong, 2008, p. 14, cited by Krzyżanowska, 2016, p. 469) of public buildings and monuments.

Nationalism is an ideology constructed as a social common frame of mind that provides ways to create community, identify fundamental patterns that reflect similarities and differences between people, make political claims, and organise social relations (Brubaker, 2004 and Clahoun, 1997, cited by Kyriazi & vom Hau, 2020, p. 519). At the same time, the authors Kyriazi and vom Hau (2020) consider nationalism to be an adaptable but explicit ideology advanced by states to legitimise their authority and hold control. National ideologies constructed by the state may vary in their content or how they convey historical and cultural particularities through the official discourse.

Along with the construction of the nation-state in the 19th century as “a territorial, political, cultural, historical, mythical and religious entity,” the nation was also built as an “identity community, as a community of attitudes” or as a community that shares a common destiny that is built and disseminated to young generations (Morin, 1991, pp. 320–321, cited by Murgescu, 1999, p. 10) in different forms: images such as photos of political leaders, postcards (Burke, 2001; Kyriazi & vom Hau, 2020), art such as paintings (Burke, 2001; Fodor, 2022a), representations in public space (Edensor, 2002; Bucur, 2019; Fodor, 2019; Kyriazi & vom Hau, 2020; Fodor, 2022a), identity discourses (Miller-Idriss, 2009, quoted in Kyriazi & vom Hau, 2020), and ceremonies (Bucur, 2019; Kyriazi & vom Hau, 2020), as well as through the mass media and the public education system and school curriculum (Murgescu, 1999; Kyriazi & vom Hau, 2020; Ilovan & Merciu, 2021). The visual representations of the nation change, however, even if they are presented in similar forms (e.g., various forms of art, postcards), because they represent an ideological tool through which state leaders can legitimise their power and differentiate themselves from the previous regime by trying to impose a special understanding of the nation (Kyriazi & vom Hau, 2020). The nation-state is also a mythological entity based on its own religion, which can consist, for example, of the cult of the Motherland and of heroes and martyrs, alongside ceremonies that glorify the sacred objects of the nation such as monuments, flags, and heroes who sacrificed themselves for the country (Morin, 1991, pp. 322–323, cited by Murgescu, 1999, p. 10).

A national identity is built in the collective mind together with the creation of a national mythology through the construction of an image of the past or by referring to a series of fundamental myths, including the myth of origin, of the struggle that highlights the emblematic national heroes, and the myths related to the role of the nation in the future to generate solidarity, strengthen the sense of community, and develop patriotic and religious feelings—or to support a political regime (Murgescu, 1999, p. 10). The purpose of such myths is to create a form of collective memory through the careful selection of events, characters, and symbols (flag) considered to be emblematic for the respective community and with which the citizens of the nation-state can identify (Murgescu, 1999, p. 11). The nation and the awareness of belonging to a national community are the result of a training and education process initiated by the actions of the intellectual and political elites; through this process of education, the nation develops from an abstract concept to a tangible one (Fodor, 2022b). National identity is transmitted to the general public through models and the careful selection of historical personalities to illustrate the grid of values within the nation (Murgescu, 1999; Fodor, 2022b).

Public monuments and memorials are forms of visual representation that influence the way people remember and value the past (Petterson, 2019) because they narrate history in controlled and selective ways (Alderman & Dwyer, 2009; Burke, 2001; Bellentani & Panico, 2016) and incorporate dominant discourses, including what history, ethnicity, gender, and nationality are represented through them (Bellentani & Panico, 2016; Goodrich & Bombardella, 2016), as well as who possesses the right to commemorate and to be commemorated in/through monuments (Krzyżanowska, 2016). In this way, the symbols of the past are transmitted to younger generations (Engelen & Sterckx, 2011; Ilovan & Merciu, 2021; Kean, 2021). Because public monuments have traditionally been used to build a collective identity and to strengthen collective belonging, they must be easily decoded by the general public, even if the monuments themselves are often complex in form (Krzyżanowska, 2016, pp. 469–470). The representations of public monuments in the form of postcards or lithographs also constituted an “educational material” through which to popularise the decoded messages among the general public (Petterson, 2019). Postcards, as a visual medium, are constantly displayed and signal special understandings of the nation in national territories (Kyriazi & vom Hau, 2020), especially

because their production tends to be oriented primarily toward mass commercial culture (Edensor, 2002).

Public monuments have more than an ornamental, artistic role (Purici & Mareci-Sabol, 2021; Rusu & Croitoru, 2021): they are also symbols that give meaning to the city and transform neutral places into ideologically charged locations (Whelan, 2002, p. 508, cited by Merciu et al., 2018, p. 59), which allows political elites to establish ideological meanings in space (Edensor, 2019). At the same time, the spatial context shapes the discursive meaning. Different understandings of time in national commemorative places are used to connect citizens to the nation and to other members of the nation in the past, present, and future (Sumartojo, 2015, p. 8).

The process of building a national identity in Romania through the use of monuments was more intensively developed with the realisation of the Union of the Romanian Principalities and the consolidation of the new state. Schools had an essential role in the process of creating and disseminating the modern national identity (Murgescu, 1999; Fodor, 2022b). The educational policy supported by the intellectual elites was thus focused on the development of the feeling of national identity and the creation of an “imagined community” through educational strategies such as the enrichment of the school curriculum by the study of national history emphasising historical personalities who contributed to the defence and reunification of the Romanian state, as well as the consolidation of knowledge in Romanian geography. “Extra-curricular” activities were also added, and speeches given during school celebrations (Murgescu, 1999; Fodor, 2022b) were used to clarify the ideological message transmitted by the political and intellectual elites, as was the participation of students in various festivities dedicated to the Act of Union. Such activities sought to develop feelings of attachment in the students for the newly created state, as well as to consolidate unity with Romanians from other Romanian territories, which had not yet been included within the borders of the young Romanian state (Murgescu, 1999).

Starting in the 19th century, national identity in Romania was promoted through the careful selection of personalities considered representative of Romanian history; this selection was adapted and ranked according to the major milestones of the era, with the aim of forming national consciousness (Fodor, 2019, 2022b). The result was the creation of a pantheon dominated, in the 19th century, almost without exception by princely characters (Murgescu, 1999; Fodor, 2022b). These characters were presented as examples worth following, symbols of national feeling, of the spirit of sacrifice, and of self-sacrifice for the nation (Fodor, 2022b, p. 5). During the Royalty period, holidays were adopted to commemorate important historical events (Georgescu, 1989; Bucur, 2019); for example the 10th of May has multiple meanings: the coming to the throne of the ruler Charles I (proclaimed sovereign prince on May 10, 1866), the day when the Declaration of Independence was proclaimed and countersigned by Carol I (May 10, 1877), and the proclamation of the Kingdom of Romania (May 10, 1881) when Carol I received the title of King of Romania. During the reign of King Ferdinand, at the initiative of Queen Maria, the celebration of Heroes’ Day was approved (Bucur, 2019). The unification of the Romanian territories in 1918, considered “a moment of indisputable national triumph,” created the occasion for a national redefinition and justified the initiation of a nation-building process (Livezeanu, 1995, p. 46). After the Great Union, the political discourse had a strong nationalist accent given the desire for rapid national consolidation as a result of the assimilation of the new provinces in which there were also numerous minorities. At the same time, social mechanisms were also engaged in the process of nation-building, including educational and cultural strategies. Romanian literary culture, for example, was one of the main avenues for national integration through the stimulation of a rich literary and journalistic production intended to

educate different categories of public, along with literary debates and the Romanianising campaign of the country's elites and cultural institutions (Livezeanu, 1995). After the First World War, other, less formal means, were also used, such as films, stamps (Fodor, 2022b), or other artistic expressions—such as public monuments (Bucur, 2019; Fodor, 2022b).

Public monuments are “points of physical and ideological orientation” around which “circuits of memory” are organised (Nuala, 1995, cited by Edensor, 2019). Nora (1996), quoted by Engelen and Sterckx (2011) considered monuments to be “sites of memory” and a place (in the literal sense) where “history persists and can be felt” (Engelen & Sterckx, 2011, p. 90). These included material, symbolic, and functional sites that were capable of “forming and shaping the content of what is remembered” (Kattago, 2015, p. 7, cited by Bellentani & Panico, 2016, p. 30).

In the postcards that represent public monuments, there is a transfer from the memorial as a place of topographic memory to the medium of the postcard, which transforms the monument into a place of portable memory (Engelen & Sterckx, 2011). Postcards were a very popular communication tool starting in the middle of the 19th century and through the first part of the 20th century, which was also known as the “golden age of postcards” (Engelen & Sterckx, 2011; Petterson, 2019; Mareci-Sabol & Purici, 2020). During this period, the circulation of postcards was intense at the international level due to the huge print runs (Sterckx & Engelen, 2013), which generated an enormous social and artistic impact (Engelen & Sterckx, 2011) as a result of the capacity of the new visual tool to popularise and canonise disseminated images (Sterckx & Engelen, 2013). The postcard correspondent frequently refers explicitly to the monument represented or, more often, to the person and facts represented by the monument. The function of the postcard as a place of memory is itself crucial in the case of commemorative monuments that have been moved to another location or have disappeared. The postcard of the original monument thus becomes a photographic substitute and a permanent record of an ephemeral sculptural object (Engelen & Sterckx, 2011, p. 95). However, studies focused on the analysis of *in situ* photographs of commemorative monuments included in postcards are few in number compared to photographs in which works of art are represented (Engelen & Sterckx, 2011; Sterckx & Engelen, 2013). In the case of the representation of commemorative monuments in postcards, the photographs always include a frame defined in time and space. The photographer thus becomes more present when photographing public sculpture than when reproducing paintings; the point of view toward the monument and the urban landscape that forms the background must be determined both literally and metaphorically (Natkin, 1934, cited by Engelen & Sterckx, 2011, p. 96).

