

Alexandru Odobescu - a pioneer of Romanian culture: from erudition to theoretical frameworks¹

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Abstract: This article investigates the intellectual trajectory of Alexandru Odobescu, emphasizing his pivotal role in transitioning Romanian scholarship from classical erudition to the establishment of rigorous theoretical frameworks. While his predecessors often approached the past through an encyclopedic but fragmented lens, Odobescu introduced systematic methodologies that laid the groundwork for archaeology and art history as autonomous academic disciplines. By analyzing his seminal works, such as “Le Trésor de Pétrossa” and his university lectures, this study demonstrates how Odobescu integrated Western European scientific standards into the Romanian cultural space. The research highlights that his contribution exceeds mere historical inquiry; it represents a foundational shift toward a modern, theoretical understanding of national heritage and cultural identity.

Keywords: Alexandru Odobescu, theoretical frameworks, scientific methodology, Romanian archaeology, intellectual history, cultural modernization.

Alexandru Odobescu², one of the most prominent figures of Romanian culture in the latter half of the 19th century, was born in Bucharest on June 23, 1834. He was the son of Colonel Ioan Odobescu (1793–1857)³ and Catinca Caracaș (1811–

¹ This study is the English version of an excerpt from „Răspunsurile la Chestionarul Odobescu pentru județul Gorj. Studiu introductiv”, a chapter published in C.-L. Rădoescu, N.-V. Chepeneag, C.-C. Rădoescu (eds.), *Documente privind istoria Gorjului. Răspunsurile la Chestionarul Odobescu pentru județul Gorj*, Editura Cetatea de Scaun, Târgoviște, 2025.

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² D. Păcurariu, *A. I. Odobescu*, Editura Tineretului, București, 1966; *Alexandru Odobescu, pașoptist și umanist*, in A. I. Odobescu, *Scrieri alese*, vol. I, introductory study by T. Vianu, critical edition by G. Pienescu, Editura Albatros, București, 1970, pp. 5-96; G. Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent*, second edition, revised and enlarged, edited and with a preface by Al. Piru, Editura Minerva, București, 1985, pp. 343-358; E. Simion, *Alexandru Odobescu. Un romantic erudit și anxios, iubitor de reverii clasicizante*, Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române, București, 2015.

³ Regarding his paternal ancestry, further details can be found in Scarlat Struțeanu, *Prefață*, in A. I. Odobescu, *Opere literare*, critical edition with introduction, notes, and variants by Sc. Struțeanu, Fundația pentru Literatură și Artă «Regele Carol II», București, 1938, pp. 5-7, note nr. 1. Regarding the military career and the „reactionary” stance of Colonel Odobescu in relation to the Revolutionary events of 1848 in Wallachia, see Gh. Bibescu, *Domnia lui Bibescu. Legi și decrete 1843-1848. Răsvrătirea din 1848: istoria și legenda*, Tomul al II-lea, Bucuresci, Tipografia Curții Regale F. Göbl Fii, 1894, p. 362 ff.; Dinu R. Rosetti, *Dicționarul contimporanilor*, Ediția I-a, Editura Lito-Tipografiei «Populara», București, 1897, p. 142; Ioan G. Bibicescu, *1848 în România*, Institutul de Arte Grafice Carol Göbl, Bucuresci, 1898, p. 79 ff.; T. Vianu, in A. I. Odobescu, *op. cit.*, p. 6 ff.; *Jurnalul lui Colțuon*, in *Călători străini despre țările române în secolul al XIX-lea*, serie nouă, vol. V (1847-1851), D. Bușă (coord.), Editura Academiei, București, 2009, p. 183 ff.

1856)⁴, a descendant of an illustrious family of physicians originating from Satiște, near Kozani, Macedonia. In 1782, the family crossed the Danube and settled permanently in Wallachia, initially in Craiova and, two years later, in Bucharest⁵.

His innate inclination toward the study of classical languages and the arts, inherited through the maternal line, combined with the scientific rigor he applied to historical and archaeological inquiry, a reflection of the perfectionism instilled by his father, allowed the young Odobescu to acquire a multifaceted culture. The breadth and specificity of his scholarship are distinct even when measured against the cultural and political desiderata of his era. This scholarly-erudite model, unique in its conceptual framework, positions Odobescu at the crossroads „between the pre-modern erudition of Dimitrie Cantemir and Constantin Cantacuzino and the universalism of Nicolae Iorga and Mircea Eliade”⁶.