The representation of commemorative monuments in postcards is not accidental. Commemorative monuments are considered by the editors to be constitutive elements for establishing a sustainable history of the national community that legitimises the national state (Engelen & Sterckx, 2011, p. 91). Due to practices such as collecting and archiving postcards, or publishing them in numbered or topical series, postcards themselves represent a form of commemoration. The postcard photographically representing a monument can become a substitute for the emotional experience of visiting the monument or it can be a souvenir of the emotionally experienced monument, whether it marks the moment of inauguration or another commemorative event. As a result of the postcard's original communication function, memories become transferable and, potentially—often literally—can be portable or transferable in time and space (Engelen & Sterckx, 2011, p. 94). As solid objects in locations that people can (re)visit to commemorate or enliven their memories, public monuments can thus be considered lasting places of memory (Engelen & Sterckx, 2011).

Postcards represent and at the same time construct particular understandings of national identity and history because a number of their formal features are explicitly national: the name of the state is often written on the postcard, which also tends to feature the stamps of the national system when put into circulation (Kyriazi & vom Hau, 2020). Moreover, postcards represent a useful tool that corresponds to the ubiquitous nationalist aspiration to promote the unique identity and authenticity of a country's culture internationally (Semmerling, 2014, cited by Kyriazi & vom Hau, 2020).

The location of the monument (e.g., a certain square, street) is also important and is invested after the fact—and possibly arbitrarily—with new collective memories, and therefore with a new meaning thanks to the use of certain representational strategies, such as the composition of the scene and the inclusion of certain photographic codes (Engelen & Sterckx, 2011, pp. 93, 96). In situ photography of commemorative monuments for postcards forms a genre (Sterckx & Engelen, 2013) that is influenced by—and itself influences—the contemporary views of the monument and the city or landscape (Engelen & Sterckx, 2011, p. 96). Examination of the urban fabric can be carried out from the perspective of elements of material culture in relation to historical and socio-cultural events. This approach determines that physical spaces, especially public spaces, are interconnected by and with mentality, culture, tradition, and social and local life (Aronin & Ólaoire, 2012, cited by Krzyżanowska, 2016). These relationships thus generate ways of organising and using public spaces (Krzyżanowska, 2016), and the place, in turn, is associated with a symbolism that refers to the return to the past, to the relationship between time and space, and to the desire to reconstruct memory (Banini & Ilovan, 2021). Recent studies have highlighted the fact that monuments are parts of the contemporary city (Krzyżanowska, 2016; Edenson, 2019; Merciu, 2020; Amirshaghaghian & Nasekhian, 2021) and at the same time represent the central element of the construction of the late modern urban *genius loci* through the construction of memory and commemoration (Krzyżanowska, 2016, p. 467).

METHODOLOGY

Postcards were used quite frequently as methodological tools in various scientific works in the second half of the 20th century (Ilovan, 2020; Mareci-Sabol & Purici, 2020; Spennemann, 2021) as a result of the increase in number of the studies of visual and popular culture (Sterckx & Engelen, 2013). They also represent an unconventional and original source of data for the study of the nationalism (Kyriazi & vom Hau, 2020).

The analysis of the official discourse focused on nationalism and representations of a nation, especially those related to previous historical periods, is associated with real methodological challenges given some limitations. One limitation, for example, is related to the impossibility of understanding how ordinary citizens consumed the images represented on postcards and whether they contested or accepted the official conceptions of national identity and history (Kyriazi & vom Hau, 2020).

Another methodological limitation is related to the impossibility of interviewing political and historical figures who lived in the past (Kyriazi & vom Hau, 2020). The transmission of the message embodied by the statues and memorials was also not self-evident, especially because the initiators made only a minimal effort to explain the significance of the monuments to the city's inhabitants. This difficult task has recently been taken on in the field of deltiology, which involves scientific study based on the rigorous interpretation of postcards included among the

approaches to the analysis of visual culture (Kyriazi & vom Hau, 2020). The investigation of the consolidation and transmission of ideologies related to nationalism has been carried out based on postcards in different studies (Sterckx & Engelen, 2013; Ilovan & Maroși, 2018; Petterson, 2019; Kyriazi & vom Hau, 2020; Mareci-Sabol & Purici, 2020; Ilovan & Merciu, 2021; Purici & Mareci-Sabol, 2021; Merciu & Vasiloiu, 2022). Postcards have also been used in other studies to analyse war memorials as places of memory in their specific commemorative context (Engelen & Sterckx, 2011) or to discuss other commemorative monuments erected in urban public spaces (Sterckx & Engelen, 2013; Bucur, 2019; Mareci-Sabol & Purici, 2020). Rowley (2010), for example, analysed postcards as vectors of propaganda in which memorials dedicated to political figures of communism are represented.

Data collection and interpretation

To investigate the transmission of ideological messages about national identity, in this study postcards with images of commemorative monuments dedicated to political leaders built in Bucharest in the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century were used. Documentation was also developed on the basis of various historical studies as the main sources of information to analyse the formation and representation of nationalism in the official discourse.

In the present study, the author analysed eight postcards and eleven old photographs selected from an image bank of about 100 postcards published in the period between the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. To them is added a postcard published during the communist period and two published after 1990 that belong to the author. The postcards examined illustrate monuments of the main historical figures selected as representative for the period of the Principality and the Kingdom of Romania (1859–1947), as well as for national history, who, through their political position, influenced the socio-economic and political evolution of Romania. Although the analysis focused on the period between 1859–1947, the author also included postcards from the contemporary period to better contextualise the identified results.

The analysis of postcards requires more inference than is needed for other forms of data (Grandy, 2008, cited by Kyriazi & vom Hau, 2020) to limit as much as possible the subjectivity of the interpretation of representations (Maroși, 2018) and to distinguish between pure visual information and interpretations deriving from the context of the images through in-depth analysis of the interaction between the image and the textuality (Mareci-Sabol & Purici, 2020; Ilovan & Merciu, 2021). The location of the memorial (a certain street, square, or park) contains many additional details that help the researcher to “read” the postcard; this can include buildings, trees, cars, shops, tram tracks, advertisements, or passers-by (Sterckx & Engelen, 2013). The author therefore quantified the observations derived from the analysis of postcards based on knowledge of the national historical context. The author has also used a double coding strategy employed in other studies (Kyriazi & vom Hau, 2020), which consisted of first reviewing, separately, a series of postcards and then selecting the most representative. Based on the visual analysis, the code scheme was broken down and each postcard was classified, taking into account dimensions that were especially adapted to analyse national identity (Kyriazi & vom Hau, 2020): elements of cultural heritage, indicators of wealth, and professions or activities carried out by the persons represented. In many postcards, representative heritage buildings or places (streets, towns, public spaces) are represented. The presence of architectural monuments can indicate an important stage in national history (Maroși, 2018; Kyriazi & vom Hau, 2020; Ilovan & Merciu, 2021). Indicators of wealth are another important identifier of how

a nation is imagined and is an integral part of the national heritage. Varying levels of wealth can be distinguished based on the indicators identified in the postcards (Kyriazi & vom Hau, 2020, pp. 525–526), which included the size and refinement of buildings, roads (dirt vs. paved roads), people's clothing and accessories, and the presence of facilities (e.g., electricity, drinking water). Appreciation of the level of wealth related to a certain historical period can also be analysed based on stylistic elements such as the colouring or composition of a postcard (Kyriazi & vom Hau, 2020; Ilovan & Merciu, 2021).

The representation of individuals in postcards makes it possible to decode the activity in which they were engaged and also provides details about their professional status more broadly, including individuals who were involved in activities associated with military or political leadership (i.e., represented riding a horse in military uniform or giving a speech), people participating in festivities or ceremonies, and people represented as passive spectators at an event or an inanimate object (Kyriazi & vom Hau, 2020, p. 526). According to Kyriazi and vom Hau (2020), the presence of a large number of political and military elites in postcards indicates the prevalence of a liberal-elitist version of nationalism. At the same time, many of the postcards depict residents of the city, which could perhaps be an artistic choice to emphasise the architectural dominance of the monument or to enliven the atmosphere in the image (Pettersen, 2019).

To ensure the analysis was as thorough as possible, the author searched for as many postcards as possible on different websites or blogs created by people who collected old postcards. The author selected only postcards that included information regarding the year/decade in which they were published or circulated, in order to examine the meanings transmitted and which were encoded in the messages of the official discourse with reference to different expressive, visual, and textual repertoires.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Narratives related to the formation and representation of national identity were interpreted with reference to the commemorative monuments dedicated to political leaders erected in the central area of the city of Bucharest during the period of the Principality and Kingdom of Romania (1859–1947).

Alexandru Lahovari

The monument of Alexandru Lahovari in Bucharest is the work of the French sculptor Marius Jean Antonin Mercié and was inaugurated in 1901 in Lahovari Square (called Dorobanți Square until its inauguration) (Caloianu & Filip, 2009) (Figure 1, left). The location was chosen by the sculptor Mercié, who rejected the location originally proposed (Roman Square) by the municipality, considering it too large in relation to the dimensions of the monument (Mihai, 2010; Sector 1 City Hall of Bucharest, 2013). The monument was built shortly after the death of the great Romanian politician (1897) using funds collected through public subscription (Caloianu & Filip, 2009), which reflected the special appreciation he enjoyed among the population and the politicians of the time. The monument represents Alexandru Lahovari standing, in the pose of an orator, with his right hand outstretched (Caloianu & Filip, 2009) (Figure 1, left). In the composition of this monument, Mercié used a method of artistic expression common in statuary art, namely emphasising the message through the vibrant alternation of surfaces, from stone

(base) to bronze (the subject of the monument) (Caloianu & Filip, 2009). In the plan, Alexandru Lahovari, the main figure of this monument, is located centrally on the upper level with features and ceremonial clothes (frockcoat) (Mihai, 2010) that convey a solemn attitude and the special political role he played. To balance the artistic work, but also to link to its symbolism, the sculptor introduced two allegorical characters to the left and right of the main statue. The one on the right is a woman in national costume, offering Lahovari a laurel branch as a tribute. The young woman is presented as a legendary figure to personify the idea of Modern Romania (Caloianu & Filip, 2009). This illustration, used in statuary art, reflects the ideals of the romantic generation and incorporates the message of the speeches and efforts for the formation of the Romanian nation (Fodor, 2022b). The allegorical representation of the country or victory as a woman dressed in flowing clothes was a technique frequently used in the 19th century in various European countries, which borrowed from the symbolism of Ancient Greece, and this approach was also taken over in Romania in commemorative art (Bucur, 2019).

There is a third statue on the left side of the monument, Danubius, the male representation of the Danube River, which symbolises the Latin origins of the Romanian state, in general historical terms; in personal terms, it refers to the activity and political achievements of Alexandru Lahovari in defence of Romania's interests regarding the legal regime of the Danube (Caloianu & Filip, 2009).



Figure 1: Postcard in which the statue of Alexandru Lahovari is illustrated (left) (Editura Ad. Maier & Stern, Bucharest); The statue of Alexandru Lahovari today (right)

Source: IMAGO ROMANIAE, The National History Museum of Romania (MNIR), 2021 (left); personal collection of F.-C. Merciu, 2020 (right)

The bronze plaques on the socle, which contained fragments of Alexandru Lahovari's speeches, with references to the Romanian monarchy, disappeared and were probably removed after 1947 for ideological reasons (Caloianu & Filip, 2009). The statue of Alexandru Lahovari is represented on the postcard in portrait format, which emphasises its verticality and monumentality, while isolating the monument from the surrounding urban context to encourage careful observation by the viewer. At the same time, Alexandru Lahovari is

represented centrally, a fact that emphasises the importance of his political personality. There is also an element of decoration on the postcard (the vegetation arranged around the statue), which is placed in the background to highlight the statue and draw the viewer's attention to the image of Alexandru Lahovari (Figure 1, left). It is one of the few statues in Bucharest that is still in its original location (Caloianu & Filip, 2009, p. 26) (Figure 1, right).

Alexandru Lahovari was an illustrious jurist and conservative Romanian politician, a good observer of the Romanian political scene, who took a careful and trenchant approach to foreign policy topics. These characteristics contributed to shaping a portrait of a politician connected to the problems of Romanian society, a fact that led Lahovari to campaign for the real interests of Romania in foreign policy; he was a moderate conservative but was also concerned with the good positioning of the Romanian state in terms of international relations (Brătescu, 2017). From the beginning of his life, he was part of the educational pattern of the children of the Romanian boyar families of the 19th century. The study of history and foreign languages in the family setting was followed by graduation from high school studies in Paris (Louis le Grand High School) and, from 1862, he became a graduate of the Faculty of Law in the capital of France, obtaining the title of Doctor of Law in 1865 (Brătescu, 2017, pp. 86–87).

He belonged to a family that gave Romania several outstanding political personalities, which included his father, Nicolae Lahovari, member of the ad-hoc Divan from 1857, which requested the union of the Romanian Principalities (Lahovari, 1905); his brothers, Ion Lahovari, Minister of Foreign Affairs (Dinu, 2011, p. 305), and the general and politician Iacob Lahovari, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of War, and head of the Great General Staff (Dinu, 2011, p. 307). Among the high positions held by Alexandru Lahovari in the Romanian state, we mention: Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Justice, Minister of Public Works, and Minister of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce, during several governments (Brătescu, 2017). Lahovari is considered one of the greatest Romanian jurists of the 19th century, carrying out, as Minister of Justice (1871–1876) in the Lascăr Catargiu Government, an important reform of the Penal Code and criminal procedure.

Although he was in visible opposition to ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza, because he was a strong supporter of the Union made in 1859, Alexandru Lahovari acted after the dethronement of Cuza for the fastest possible election of a foreign prince as his successor, a central political objective at that time to ensure the international recognition of the Romanian state. As an important member of the Conservative Party, Alexandru Lahovari campaigned for the promotion of traditions, property, and the ideas of Romanian conservatives, which included supporting agriculture and development of light industries, in particular, along with strengthening the regime of the constitutional monarchy and substantiating the freedom of citizens in the property regime, among others (Georgescu, 1989). He was effectively involved in the defence of Romania's interests in the Danube issue, standing up to pressure from Austria-Hungary. The Austrian government's attempt to create a commission made up of the representatives of the states bordering the Danube to supervise navigation raised a serious problem for the Romanian government. Lahovari delivered a speech in Parliament on May 28, 1881, recommending again that the government show more firmness in the face of the Austrian offensive, given existence of a treaty that recognised Romania's rights to control traffic on the Danube (Cârțână & Samoilă, 2010, pp. 100–101, cited by Brătescu, 2017, p. 90).

Ion C. Brătianu

The commemorative monument dedicated to Ion C. Brătianu, a great personality of Romanian political life in the modern era, was inaugurated in 1903, on the occasion of the 12th anniversary of his death (Caloianu & Filip, 2009) (Figures 2a, b, c). The municipality arranged for the location of the monumental ensemble on a square at the intersection of the Carol/Elisabeta Boulevard with the Colțea Street, which, after it was systematised, received the name Ion C. Brătianu (Buiumaci, 2020) and is currently called University Square. A so-called liberal axis was created through the location of the monument, which included the statues of Pake Protopopescu (located on the boulevard of the same name); of C. A. Rosetti, completed in 1936; and the placement of the statue of Mihail Kogălniceanu (Buiumaci, 2020). The commemorative monument was made by the sculptor Ernest Henri Dubois after a project by the architect Petre Antonescu (Giurcă, 2016, pp. 48–49). After the construction of this monument, Ernest Dubois and the architects Petre Antonescu and P. Seewald were decorated by King Carol I as Commanders of the Order of the Crown of Romania (Buiumaci, 2020). The monument was, by size and composition, the largest monument of the time, as well as being the most complex, because it included 11 characters, an ornamental element, and two bas-reliefs that marked all the important political events in which Ion C. Brătianu participated. The monument was cast in bronze and positioned on a pyramidal socle built in several registers (Buiumaci, 2020).



Figure 2a, b, c: Postcards and a photograph published in the early 20th century representing the commemorative monument dedicated to Ion C. Brătianu

Source: Stroe, 2015

The composition of the monument emphasises the important, almost guiding role of this great political personality by activating and capitalising in an aesthetic sense some components of national identity and defining moments in the historical evolution of the Romanian people. In the upper part of the monument, the highest statuary component is that of a female figure symbolising victorious Romania (Caloianu & Filip, 2009). This allegorical figure of Romania carrying the flag recalls the War of Independence (Buiumaci, 2020); in the monument as a whole she appears supported on the statue of Ion C. Brătianu, who is represented in the pose of an orator with his arm outstretched, toward a physically undefined space, but temporally defined as the path to follow—that of a continuous present that becomes, in fact, future. Brătianu appears to be showing this path to a Dorobanț (soldier), which emphasises his sustained contribution to the struggle for freedom of the Romanian people. The pose of orator in which he is depicted faithfully evokes his participation, including in the great popular gathering on the Freedom Field (Filaret Plain) during the Revolution of 1848 in Wallachia.

The appearance of the Dorobanț in the statue, in direct correlation with the representation of Brătianu, expands the symbolic component of his great merits from the time of the conquest of Romania's state of independence through its participation in the Russian-Turkish war of 1877–1878. The important role of Ion C. Brătianu as Prime Minister of Romania during the War of Independence is thus symbolically represented in this monument. In the middle area of the monument, Romania (Motherland) is symbolically represented by a woman telling future generations, indicated by two children, the deeds of Ion C. Brătianu, and pointing to the inscription: "Through our mind, through our heart and arms. 1851" (Buiumaci, 2020). On the socle of the original monument there were also two reliefs representing Ion C. Brătianu in two significant historical moments: in 1848, speaking to the people on the Freedom Field, and in 1866, when he greeted, together with the people, Prince Carol upon his arrival in Romania (Buiumaci, 2020). They no longer appear in the restored version.

At the four corners of the socle, there were four female representations on the original monument, who personified Patriotism, Eloquence, Courage, and Prudence (Buiumaci, 2020), and these also appear on the restored monument. The monument thus suggests that these qualities of Ion C. Brătianu's personality have been transmitted to the nation and that there has been a communion of his virtues with those of the Romanian people. The idea of sacrifice for freedom, on the battlefield, is also emphasised artistically as another assumed element of national identity that can also be found in Brătianu's vision. On the socle, on the opposite side of these inscriptions, there is a winged character breaking the chains of the past and of slavery, who represents the genius of Romania, and below it, a significant chronological date for the history of Romania: 1877. In 1948, the monument was demolished by the communist authorities, and the bronze was melted down (Giurcă, 2016; Panaitescu, 2018; Buiumaci, 2020) because it no longer corresponded to the ideological projection considered appropriate for a monument in that era.

The restoration of the commemorative monument was approved by the General Council of the Municipality of Bucharest in 2014, and a contest was organised to replace it on the original site. The winning solution was the proposal of the sculptor Ionel Stoicescu. The monument was inaugurated in 2019 in the context of the centenary of the Great Union (Buiumaci, 2020) (Figure 3).



Figure 3: The reconstructed statue of Ion C. Brătianu on the occasion of the Centenary of the Great Union

Source: personal collection of F.-C. Merciu, 2021

In the opinion of the historian Cezar Petre Buiumaci (2020), the relocation of the statue dedicated to Ion C. Brătianu to the intersection of University Square represents an important event for the post-December period of Romania. Indeed, the relocation of the monument to restore the history is particularly important as a result of the attempt by the communist leaders to rewrite history by dislocating and destroying the statue during the totalitarian regime (Buiumaci, 2020). The representation of the monument dedicated to Ion C. Brătianu in different postcards underlines, on the one hand, the importance of this significant historical personality, and on the other hand, it communicates the message embedded in the monument related to the national identity by referring to two historical moments—the great popular gathering of the Liberty Field and the War of Independence—with the aim of decoding it to the general public. The monument dedicated to Ion C. Brătianu is represented on the postcards in landscape format, and the surrounding urban context is accentuated to highlight unique monuments that require identification, which was a way to represent the portraits of prominent personalities that was frequently done during the Belle Époque period (Sterckx & Engelen, 2013).