Benefiting from a distinguished social standing and a refined education, Odobescu received rigorous mentorship at Saint Sava College under the guidance of professors Petrache Poenaru and August Treboniu Laurian. These mentors cultivated his affinity for archaeology⁷ and encouraged the expansion of his intellectual horizons - a pursuit later evidenced by his meticulous development of extensive scientific and cultural projects aimed at aligning national values with European modernity. Following his studies at “Sfântul Sava” College (1844–1846), Odobescu attended the Monty French College in Bucharest between 1847 and 1848, before being sent to Paris in November 1850 to complete his academic training.

In the French capital, he established contact with political exiles such as Cezar Bolliac, Vasile Alecsandri, Alecu Russo, Nicolae Bălcescu, and Gheorghe Magheru, who introduced him to the revolutionary ideals of the era. During this period, he frequented libraries and museums, joined the “Society of Romanian Students”, and garnered the attention of prominent figures in the scientific community, including Alfred Dumesnil and Edgar Quinet. His profound interest in classical antiquity and archaeology facilitated his entry into elite literary circles. On February 14, 1851, alongside fellow Romanian students in Paris, he co-founded *Junimea Românească*; within this revolutionary youth circle, he delivered his celebrated lecture, *Viitorul artelor în România*, on March 17, 1851. This landmark discourse would later consolidate his legacy as “the father of scientific archaeology and the founder of art history studies within Romanian culture”⁸.

⁴ Regarding Alexandru Odobescu’s maternal ancestry, see Al. Jordan, *Strămoșii dinspre mamă ai lui Alexandru Odobescu*, in *Viața Românească*, 32 (2), 1940, pp. 41-52.

⁵ G. I. Ionescu-Gion, *Portrete istorice*, Editura Librăriei H. Steinberg, București, 1894, pp. 29-45.

⁶ S. Iosipescu, *Un întemeietor - Alexandru I. Odobescu (1834-1895)*, in *Revista Monumentelor Istorice*, Anul LXI, 1992, nr. 2, p. 66.

⁷ A. I. Odobescu, *Petrache Poenaru. Cuventare asupra vieței și activității sale, rostită la 22 octombrie 1889 de D. Prof. A. I. Odobescu cu ocaziunea aniversarei a XXV-a de la fundarea Universității din București*, Tipografia Carol Göbl, București, 1889, pp. 6;17.

⁸ D. Tudor, in Al. I. Odobescu, *Istoria arheologiei. Studiu introductiv la această știință. Prelegeri susținute la Facultatea de Litere din București, I. Antichitatea. Renașterea*, edited, with an introductory study, notes, glossary, index, and illustrations by Dumitru Tudor, Editura Științifică,

The brief journey to London undertaken with his father in early August 1852 provided the eighteen-year-old youth with the opportunity to observe the distinctive nature of English society, particularly the persistence of feudal customs into the modern era. Moreover, it afforded him the privilege of admiring the Parthenon remains within the British Museum collections and attempting a daring comparison between the English Gothic style, as observed at Westminster Abbey, and that of the cathedrals throughout continental Europe⁹.

At the end of 1853, his Parisian studies culminated in the attainment of a Bachelor of Arts. Odobescu sat his terminal examination before a commission presided over by the renowned Saint-Marc Girardin, a professor at the Sorbonne and contributor to the *Journal des Débats politiques et littéraires*, who was also a keen observer of the political, economic, and social landscape of the Danubian Principalities¹⁰.

His intellectual formation, rooted in philology, was further complemented by the courses in archaeology and history he attended at the Faculty of Letters in Paris. There, he had the opportunity to attend Émile Egger's lectures on Greek literature and Henri Patin's discourses on Latin poetry; furthermore, he remained well-informed regarding the activities of the National Commission for Historical Monuments and honed his skills as a gifted translator of ancient classical texts. Although his scope of inquiry encompassed a broad thematic spectrum - ranging from Greco-Roman antiquity to modernity - and his erudition revealed a "visionary scholar defined by culture, a luminous and temperate humanist who recorded the splendors of art and reality"¹¹ with grace and detachment, Odobescu withdrew from his licentiate examination and decided to return to his home country in 1854.