Ion C. Brătianu is represented centrally on the postcard, and the location of the monument within the local urban landscape is highlighted through representative buildings from the time, such as the Palace of the Ministry of Agriculture and Domains (today the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development), an imposing building built during the reign of Carol I, designed by the Swiss architect Louis Pierre Blanc in the style of the French Renaissance between 1894 and 1897 (Figure 2a); the former Palace of the Ministry of War (today the headquarters of the Payments and Intervention Agency for Agriculture) (Figure 2a), which was built in 1900 according to the plans of the architect Nicolae Cerkez (Marinache, 2013); and the University Palace, which was built between 1857 and 1869 according to the plans of the architect Alexandru Orăscu (Figures 2b, c) (Berindei & Bonifaciu, 1978). In the old photograph containing the statue of Ion C. Brătianu (Figure 2c) other details are reflected that contribute to tracing the contours of the modern image of Bucharest and the central location of the monument within the city, including the tram, a vintage car, the cubic stone pavement of the market, and the alignment of the trees along the boulevard.

In the postcards that illustrate the statue of the great politician, people around the monument are also represented, and they belong to different professional categories, including people whose clothes reflect their professional status belonging to the upper social class. A careful analysis of the postcards highlights the presence of some soldiers (Figure 2a), which can be linked to the commemoration of the political personality of Ion C. Brătianu, a moment which, through its immortalisation on the postcard, draws the attention of the general public to the importance of his personality.

The documents and research of historians have illustrated the special contribution of Ion C. Brătianu to the national rebirth of the Romanian people; he was a leader of the Revolution of 1848 in Wallachia and he contributed to the act of the Union of the Romanian Principalities in 1859, as well as to the achievement of other important historical events (Georgescu, 1989; Buiumaci, 2020).

Ion C. Brătianu was a political personality throughout his entire career and fulfilled a series of particularly important political objectives. He overcame the challenges of the internal environment (conservative opposition, underdevelopment of the country, lack of resources), as well as those of the external political environment, which included the interests and actions of the three surrounding empires—Ottoman, Habsburg, and Tsarist. These objectives included socio-economic and political modernisation, the union of the Romanian Principalities, cultural development, the creation of the modern Romanian state, the achievement of the state independence, and the development of the political party system in Romania (Georgescu, 1989). A prominent exponent of the 1848 Revolution in Wallachia, Brătianu became secretary of the Provisional Government established on June 14, 1848, and then head of the Capital Police.

A politician with radical liberal views, he was a deputy in the ad-hoc Divan (1857), and, in the Elective Assembly of Romania (1859), he supported the double election of Alexandru Ioan Cuza and the Union of the Romanian Principalities on January 24, 1859 (Georgescu, 1989; Buiumaci, 2020). Ion C. Brătianu founded the National Liberal Party in 1875 and was its co-president until 1882–1883 and president until 1891 (Buiumaci, 2014). He was a reformer and constantly campaigned for the modernisation of the state, the establishment of banks, and the development of industries and agriculture. He was Prime Minister of Romania during the War of Independence (1877–1878) and participated together with the Foreign Minister Mihail Kogălniceanu at the Berlin Peace Congress (1878), where Romania's independence was officially recognised, along with the re-inclusion of Dobrogea between its borders. He governed Romania as Prime Minister for a long time (1876–1888) and played an important role in the proclamation of the Kingdom (1881) and in the prior appointment, as successor of King Carol I, of the king's nephew, Ferdinand (Georgescu, 1989).

Constantin A. Rosetti

The monument to Constantin A. Rosetti in Bucharest was executed by the sculptor Wladimir Hegel and cast in bronze in 1902 within the School of Arts and Crafts in Bucharest. It was placed in 1903 in Rosetti Square (Caloianu & Filip, 2009). The statue was built with funds collected through public subscription. On the frontispiece of the monument is affixed a round bronze plate, beautifully ornamented, on which are inscribed the words: "C. A. Rosetti. 1816–1885. Enlighten yourself and you will be. Wish and you shall have." The stone socle of the statue is decorated with two bronze bas-reliefs on the sides that reproduce important moments in the history of Romania in the fulfilment of which C. A. Rosetti had a major role: the historical act of

the Union of the Romanian Principalities, entitled “January 24, 1859,” and the second, “May 9, 1877,” evoking the proclamation of Romania’s independence (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Postcard published in the first half of the 20th century, representing the commemorative monument dedicated to Constantin A. Rosetti

Source: Stroe, 2015

The monument represents the politician Constantin A. Rosetti seated in an armchair, in an attitude of meditation, with the newspaper *Românul* [The Romanian], which he founded, in one hand and a quill in the other, in the posture of a writer (Caloianu & Filip, 2009). The importance of the illustrious historian is also transposed within the portrait postcard in which he is captured centrally, represented in a festive setting in which representatives of the peasantry appear with wreaths of flowers. The image of Romanian peasants paying tribute to Rosetti directly conveys the message that the general public should appreciate the great statesman for his political achievements.

Constantin A. Rosetti (1816–1885) was one of the main artisans and exponents of the 1848 Revolution in Wallachia, alongside Ion C. Brătianu, who also contributed to the establishment of the modern Romanian state. His liberal political views were shaped by prestigious teachers such as Edgar Quinet, Jules Michelet, and Adam Mickiewicz during his university studies in Paris at the Collège de France (Bucur, 1970). From his youth, Rosetti was involved in various activities within the Romanian Revolutionary Circle and the Society of Romanian Students; he attended the Masonic lodge L'Athénée des Étrangers; and opened a printing house in 1846 (C. A. Rosetti Establishment), adding, in collaboration with E. Winterhalder, a bookstore (known as the Rosetti et Winterhalder Bookstore), which also represented an instrument for promoting the ideas of the 1848 Revolution and served as a centre for propaganda (Bucur, 1970, pp. 18–23). He was also one of the founders of the Frăția [Brotherhood] Society in 1843, which represented the engine of the 1848 movement in Wallachia (Bucur, 1970). As an 1848 revolutionary, he was prefect of the police, then secretary of state in the provisional government.

After the repression of the Revolution, Rosetti left the country, returning to Paris, where he campaigned for the creation of the modern Romanian state. To contribute directly to the realisation of the political unity of the Romanian people, Rosetti returned to Wallachia, and in 1857, he was a deputy in the ad-hoc Assembly of Wallachia, which asked the Great Powers to

support the Union of Wallachia to Moldova. In 1859, he was a deputy in the elective Assembly of Wallachia, which elected Alexandru Ioan Cuza as ruler, creating the Union of Romanian Principalities through his double election to the thrones of Moldavia and Wallachia. After the Union of 1859, he was part of the Government as Minister of Cults and Instruction (May–July 1860; February–July 1866), but also as director of the National Theatre (Bucur, 1970). Although he was a minister and held other public positions during the reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, Rosetti was his strong rival and was the initiator of the “monstrous coalition” (Georgescu, 1989), which was the alliance between radicals and conservatives that led to the abdication of Cuza from the throne of the Romanian principality. Rosetti was one of the great Romanian political personalities during the reign of Carol I and held important positions, especially between the years 1876 and 1881, including Minister of Internal Affairs, President of the Assembly of Deputies, and Mayor of the Capital.

During this period, Rosetti again made his political contribution through various achievements, such as the conquest of state independence (1877–1878) and the proclamation of the Kingdom (1881). Throughout his decades of political and editorial activity, Rosetti was a politician with a vision and, through the newspapers he founded (*Pruncul Român* [The Romanian Child], *Republica Română* [The Romanian Republic], and *Românul* [The Romanian]), he sought to promote the idea of the union of the Romanian Principalities and national independence, as well as to support the revolutionary movement among Romanians (Bucur, 1970). His dynamic, reforming, and revolutionary spirit was also reflected in his publications, especially in the poems written during the 1848 Revolution. These are considered, in the opinion of the author Bucur Marin, to be the “battle march of C. A. Rosetti” (Bucur, 1970, p. 28) transmitted through his propaganda centre among the Romanians. His artistic creation was continued during his exile in Paris: for example, “Doamnei,” a poem published in the newspaper *Republica Română* in 1851, focused on the allegorical theme of the anonymous woman of the country that had sacrificed herself for the revolution; the idea of a new revolution was illustrated by appealing to the theme of maternal sacrifice: the woman personified the idea of the homeland that needs a new sacrifice and a new revolution to achieve emancipation (Bucur, 1970).

George C. Cantacuzino-Râfoveanu

George C. Cantacuzino-Râfoveanu (1845–1898) completed his university studies in Paris in the field of mathematics (Tribune of the People, 1898). He was one of the close associates of Ion C. Brătianu, to whom he owes his entry into the world of politics. In 1877, Cantacuzino-Râfoveanu started his administrative career as general secretary of the Ministry of Finance (Tribune of the People, 1898). He was a Romanian politician of liberal orientation, who held the position of Minister of Finance during the liberal governments led by Dimitrie Sturza (1895–1896, 1897–1899) and Petre S. Aurelian (1896–1897) (Rînzîș, 2001; Marin & Ivașcu, 2019). During these years of activity at the highest level in the central administration of the Romanian state, Cantacuzino-Râfoveanu supported the policies stemming from the liberal doctrine: the affirmation of an independent Romanian nation in the economic field, the political and economic consolidation of the country, the development of domestic industry and protectionism, and ensuring the stability of state institutions. Implicitly, the liberal vision implemented by Cantacuzino-Râfoveanu contributed fully to the preservation and perpetuation of the Romanian national identity. In addition to his governmental activity, Cantacuzino-Râfoveanu was director of the liberal newspaper *Voința Națională* [The National Will], which he led until 1895, when the Liberal Party returned to power, which he entered as Minister of Finance (Marin & Ivașcu, 2019).

The monument of George C. Cantacuzino-Râfoveanu was made from funds collected through public subscription and was placed in 1904 at the entrance to the Grădina Icoanei in Bucharest (Figure 5). This work is the labour of the French sculptor Ernest Henri Dubois (Tribuna Magazine, 1904), among the great representatives of French neoclassicism, whose works are appreciated internationally and have been awarded medals at major cultural events around the world. In the rendering of the artistic message of the monument to George Cantacuzino-Râfoveanu, the names of some of the leaders of the Revolution of 1848 from the Romanian Principalities also appeared next to the liberal leader. It is believed that this is why the monument was not destroyed by the communist regime and has been preserved until today. The monument includes the bust of the great liberal politician, placed on a socle made of stone from Vrața (Bulgaria) by the sculptor Gheorghe Boboc (DGAPMFR, 2017). At the base of the socle is the statue of a young woman who holds in her right hand a quill pen and, with her left hand, she supports an open book against the socle, where the word "Fatherland" is written and, below it, appear the names of the Romanian 1848 Revolution leaders: "I. Câmpineanu, the Golescu brothers, C. Negri, A. Panu, C. A. Rosetti, I. C. Brătianu and G. C. Cantacuzino."



Figure 5: Old photo showing the statue of George C. Cantacuzino (dated 1932)

Source: collection of Bucharest Metropolitan Library, 2020

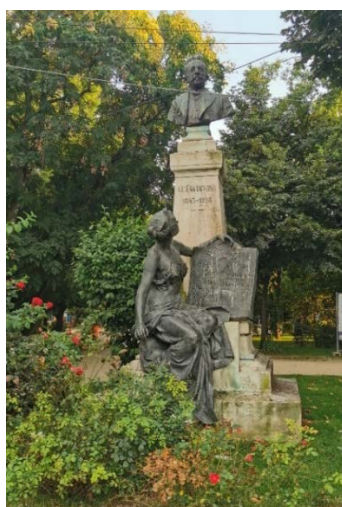


Figure 6: The statue of George C. Cantacuzino today

Source: personal collection of F.-C. Merciu, 2020

The desire to immortalise the personality of the politician George Cantacuzino-Râfoveanu through this monument was realised through a hierarchical visual association. From his bronze bust, of sober nobility, on the stone socle, the eye descends to the fine, supple forms of the young woman, who represents the press, before falling on the names of his generational colleagues which appear in the bronze book, ultimately to dwell the longest on a single word: Fatherland (Figure 6).

Lascăr Catargiu

The project to build the statue dedicated to Lascăr Catargiu, a prominent historical personality and founder of the Conservative Party, was initiated by members of a committee of the Conservative Party, established on September 14, 1899, to determine the details of the monument's realisation (Chitiță, 2013). The inauguration of the statue on October 28, 1907, was marked by a celebration organised by Vintilă Brătianu, the mayor of Bucharest at the time, who decided that the institution he represented would cover the costs of the event (Chitiță, 2013). Initially, the statue was placed in the Roman Square in Bucharest, renamed after the inauguration of the monument Lascăr Catargiu Square (Beldiman, 2005, cited by Chitiță, 2013). The monument, crated by the French sculptor Jean Antonin Mercié, presents the great politician standing "accompanied by two allegories: agricultural Romania, a female character in national costume, holding a sheaf of wheat with her left arm, with her right hand indicating to a child the merits of Lascăr Catargiu, recorded in inscriptions. The peasant points to the data carved on the front face of the socle (Figure 7, left and right). The symbolic elements of the monument are the plough, behind the main character, and a laurel wreath on the socle steps, on the right" (Beldiman, 2005, p. 91, cited by Chitiță, 2013, p. 235) (Figure 7, left).



Figure 7: Postcard in which the statue of Lascăr Catargiu is illustrated (left);
The statue of Lascăr Catargiu today (right)

Source: Stroe, 2015 (left); personal collection of F.-C. Merciu, 2021 (right)

Like other monuments dedicated to political personalities, the statue of Lascăr Catargiu was decommissioned during the communist period (the exact year is not known, with four different

years being mentioned in different sources: 1958, 1960, 1962, 1964) (Chitiță, 2013). The monument was stored without protective measures in the courtyard of the Plastic Fund Complex (Beldiman, 2005, p. 92, cited by Chitiță, 2013, p. 240). Details about the monument's state of conservation during the time – it was stored in the yard of the Plastic Fund Complex – have been provided by the author Ioana Beldiman, who noted that the head of the statue, the child at the base, the bronze plaque with the laurel branch, the socle, and the statue of the woman who allegorically embodied agricultural Romania were detached from the main body of the monument (Chitiță, 2013).

The representation of the outstanding personality of Lascăr Catargiu is reflected through the postcard; he is highlighted in its entirety in the foreground, positioned on the socle on which have been laid wreaths that emphasise a commemorative moment and induce the viewer to appreciate him. At the same time, the postcard is made in the traditional formula of lithographed landscapes and views, and buildings are illustrated in the background (e.g., the house of the renowned scientist Sabba Ștefănescu, professor at the Faculty of Geology of the University of Bucharest), which accentuates the urban context. This postcard is particularly important for highlighting the location of the monument, which was later removed, even more so because it has been placed in another location at present.

The measures for the redevelopment of the monument stored in the courtyard of the Plastic Fund Complex were started through a joint program of the Ministry of Culture and Cults and the Directorate for Culture, Cults, and National Cultural Heritage of the Municipality of Bucharest, together with the Bucharest City Hall and the Administration of Monuments and Tourist Heritage in 2003 (Chitiță, 2013). The construction permit issued by Bucharest City Hall was obtained in 2010 and sought to relocate the monument dedicated to Lascăr Catargiu on the boulevard of the same name, in the place where the boulevard intersects with Povernei Street and the bus station of the same name is located (Figure 7, right).

The work was executed by the plastic artist Ioan Bolborea and consisted of the transposition of definitive bronze material, the reassembly of bronze and stone components, and the reassembly of the monumental ensemble of Lascăr Catargiu. The plastic artist also remodelled the missing heads of Lascăr Catargiu and the bronze child. The stone socle and the actual location were also made (Chitiță, 2013, p. 242).

Vasile Lascăr

The statue of Vasile Lascăr represents the politician standing, in life size, located on a high stone socle; it is the work of the Romanian sculptor Gheorghe Horvath and was cast in bronze (Figure 8, left, right). It was placed on the street named after the politician, at the intersection with Thomas Masaryk Street, directly in front of the house where Vasile Lascăr lived. The monument was inaugurated in 1908 (Caloianu & Filip, 2009). It is included in the List of Historical Monuments in the City of Bucharest (Ministry of Culture, 2015).

In front of the monument is a young woman who appears to be writing the following inscription: "I want to make the administration a second magistracy." This inscription refers to the particularly important contribution of Vasile Lascăr in the modernisation process of the Romanian police.



Figure 8: Photo of the statue of Vasile Lascăr after the inauguration (left);
Image of the statue of Vasile Lascăr today (right)

Source: Șinca, 2019 (left); personal collection of F.-C. Merciu, 2021 (right)

Vasile Lascăr is from a noble family of French origin; his father was Emanoil Lascăr, an important boyar from Gorj (established in Târgu Jiu in 1842), who occupied the position of president of the Law Court (Theodorian-Carada, 1914, p. 7). He was “serdar”, which is a military rank, commander of troops, especially of cavalry, that existed in Wallachia and Moldova in the 17th–18th centuries; later, between the 18th and 19th centuries, it was assimilated to the noble rank (third stage) (Bucur, 2011, p. 37). Vasile Lascăr’s educational path included university studies abroad (in 1872 he enrolled at the Faculty of Law in Paris and graduated in Law in 1877; in parallel, he took accounting lessons and attended philosophy courses at the Sorbonne) (Theodorian-Carada, 1914, p. 13). After graduating from the faculty, he returned to Târgu-Jiu, joined the police, and then entered the Bar, ultimately becoming a lawyer of great repute. He was an important member of the Liberal Party and held several important positions over time: in 1878, he was elected to the County Council, and later he was appointed by the government, among the elected councillors, as mayor of the municipality of Târgu-Jiu, where he was also involved in actions to organise markets and cemeteries. In 1884, he moved to Bucharest and was elected a member of the Parliament, holding the position of Minister of Internal Affairs in the government of Petre S. Aurelian (between November 21, 1896–March 26, 1897) and between November 21, 1902, and December 13, 1904 (Theodorian-Carada, 1914, pp. 16–30).

In his political career as Minister of Internal Affairs, Vasile Lascăr carried out activities aimed at reforming the institution of the Romanian Police, as well as proposed a draft law entitled “Law for the organisation of the General State Police,” which was approved on April 1, 1903 (Theodorian-Carada, 1914). This represented the first organic law concerning the Romanian police, which was designed according to modern scientific principles by Vasile Lascăr along the model of similar laws in European developed states, but referred to the realities and needs of Romanian society. He proposed, in the legislative draft, that the selection of police personnel be carried out by correlating the importance of the positions with profile studies to ensure, through

professional training, thorough preparation and the rigorous fulfilment of responsibilities. He also specified the attributes and competences of the police personnel, establishing the principle of the stability of the police bodies and removing them from political struggles. This law also provided for the establishment of a special police school for the training of police personnel. By this law, Vasile Lascăr ensured that the measures of the municipal police no longer interfered with those of the mayor (e.g., sanitation, ensuring the supply of necessities, ensuring public transport, and guarding against fires and epidemics). Vasile Lascăr was also concerned with improving electoral law, as well as with the reorganisation of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Șinca, 2006). As a sign of appreciation, the School of Police Agents in Câmpina has borne his name since 1993.

King Carol/Charles I

Carol I of Romania, Prince of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, ruler and then king of the modern Romanian state, was one of the greatest personalities in Romanian history. The equestrian statue of King Carol I was made after the organisation, in 1936 in Bucharest, of a competition won by the sculptor Oscar Han. The order was finally awarded for execution to the Croatian sculptor Ivan Meštrović, highly appreciated for the exceptional quality of his works (Urban Resistance, 2008; Panaitescu, 2018). The imposing statue of King Carol I was inaugurated on May 10, 1939, considered at that time the National Day of Romania, when it was proclaimed Kingdom, in the presence of King Carol II of Romania and Grand Voivode Mihai (the future king of Romania). The date marked the 100th anniversary of the birth of Carol I (Urban Resistance, 2008). The statue was placed in Palace Square (currently called Revolution Square), facing the Royal Palace (Figure 9, left and right), thus strengthening the symbolism of monarchical power in Romania. The statue, mounted on a socle, represents the sovereign on a galloping horse—an ideational claim in a physical, dynamic plane of the innovative historical processes that unfolded throughout his reign. The statue was inaugurated with great pomp and appears in the photos taken when it was mounted on the socle.