One year later, he commenced his administrative career, initially serving as chief clerk at the Department of Foreign Affairs, and in 1857, he was appointed head of the French bureau within the Secretariat of State. Throughout this period, Odobescu undertook several research expeditions across the country. The first, in 1856, allowed him to gather data regarding Trajan's Bridge at Turnu Severin. During the second, in April 1857 - accompanied by C. Cornescu - he surveyed the monasteries and historical monuments of Argeş County and Oltenia. The findings

Bucureşti, 1961, p. 10; R. Theodorescu, *Odobescu și arta lecțiilor despre artă*, în vol. *Picătura de istorie*, Editura Fundației Culturale Române, Bucureşti, 2002, pp. 213-226.

⁹ For further details regarding the journey to London, see Al. Odobescu, *Fragment din călătoria din Paris la Londra (3-11 August 1852)*, în *Convorbiri Literare*, XLIX (nr. 11-12), 1915, pp.1141-1144; idem, *Călătoria din Paris la Londra (de la 3 până la 11 August)*, în *Convorbiri Literare*, LXVII (nr. 7-9), 1934, pp. 621-635

¹⁰ The illustrious politician's travel impressions of the Danubian Principalities (1836) were initially featured in the pages of the Parisian newspaper and were subsequently compiled into a volume titled *Souvenirs de voyages et d'études. Italie. Allemagne et Suisse. Le Danube*, published likewise in Paris, in the year 1852. For the Romanian version of the details provided on the occasion of this voyage, see Saint Marc Girardin, *Chapter X-XVIII*, in *Călători străini despre Țările Române în secolul al XIX-lea*, serie nouă, vol. III (1831-1840), P. Cernovodeanu, D. Buşă (coord.), Editura Academiei Române, Bucureşti, 2006, pp. 522-538.

¹¹ E. Simion, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

from these travels were subsequently utilized in the drafting of his *Scene istorice din cronicile românești*, published as a short volume in 1860¹².

On August 14, 1858, he married Alexandra (Sașa) Prejbeanu¹³ - daughter of Ruxandra Băleanu and Pavel Kiseleff, and granddaughter of Princess Zoe Văcărescu-Bagratiun - subsequently departing for Paris on their honeymoon. The following year, in February 1859, he was appointed prosecutor at the Second Section of the Bucharest Court of Appeal; by June, he transitioned to the same position within the First Section, before resigning to join the Ministry of Cults. There, he was appointed a member of both the Documentary Commission and the Historical Commission. Following Major Dimitrie Pappasoglu's initiative to inventory the historical and archival assets of the „dedicated monasteries”¹⁴, Odobescu was designated in May 1860, by decree of the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction, as one of the four „distinguished men” tasked with cataloging the patrimony of the monasteries across Wallachia¹⁵.

Thus, in the summer of 1860, commissioned by the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction, Odobescu undertook a research journey through the counties of Argeș and Vâlcea. The findings were recorded not only in his official reports but also in a journal kept by him and his wife, Sașa. This journal was partially published by Al. Tzigara-Samurcaș in the journal *Convorbiri Literare* between 1915 and 1923, and was subsequently issued in its entirety in 1934, under the title *Însemnări despre monumentele istorice din județele Argeș și Vâlcea*¹⁶.

¹² Regarding the editio princeps of the two Historical Scenes (*Scene istorice*) and their subsequent editions, see A. I. Odobescu, *Scrieri alese*, vol. I, Note, pp. 247, 248-250.

¹³ *Alexandru Odobescu și corespondenții săi: documente literare*, edited by Filofteia Mihai and Rodica Bichis, Editura Minerva, București, 1984, appendix, *Geanologia Alexandrinei Odobescu* de Constantin I. Odobescu.

¹⁴ C. D. Fortunescu, *Viața Maiorului D. Pappasoglu*, in *Arhivele Olteniei*, IX, nr. 47-48, 1930, pp. 97-98; A. Sacerdoțeanu, *Cercetări istorice și pitorești prin mănăstirile noastre acum optzeci de ani. Lucrările lui Al. Odobescu, H. Trenk și G. Tătărescu*, in *Arhiva Românească*, Tomul VI, Cartea Românească S. A., București, 1941, document 1, pp. 350-351.

¹⁵ A. Sacerdoțeanu, *op. cit.*, document 5, p. 354. Odobescu had been appointed commissioner for the inventory of archaeological artifacts in the counties of Dolj, Mehedinți, Gorj, Vâlcea, and Argeș; however, the investigation was completed only for the latter two regions. Nevertheless, in September 1863, acting as Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, Odobescu tasked Grigore Bengescu with continuing the inventory of heritage objects at the monasteries that had not been visited in 1860 by other competent experts. For further reference on this matter, see Ion I. Solcanu, *Three Initiatives to recover the National Cultural Heritage and History during the reign of Alecsandru Ioan Cuza*, in *Annals of the Academy of Romanian Scientists, Series on History and Archaeology*, vol. 12, 1, 2020, p. 28.