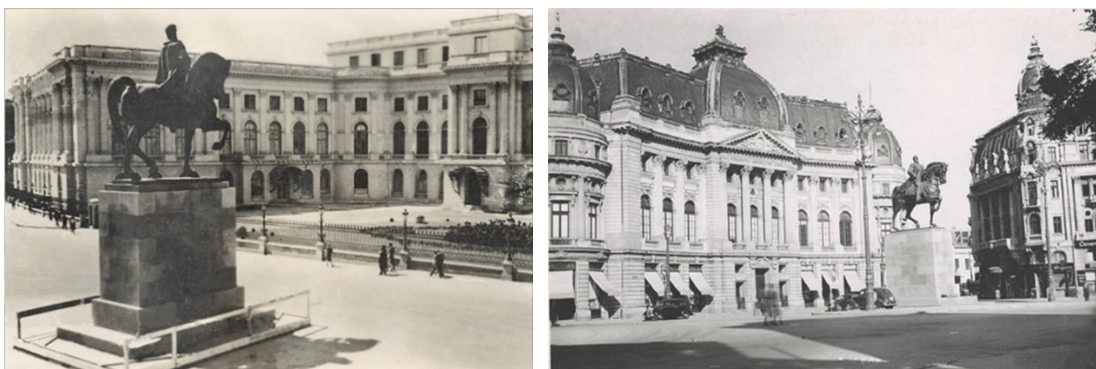


Figure 9: Statue of King Carol/Charles I in Palace Square, facing the Royal Palace (left), front profile (right)

Source: Stroe, 2015

The location of the statue in Palace Square also reflects, as previously mentioned, the symbolism of the monarchical power in Romania, and the statue of Carol I is oriented toward the new Royal Palace, which was built in 1937 on the location of the residence of the ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza,

due to the need to reconfigure the residence of the Romanian monarch (Ipate, 2006), characterised by monumentality, both in terms of size and architectural value. Palace Square was configured as “a large public square”, according to the development project carried out by architect Nicolae Nenciulescu, to correspond to the new urban changes marked by the construction of buildings of architectural value, which contributed to the modernisation of the capital city, including the Royal Palace and the University Foundation Carol I (Nenciulescu, 1942). The Royal Palace, due to its size, attracts and directs the eye to the square (Nenciulescu, 1942) dominated by the equestrian statue of Carol I. The arrangement of Palace Square was aimed at reducing the impression that the wings of the Royal Palace are out of alignment. The location of the Carol I University Foundation, located at a distance from the square, provides a complete and well-framed view of the Palace and limits the square itself, which would otherwise have been a wide street that would not offer a perspective on the Palace (Nenciulescu, 1942).

The architect Nenciulescu’s vision was to build a monumental square, a characteristic highlighted by its unitary and simple construction that would tend, through these characteristics, toward perpetuity, like the Palace (Nenciulescu, 1942). The equestrian statue of Carol in Palace Square reinforces the character of perpetuity. In the photos taken during that period, architectural monuments symbolic of the Royalty period are represented next to the statue, including the Palace (Figure 9, left) and the Carol I Central University Library (Figure 9, right), which highlight the location of the statue, as well as the way the Romanian nation was reflected by reporting the modern image of the capital city from the first part of the 20th century, which was an image that was built under the coordination of Carol I. The construction of a suitable residence for the first monarch of Romania (and even the summer palace, Peleş, in the town of Sinaia, characterised by a special architectural value), along with the erection of a public monument to commemorate important memories from the history of Romania and the central role of Carol I around them, are elements through which the monarch made his presence known through space and spectacle (Bucur, 2009, p. 26).

King Carol I had the longest reign in the history of the Romanian states (48 years: 1866–1914), during which Romania developed extensively in all fields (Bărbulescu et al., 2002; Scurtu, 2004; Bucur, 2009). The entire period of his reign was characterised by a remarkable political stability; Carol I, leading with measure and modesty, managed to smooth out the internal disputes among political groups – the battle of pride and petty interests (Scurtu, 2004) –, although in the first five years no less than 13 governments, either moderate liberal, or moderately conservative were changed by the monarch (Georgescu, 1989, p. 183). A second stabilising element was the organisation of the ruling class in two political parties (liberal and conservative) that alternated in government (Georgescu, 1989).

At the same time, to build an image of unity and legitimacy against the background of the numerous fractures and tensions in Romanian society and on the political scene at that time, Carol I adopted celebrations and commemorations through public monuments to connect glorious moments from the past with the establishment of the modern Romanian state. These actions were not a concerted commemoration campaign dedicated exclusively to the king and the central government (Bucur, 2009). In general, Carol I was not characterised by the autocratic tendency and proved his self-discipline, although he had an inclination for military pomp. His construction projects thus stand out in their combination of the desire to show power with the conscious need for functional justification, best exemplified by the Cernavodă Bridge, also known as the Carol I/Saligny Bridge (Bucur, 2009, p. 27). This monumental project embodies the idea of King Carol I to commemorate the War of Independence: through its location on the border between Wallachia and Dobrogea, it symbolically suggests the territory recovered by

Romania in the War of Independence (Bucur, 2009, p. 29). Throughout his reign, 56 public monuments were erected, most of them at the initiative of urban planners or local enthusiasts, and only about twenty were related to the events that took place when Carol I ruled the country (Bucur, 2009, p. 26). In Bucharest, during that period, public monuments dedicated to other leaders (e.g., Mihai Viteazul/Michael the Great) or cultural personalities (e.g., the writer and philologist Ion Heliade Rădulescu) were erected. The monument dedicated to Mihai Viteazul, made by the sculptor Carrier Belleuse in 1876 (Panaiteescu, 2018), represented a nationalist ideal of the legitimacy of the nation's rule over all the territories in which ethnic Romanians lived (Bucur, 2009, p. 26).

The reign of Carol I includes some of the greatest achievements of the nation as a result of the continuation of the reforms of ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza, which led to the modernisation and development of the Romanian society, as well as to the appearance of modern classical Romanian culture, integrated in the European and international context. Prince Carol I was in charge of the Romanian Army and took part in the Russo-Romanian-Turkish war between 1877 and 1878, which led to Romania's state independence and the union of Dobrudja with Romania in 1878. Shortly after, in 1881, the Kingdom of Romania was proclaimed (Bărbulescu et al., 2002).

After the establishment of the communist regime, the bronze statue of King Carol I was taken down with the help of tanks, on the night of December 30/31, 1947 (Urban Resistance, 2008; Buiumaci, 2014; Panaiteescu, 2018; Project Commemorative Monuments 1918–2018a). In 2007, the local authorities in Bucharest initiated a project to rebuild the statue. This initiative was launched when celebrating the 140th anniversary of the King's accession to the Romanian throne and the 125th anniversary of the proclamation of the Kingdom of Romania in 2006. The Presidency of Romania declared 2006 the "Year of Carol" to indicate the nation's gratitude for this complex political personality from modern Romania (Historia, 2010). The initial plan was to restore the statue according to the original plans of the sculptor Ivan Meštrović. In the end, the execution of the monument was assigned to the sculptor Florin Codre, whose mission was to create a representation close to Meštrović's, which could not be used because the copyright was very expensive (Urban Resistance, 2008) (Figure 10).



Figure 10: The reconstructed statue of King Carol I in Revolution Square on the old site, facing the former Royal Palace

Source: personal collection of F.-C. Merciu, 2021

Although the artistic realisation of the new equestrian statue has been criticised, with arguments being invoked that mainly refer to the fact that the representation of King Carol I as an emblematic military figure was not properly captured, the new statue represents a welcome and necessary historical repair (Panaiteanu, 2018). The symbolic value of the new commemorative monument communicates, on the one hand, through the figure of King Carol I, the idea of the fight for the territorial integrity of Romania and the obtaining of the country's independence, which took place during his reign. On the other hand, the monument emphasises the continuity of the fight for freedom that led to the end of the communist regime, because the statue occupies the old location, the former Palace Square and present-day Revolution Square (renamed after the 1989 Romanian Revolution). Thus, new symbols are being associated with Revolution Square in Bucharest from the perspective of national identity. The struggle for the freedom of the Romanian people thus became the leitmotif of historical events, such as the great popular demonstration of support for King Michael I in 1945 or the Romanian Revolution in 1989. The new equestrian statue of King Carol I was inaugurated in 2010 (Commemorative Monuments Project 1918–2018a). The initiative to rebuild the statue and to place it in the old location had strong political support, which was directly highlighted by the inscription of a text on the back of the statue's socle referring to the two mayors of the capital who were involved in the implementation of this project.

The representation of the statue of Carol I in modern postcards are relatively limited, but two perspectives can be identified: the representation of the statue in the secondary plan, the main element highlighted being the Palace of the Central University Library Carol I (Figure 11). The latter is represented in collage postcards alongside other representative buildings for the cultural and touristic image of Bucharest. In this case, the postcards represent a means of tourism promotion.



Figure 11: Collage-type postcard edited in the current period, in which the reconstructed statue of King Carol I is represented in the Revolution Square in the background, next to other monuments (first line, from top to bottom): The Palace of the Parliament, The Romanian Atheneum, The Royal Palace; (second line, from top to bottom): The Patriarchal Cathedral, The Central University Library, Union Square wells during the show; (third line, from top to bottom): The National Theatre and Intercontinental Hotel, The Palace of the Parliament at night, The Arch of Triumph (Foto: Adina Munteanu)

Source: personal collection of F.-C. Merciu, 2021

The second perspective is related to the representation of the equestrian statue of Carol I as a central element, although it appears next to the Central University Library Carol I (Figure 12). On these postcards, the statue is represented in the foreground, which is also emphasised through the details on the back of the postcard regarding the names of the monuments represented, with the statue being explicitly mentioned. This form of representation of the statue of Carol I as a central element is related to the political evolution since 1990, an evolution marked by the transition from communism to democracy, which assumed from the perspective of the official discourse, a promotion of the ideas of national identity that refers to the period when Romania was a kingdom. The representation of the statue of Carol I is thus a symbol that marks his role through the elaborate reforms that contributed to the economic and cultural development of Romania in that period.



Figure 12: Collage type postcard edited in the current period in which the reconstructed statue of King Carol I in the Revolution Square is represented in the foreground next to other monuments (first line, from left to right): The Arch of Triumph, Victory Avenue, The Romanian Athenaeum; (second line, from left to right): The National Theatre and Intercontinental Hotel, The Palace of the Parliament, “Colțea” Hospital; (third line, from left to right): “Baratie” church, “Stavropoleos” Monastery, Statue of King Carol I

Source: personal collection of F.-C. Merciu, 2021

As previously highlighted, Revolution Square, where the statue is located, represents a public space in the capital city where a series of important events took place that marked the fall of communism. The importance of these events was also symbolically marked by the construction of memorial monuments in memory of the victims of the 1989 Revolution (Renaissance Memorial—Eternal Glory to the Romanian Heroes and Revolution of December 1989) or of historical figures such as Iuliu Maniu and Corneliu Coposu, who represented some of the main opponents of the communist regime in the second part of the 20th century.

Mihail Kogălniceanu

The statue dedicated to Mihail Kogălniceanu depicts him standing, in the position of an orator, with his right hand resting on his hip and his left leg slightly pushed forward (Figures 13, left and right). The monument is three meters high and was executed in bronze in 1936 by the sculptor Oscar Han. It was placed in Mihail Kogălniceanu Square in 1937 (Commemorative monuments project, 2018). Starting in 1898, the liberals asked the Capital City Hall to install statues dedicated to the personalities of the National Liberal Party on the East–West axis of Bucharest, to create squares around that axis. The statue of Mihail Kogălniceanu is the final component of this project (Commemorative monuments project, 2018b). It was mounted on a socle in the form of a pyramid trunk with three steps (Caloianu & Filip, 2009) (Figure 13, left). The representation of the politician, historian, and writer Mihail Kogălniceanu reflects his importance in the politics and culture of Romania in the modern period: the stone socle, six meters high, glorifies his outstanding personality.

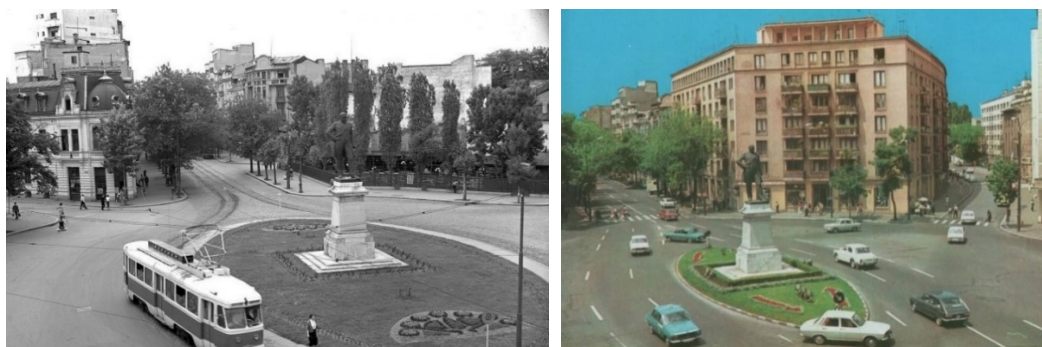


Figure 13: Photo showing the statue of Mihail Kogălniceanu (dated 1956) (left); Postcard published during the communist period, in which the monument dedicated to Mihail Kogălniceanu is represented (right)

Source: AGERPRESS, 2018 (left); personal collection of C. Merciu, 2019 (right)

The statue dedicated to Mihail Kogălniceanu was the only one dedicated to an exponent of the National Liberal Party that was not demolished during the communist period. It was also promoted on postcards published during the socialist period (Figure 13, right).

Mihail Kogălniceanu (1817–1891) is one of the greatest political and cultural personalities in Romania. He campaigned for the union of the Romanian principalities and made a huge contribution to the creation of the modern Romanian state through his extensive activities carried out both within the country and abroad (Dragnea, 1926). His main characteristics—a reflective and realistic spirit, active and bold temperament—outlined his complex personality as historian, diplomat, politician, writer, and publicist. He was also a founding member and then President of the Romanian Academy (Dragnea, 1926). As a historian, he was a forerunner of Romanian historiography (his greatest innovation being the introduction of the people among the factors that write history, proving a democratic political conception, along with the introduction of the study of institutions and the introduction of popular culture in the treatment of history. He was strongly influenced by currents of thought (Positivism, Romanticism) from his studies in Berlin (Dragnea, 1926). Mihail Kogălniceanu was also interested in writing the history of the Romanian Principalities based on the discovery, interpretation, and publication of documentary sources; as he himself stated: “my only goal, my only thought, my only ambition

was to give an abbreviation of my country's history" (Letters, p. 69, quoted by Dragnea, 1926, p. 36). This achievement was done at the age of 20 when he printed, in Berlin on September 6/18, 1837, the first part of the History of the Romanians (which includes the foundation of the principalities and the history of the Romanian Land until the Peace of 1792) (Dragnea, 1926, pp. 36–37). His motivation to publish the two volumes about the Romanian Principalities (the second one was on the history of Moldova) was justified by the desire to make known the Romanian Countries in Europe, where "their geographical location is barely known" (Dragnea, 1926, p. 38). Mihail Kogălniceanu studied in Moldova, in Iași, and then in France and Prussia, at the College of Lunéville and at the University of Berlin, respectively. He was part of the group of Romanian revolutionaries formed by Nicolae Bălcescu, Ion Ghica, and C. A. Rosetti (Dragnea, 1926).

Back in Moldova, he carried out intense publishing activity by founding and contributing to magazines with a cultural-scientific role, such as *Arhiva românească* [The Romanian Archive], *Dacia literară* [Literary Dacia], *Proșșirea* [Progress], and *Steaua Dunării* [Star of the Danube] (Dragnea, 1926, pp. 39–41, 67–78). In the pages of these publications, as well as in his speech at the Mihăileană Academy in Iași, he supported ideas about national history in the context of the sudden entry of the Romanian Principalities into the sphere of European influence. This was a historical moment in which the national consciousness was not consolidated from a social and cultural point of view, and this aspect was highlighted by Kogălniceanu using historiography as a political weapon in Romania's external relations and to consolidate nationalism in the Romanian society through journalism and, later, through political discourse (Dragnea, 1926, pp. 39–41). In 1855, he dedicated himself to important political achievements for the creation of modern Romania, a fact for which he needed to sacrifice his ambitions as a historian and writer (Dragnea, 1926, p. 56).

Mihail Kogălniceanu was one of the leaders of the Revolution of 1848 in Moldova and was the synthesiser of the Romanian 1848 Revolution demands and ideals. He drafted, in Cernăuți, "The Desires of the National Party of Moldova" — an exposition of the programmatic requirements for political and social reform in the Romanian Principalities during the Revolution of 1848, which was characterised by a strong democratic emphasis, as well as a "Constitution Project for Moldova" (Dragnea, 1926, p. 48, pp. 173–185). He was one of the most active leaders of the Unionist Movement and a member of the Central Committee of the Union. He was present in the ad hoc Assembly of Moldavia in 1857, which asked the Great Powers for unification with Romania, and then in the Assembly of Moldavia that elected Alexandru Ioan Cuza on January 5, 1859. After the Union of the Romanian Principalities by the double election of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, he led the liberal government between October 1863 and January 1865 (Georgescu, 1989).

During this period, Mihail Kogălniceanu also held the position of Minister of Internal Affairs and coordinated the application of radical reforms during the reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza. These reforms contributed to the development of the modern Romanian state and included the secularisation of monastic assets, the electoral reform, the agrarian reform, the creation of public education, and the organisation of the Romanian Army (Dragnea, 1926; Georgescu, 1989). He remained one of the great Romanian statesmen even after Cuza's abdication and was recognised in the government as a good administrator of internal affairs, but above all as a refined diplomat. He was Romania's Foreign Minister during the War of Independence (1877–1878) and then the Berlin Congress (1878), and he contributed alongside Ioan C. Brătianu to the international recognition of Romania's independence as a state (Georgescu, 1989).

Ion I. C. Brătianu

Ion I. C. Brătianu, the eldest son of Ion C. Brătianu, is another significant historical figure of Romania, a member of the National Liberal Party, having been elected president of the party since January 1909, a position he will hold until the end of his life (Buiumaci, 2014). Ion I. C. Brătianu forms a government in 1914 that will remain in power throughout the First World War. After two years of neutrality, but in which Brătianu pursued a sustained foreign policy, receiving guarantees from the Entente that Romania would receive Transylvania, Bucovina and Banat, he signed the Treaty of Alliance with the Entente on August 4, 1916, so that ten days later Romania declared war on Austria-Hungary (Nicolescu, 2003, cited by Buiumaci, 2014, p. 146). He is known as the longest-serving prime minister during the period 1922-1927 (Buiumaci, 2014). At the same time, Ion I. C. Brătianu took care of the coronation of King Ferdinand and Queen Maria, in Alba Iulia, in the fall of 1922. The biggest challenge of the government led by Ion I. C. Brătianu was the adoption of the Constitution of 1923 (in fact a revision of the one of 1866) adapted to the new territorial configuration of the country, intended to be the legal basis of greater Romania (Buiumaci, 2014).

His wife, Eliza Brătianu, addressed to Alexandru I. Lapedatu, Minister of Cults and Arts, the proposal to dedicate a commemorative monument to Ion I. C. Brătianu. The monument was erected ten years after his death. The monument was built by the renowned sculptor Ivan Meštrović, in the garden of the residence of Ion I. C. Brătianu, with an opening in the projected extension of Dacia Boulevard (Buiumaci, 2014) (Figure 14, left).



Figure 14: Photo taken after the inauguration of the statue dedicated to Ion I. C. Brătianu, located on Dacia Boulevard (left); The statue of Ion I. C. Brătianu today, placed in the original location (right)

Source: Buiumaci, 2014 (left); personal collection of F.-C. Merciu, 2021 (right)

The monument was made of a dark grey granite monolith and was placed on a reinforced concrete socle coated with black marble. For the construction of the monument, a fund-raising campaign was carried out, which was provided by various individuals and institutions (city halls in the country, the National Savings and Postal Checks House). The inauguration of the statue of Ion I. C. Brătianu was carried out during a celebration on November 28, 1938, to which the presidents of the branches of the National Liberal Party, as well as the members of the order of Ferdinand I, were invited, along with members of the Government and representatives of various public institutions. Alexandru Lapedatu sent the invitation to participate in the festivity to all the prefects “to represent, symbolically, the whole country, i.e., all the communes (urban

and rural) in the whole Romania by one of their representatives” (Buiumaci, 2014, p. 154), mention that refers to Ion I. C. Brătianu’s political result of reuniting the Greater Romania.