¹⁶ Regarding the capitalization of the results from the inventory mission of historical monuments in Vâlcea and Argeș counties - undertaken by Odobescu between June 20 and August 15, 1860, alongside his wife, Sașa, and the painter Henri Trenk, see Al. Odobescu, *Opere (Scrieri din anii 1861-1870. Antume. Postume. Anexe. Variante. Note)*, II, critical text and variants by Marta Anineanu, notes by Virgil Căndea, Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, București, 1967, pp. 361-408; 423-434; 641-666; 672-674.

For details regarding the supporting documents (actele justificative) concerning Henri Trenk's participation in Alexandru Odobescu's 1860 documentation travels, the execution of plates commissioned by the Ministry of Cults, and the compilation of the Archaeological and Picturesque

On this occasion as well, Odobescu demonstrates his profound expertise, underpinned by robust knowledge of archaeology and art history, through his meticulous investigation of the sites, monuments, and artifacts discovered within the ecclesiastical establishments of the aforementioned regions. Endowed with undeniable literary talent, he exhibits a marked interest in transposing archaeological data into a refined scriptural elegance. His travel journal entries impress through the fluidity with which the scholar applies his vision regarding the essential symbiosis between the historical, literary, and artistic fields in reconstructing this nation's past.

The results of research conducted years prior, yet remaining unpublished, prompted Odobescu to capitalize on them under the aegis of a new journal - *Revista română pentru științe, litere și arte* - which was published between April 1861 and November 1863¹⁷. The pages of this inaugural publication - printed in the Latin alphabet and dedicated to promoting new cultural, artistic, and scientific horizons aimed at aligning national culture with that of European nations - featured not only Odobescu's own writings (*Poezii Văcărești, Traducerea lui Britannicu, Străbunii Văcărescilor, Banul Iănăkiță, Câteva ore la Snagov, Despre odoarele, manuscriptele și cărțile aflate în mănăstirea Bistrița, Psaltirea diaconului Coresi, Cântece poporane ale Europei Răsăritene, mai cu sémă în raportu cu țerra, istoria și datinele Românilor*, etc.) but also contributions from illustrious figures such as Ion Ghica, Ștefan Dimitrie Grecianu, Nicolae Filimon, Dimitrie Bolintineanu, Grigore Cobălcescu, Petre S. Aurelian, Ion Fălcoianu, and George Cretzianu. Through their studies in history, literature, jurisprudence, art, philosophy, and science, these contributors fostered a general interest in knowledge - a fundamental prerequisite for the cultural affirmation and development of the Romanian nation¹⁸.

On February 1, 1862, Alexandru Ioan Cuza appointed Alexandru Odobescu as Director within the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Instruction for the department of Wallachia. One year later, on May 26, 1863, Odobescu assumed the interim leadership of the institution following the resignation of Christian Tell. Subsequently, on July 31, the Sovereign signed the decree appointing Alexandru Odobescu as Minister of the Department of Religious Affairs and Public Instruction within the government presided over by Nicolae Kretzulescu (June 24, 1862 –

Historical Album - intended for display at the 1862 London International Exhibition and subsequently presented to Prince Carol upon his arrival in the country, see A. Sacerdoțeanu, *op. cit.*, documents 19-23; 25; 27; 28, pp. 371-379; idem, *Cercetări istorice și pitorești prin mănăstirile noastre acum optzeci de ani. Lucrările lui Al Odobescu, H. Trenk și G. Tătărescu (urmare)*, in *Arhiva Românească*, Tomul VII, Cartea Românească S. A., București, 1941, documents no. 29; 32; 33; 58, pp. 309-337.

¹⁷ The journal was edited by Odobescu in collaboration with D. Cretzianu, D. Berindey, and P. Iatropol. See A. I. Odobescu, *Scrieri alese*, vol. II, introductory study by T. Vianu, critical edition by G. Pienescu, Editura Albatros, București, 1970, Tabel cronologic, p. 299.

¹⁸ Regarding the role of *Revista Română* as a center for Romania's intellectual activity and its impact on Transylvanian literary circles, see O. Scridon, *Revista Română și George Barițiu*, in *Studii literare*, I, Sibiu, 1942, pp. 210-213.

October 11, 1863)¹⁹. On August 17, 1863, following the resignation of Ioan Ghica, Odobescu was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs *ad interim*, a position he held until September 7. On October 12, as his proposed solution regarding the management of secularized monastic estates for cultural purposes had not been accepted, Odobescu resigned from the government, thus concluding his ministerial mandate²⁰.

In 1834, at the initiative of *Ban* Mihalache Ghica, the Museum of Natural History and Antiquities was established as an annex to Saint Sava College, with the purpose of gathering “various collections for the enlightenment of the natural history of this land [...] and **antiquities**, (emphasis added) ...”²¹. As the museum's patrimony expanded - bolstered by the state's involvement in recovering the famous Pietroasa Treasure (1841) and the generous donation of General Nicolae Mavros, in the cataloging of which Alexandru Odobescu participated - the necessity of establishing a new Museum of Antiquities, under the authority of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Instruction, became evident.

Consequently, by Decree No. 1648 of November 25, 1864, Alexandru Ioan Cuza approved the *Regulations for the Administration and Organization of the Museum of Antiquities in Bucharest*. Through Decree No. 1649, issued on the same day, an Archaeological Committee of Romania was also instituted, composed of four members: Nicolae Mavros (elected president for life), Alexandru Odobescu, Vasile Alexandrescu-Urechia, and August Treboniu Laurian²².

The recognition of the internal autonomy of the United Romanian Principalities by the representatives of the Great Powers at the 1861 Constantinople Conference, alongside the adoption of the Developing Statute of the Paris Convention (1864) as the fundamental law of the new state entity, prompted the French Empire to invite the Romanian government in 1865 to participate in the Universal Exposition, scheduled to open two years later, in 1867. An intellectual

¹⁹ One of Odobescu's primary measures as Minister of Religious Affairs was to halt any attempts by the Greek clergy to misappropriate art objects remaining in the monasteries under their occupation. To this end, he appointed a commission - comprising Ioan Brezoianu, Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu, and Ștefan Greceanu - tasked with compiling a *Catagrafie* (Official Inventory) of the monasteries. Furthermore, the Ministry of Religious Affairs drafted a report, which the government subsequently submitted to the Conference of Ambassadors in Constantinople (A. D. Xenopol, *Nicole Kretzulescu, Viața și faptele lui (1812-1900)*, Atelierele Grafice Socec & Comp., București, 1915, p. 85; Constantin. C. Giurescu, *Viața și opera lui Cuza Vodă*, Editura Științifică, București, 1970, p. 161.

²⁰ During his tenure at the helm of the ministry, Odobescu sought to repatriate Bălcescu's remains and intervened to bring Hașdeu to Bucharest as a member of the Documentary Commission for the Dedicated Monasteries. Furthermore, he advocated for the reorganization of secondary education and the establishment of vocational and technical schools, aligned with the country's economic needs. In this regard, see A. I. Odobescu, *Scrieri alese*, vol. I, pp. 50-52.

²¹ Apud Al. Păunescu, I. Casian-Franga, P. Diaconu, *Începuturile arheologiei românești. Istoricul Muzeului Național de Antichități*, part I (1934-1880), in *SCIVA*, tom 35, nr. 1, 1984, pp. 6-7.

²² R. Vulpe, *Muzeul Național de Antichități*, in *Boabe de grâu*, 1, 3, 1930, pp. 133-136; Vl. Dumitrescu, *Muzeul Național de Antichități*, București, 1968; Al. Păunescu *et alii.*, *op. cit.*, p. 31 ff.; C. Preda, *Din istoricul Muzeului național de antichități-Institutul de Arheologie-150 de ani de activitate arkeologică și muzeistică*, in *Thraco-Dacica*, V, 1-2, 1984, pp. 5-7.

with extensive studies, highly regarded for his efforts in inventorying the ecclesiastical heritage of Wallachia, the 31-year-old Alexandru Odobescu was appointed Commissary General of the Principalities, serving as the Romanian government's representative to the French Exhibition Commission²³.

The negotiations conducted with the delegation of the Imperial Exhibition Commission represented a significant success, as the Principalities secured the right to exhibit under a national pavilion, separate from Turkey. Furthermore, Odobescu requested that Ioan Alecsandri record the name **Romania** in the official documents of the United Principalities' Diplomatic Agency in the French capital²⁴. Despite the fact that the preliminary actions for organizing the Romanian pavilion were delayed by domestic political events during the first half of 1866, the inertia of local administration, and a certain reluctance among producers, Odobescu - reconfirmed in his position by the new governmental authority - succeeded in mobilizing key decision-makers, ensuring that the Romanian presence in Paris in 1867 served as a significant opportunity for the assertion of national identity²⁵.