During the communist period, the statue dedicated to Ion I.C. Brătianu could not be destroyed because it was carved in granite. But it was initially stored in Mogoșoaia, later being moved to the Golești mansion in Argeș County, from where, at the initiative of Mrs. Ioana Brătianu, it was brought back and re-placed in 1991 on the original place on Dacia Boulevard (Buiumaci, 2014), in the park that was renamed after 1990 with the name of the great politician (Figure 14, right). Although the monument is slightly damaged, the traces being visible even today (Panaiteescu, 2018) (part of the lapel of the coat is broken), it reproduces, through the manner of construction, the importance of the great politician Ion I. C. Brătianu, who is represented in his pose as a reformer meditating on the future of the country. The statue is classified as a historical monument (List of Historical Monuments of the Municipality of Bucharest, 2015).

King Ferdinand

Two locations were proposed for the construction of the equestrian statue of King Ferdinand: one in the southern part of Victory Square, on the place between Kiseleff Road and Aviators Boulevard (at that time called Jianu Road) and the second one in the northern part of the square, facing Victory Avenue (Teodorescu, 2008; Le Meteque, 2016; Panaiteescu, 2018). The Croatian sculptor Ivan Meštrović was assigned the task of creating the statue, and he found that the place in Victory Square was too small for the grandiose monument, so he decided on the location, in 1940, on the western side of the first round of the Kiseleff Highway (Teodorescu, 2008; Panaiteescu, 2018). Establishing the location of the monument dedicated to King Ferdinand assumed the removal of two monuments located nearby (The Heroes of Teaching Staff and the Infantry Heroes) (Panaiteescu, 2018), both with a national evocative character (Teodorescu, 2008). Although the relocation of the two monuments was proposed, this approach was not taken (Teodorescu, 2008; Bădescu, 2013; Panaiteescu, 2018). Although the sculptor Meštrović modelled the component parts of the monument in Split (Croatia), he sent the 1/1 scale casts to Romania to be finalised by the Romanian moulder, Vasile Rășcanu, renowned for his passion and professional competence (Teodorescu, 2008, p. 220) (Figure 15, left).



Figure 15: The statue during the finishing process in Vasile Rășcanu’s foundry (1930-1940) (left); The statue of Ferdinand erected on the site (March 1940) (right)

Source: Le Meteque, 2016

Based on the analysis of the limited number of photos of the statuary ensemble that have been preserved, the large size of the central monument can be noted (Figure 15, left, right). The equestrian statue was eight meters tall (Le Meteque, 2016; Panaitescu, 2018) and was mounted on a high socle, which contributed to shaping the monumentality of the statue, while also being a way to reflect the importance of the historical figure represented.

The aesthetic value of the equestrian statue of King Ferdinand was conferred by the circular portico that surrounded it with granite pillars and preceded by four columns on which other monuments would be built, each symbolising a “winged victory” in the form of female figures (Figures 16, 17). The sculptor Ivan Meštrović also made the four sculptures representing the “winged” women (Teodorescu, 2008).



Figure 16: Details of the monumental ensemble (1940): the four Victories (“winged” women) cast in bronze

Source: Le Meteque, 2016



Figure 17: Photograph of the statuary complex represented from the front (1942)

Source: Le Meteque, 2016

The statuary ensemble was built to celebrate the achievement of the Great Union under the leadership of King Ferdinand. The architectural conception of the monument thus included the central composition, the equestrian statue of the unifying king and the four allegorical female figures flanking it to symbolise Wallachia, Moldova, the former Habsburg possessions (Bucovina, Transylvania, Maramureş, Crişana, and Banat), and Bessarabia (Teodorescu, 1939, cited by Bădescu, 2013). The inauguration of the monumental ensemble took place on May 10, 1940, in the presence of King Carol II, the Grand Voivode of Alba Iulia – Mihai, and government representatives, together with the sculptor Ivan Meštrović and an impressive number of Bucharest residents (Teodorescu, 2008; Bădescu, 2013).

Information about the fate of the equestrian statue dedicated to King Ferdinand is limited. Several studies (Teodorescu, 2008; Le Meteque, 2016; Panaitescu, 2018) have stated that the ensemble was dismantled in 1948 by the decision of the representatives of the Romanian Communist Party as part of a broader course of action to remove all the symbols that referred to important events in the national history, the realisation of which was also possible through the contribution of the monarchs of Romania. Like other “incriminated” statues, the monument dedicated to King Ferdinand was melted down (Teodorescu, 2008). In Order 2,493/1948 of the Ministry of Arts and Information, the situation of the existing public monuments with possible monarchical insignia in each locality was reported so that they would later be removed (Teodorescu, 2008, p. 213).

Since 2012, the idea of erecting a new public monument commemorating King Ferdinand in Victory Square has been proposed, but the tortuous course of the necessary approvals for the location as a result of the divergent opinions of specialists in the absence of a coherent plan for the urban planning of the area (Panaitescu, 2018), in addition to the high level of bureaucracy and financial limitations, prevented the construction of the project in 2018, when the Centenary of the Great Union was celebrated. Although the project to build the new statue dedicated to King Ferdinand was assigned to the sculptor Florin Codre (Panaitescu, 2018), the project has not been realised to date.

Ferdinand I, Victor Albert Meinrad de Hohenzollern (August 12/14, 1865, Sigmaringen, Germany–July 20, 1927, Sinaia, Prahova County, buried at Curtea de Argeş) was the grandson of King Carol I (Teodorescu, 2008, p. 213). From 1883, King Carol I sent professor Vasile Păun to teach him the Romanian language, as well as lessons in literature, geography, and Romanian history (Târziu, 2018, p. 253). After finishing high school in Düsseldorf, he became a student at the Military School in Kassel, graduating in 1897 with the rank of sub-lieutenant. He continued his studies at the University of Leipzig and the Higher School of Political and Economic Sciences in Tübingen (Târziu, 2018). In 1889, he was declared heir to the throne and was integrated into the Romanian army with the rank of captain in the following decade. He advanced gradually, in 1895 reaching the rank of colonel, receiving the command of the 4th Roşiori Regiment, and in 1898 promoted to brigadier general. Ferdinand became King of Romania on September 28/October 10, 1914 (Teodorescu, 2008, pp. 213–214).

An essential problem that Ferdinand had to manage was Romania’s attitude toward the new major conflict taking place in Europe. Ferdinand tried to obtain a period of neutrality for as long as possible in consultation with his politicians (Târziu, 2018). Later, on August 14/27, he declared war on the Central Powers and participated in military campaigns; he remained an example of dignity and full dedication in accordance with the oath taken when ascending the throne of Romania (Teodorescu, 2008). At the end of the First World War, Romania completed the process of creating a unitary national state by uniting Bessarabia, Bucovina, and Transylvania with the Old Kingdom. Thus, the Great Union took place under the leadership of Ferdinand I “Întregitorul”

[The Unificator] King of Romania—metaphorically speaking, as the term can be understood as “the one who, by adding the last territories to Romania, made the country whole” (Târziu, 2018). On October 15, 1922, in Alba Iulia, Ferdinand I was crowned King of Greater Romania (Teodorescu, 2008; Târziu, 2018). Subsequently, King Ferdinand, through the applied reforms, consolidated the reunited Romanian state and achieved profound transformations in the country, especially through the application of the agrarian reform and universal suffrage. The policy of strengthening the Romanian state at this historical stage was the object of extensive legislation carried out by the government led by Ionel Brătianu (Târziu, 2018).

CONCLUSIONS

The postcards and old images of prominent personalities of Romania from the period of the Principality and Kingdom of Romania (1859–1947) examined in this work reflect a way of representing the historical past, expressing power, and forming national identity. Most of the postcards of monuments dedicated to prominent leaders of political parties who contributed to the unification of the Romanian Principalities and to the modernisation of the country used a portrait type format intended to emphasise the cult of the great political personalities. At the same time, some of the postcards published in the first half of the 20th century highlighted and propagated the dominant discourses on the monument and the urban landscape, the public spaces where they were placed to reflect, through the different monumental buildings located within the squares where the commemorative monuments were erected, the transformations in the capital city during the modern period under the political leaders of that period. Different public spaces in Bucharest were selected for the placement of commemorative monuments dedicated to prominent political leaders, including the former Palace Square, the current Revolution Square, and University Square, which, thanks to the monuments and the various historical events that took place within them, have accumulated ideological significance.

The analysis of the evolution of commemorative monuments under socialism (1945–1989) highlighted significant changes in the official discourse related to the expression of power and the formation of national identity through the destruction of some public monuments to erase historical stages and their representatives (especially Royalty) from the public’s memory, as well as to promote different political leaders of the totalitarian regime.

At present, the initiative started by Bucharest City Hall to rebuild and place in the original locations the monuments dedicated to the most important political leaders from the period of the Principality and the Kingdom of Romania, which were demolished during the socialist period, is yet again rewriting the national history to bring these significant historical figures to the attention of the public, especially on the occasions commemorating particularly important historical events, such as the Centenary of the Great Union celebrated in 2018.

The postcards discussed here are a methodological tool through which I analysed the official discourse about the Romanian national identity and historical events. Based on the analysis of the postcards and commemorative monuments visually situated in the public space of Bucharest, I identified narratives associated with the national identity through the selection of symbolic political personalities as representative of the period of the Principality and the Kingdom of Romania. These figures were selected based on the national values for which they campaigned and to the execution of which they contributed. At the same time, the analysis of the postcards enhances our understanding of the evolution of the visual representations

dedicated to symbolic political personalities of the Principality and the Kingdom of Romania under communism and at present, as well as it decodes the messages related to the national identity transmitted to the general public.

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