On this occasion, a comprehensive volume presenting the Principalities was compiled, titled *Notice sur la Roumanie, principalement au point de vue de son économie rurale, industrielle et commerciale suivie du catalogue spécial des produits exposés dans la section roumaine à l'Exposition universelle de Paris, en 1867 et d'une notice sur l'histoire du travail en ce pays*. Within this work, the authors, Alexandru Odobescu and Petre S. Aurelian, provided the public with extensive data concerning the political-legal and administrative status of the new state entity, alongside geographical and statistical information regarding its socio-demographic and economic profile. While the first section, authored by the distinguished economist, highlighted aspects of rural, industrial, and commercial life, the contribution drafted by Odobescu, *Notice sur les antiquités de la Roumanie*, promoted the Latin character and the Byzantine-Orthodox dimension of Romanian civilization. These served as ideological arguments intended to legitimize the national identity²⁶ and further attest to the eminent classicist's scholarly dedication to the field of archaeology.

²³ V. Slăvescu, *Alexandru Odobescu la Expoziția din Paris din 1867*, in *Revista Fundațiilor Regale*, 5, 1942, pp. 396-398.

²⁴ Al. Odobescu, *Opere (Corespondență, 1847-1879)*, VIII, introduction by Al. Dima, notes and index by Nadia Lovinescu, Filofteia Mihai, Rodica Bichis, Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, București, 1979, pp. 157-159, note 89.

²⁵ For further details regarding Odobescu's role in organizing and promoting the Romanian presence at this universal exposition, see Al. Odobescu, *Opere*, II, pp. 315-357; 631-640.

²⁶ L. Vlad, *Imagini ale identității naționale. România la expozițiile universale și internaționale de la Paris (1867-1937)*, second edition, revised and enlarged, Editura Institutul European, Iași, 2007, pp. 39-90. The *Note on Romanian Antiquities (Nota asupra antichităților României)* sought to evoke the Pietroasa Treasure and the Curtea de Argeș Monastery, while also accounting for the Roman vestiges discovered in Wallachia and the religious cult objects surveyed by Odobescu during his research travels through Argeș and Vâlcea counties. Furthermore, the *Histoire du Travail* Gallery featured the *Album pittoresque et archéologique des couvents de la Roumanie*, the work of Swiss painter Henri Trenk.

The 1861 summer visit of the renowned German archaeologist Franz Bock, who sought to publish the Pietroasa Treasure, prompted Odobescu to re-evaluate his scientific focus and engage actively in the study of the fabulous “Cloșca cu pui de aur”, whose historical and archaeological significance was not yet universally recognized at the time²⁷.

Thus, in December 1865, on the occasion of his visit to the French capital as the Romanian government’s representative to the Exhibition Commission, Alexandru Odobescu accepted the invitation of his former professor, Émile Egger, to deliver a lecture on the treasure under the auspices of the prestigious Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. The text, titled *Notice sur le trésor de Pétrossa, découvert en Roumanie et conservé au musée national de Bucarest*, was met with admiring remarks from the scholars attending the two sessions of this high academic forum.

A fragment of the communication appeared in the Bucharest gazette *La Voix de la Roumanie* (1866), founded by the journalist and publicist Ulysse de Marsillac, a professor of French at Saint Sava College; subsequently, the text was revised and included in the second part of *Notice sur les antiquités de la Roumanie*, published in Paris in 1868²⁸.

In his capacity as a member of the Archaeological Committee of Romania, Odobescu took an active role in systematizing the field’s scientific activities; being well-versed in the state of field research across the country, he conducted his inaugural excavations at Pietroasa in the autumn of 1866. His objective was to establish a chronological and historical correlation between the Roman castrum and the site of the discovery, while also augmenting the collection of historical exhibits intended for Paris with archaeological materials recovered during his own research.

Although his contribution to the conception of the Romanian exhibition and the organization of the displays in the *Galerie de l’Histoire du Travail* received high praise - and his efforts to promote and consecrate the Pietroasa Treasure as a facet of Romanian national identity earned laudatory remarks from renowned French scholars such as Ferdinand de Lasteyrie and Charles de Linas - Odobescu and, by extension, the Brătianu government, became the targets of a denigrating press campaign orchestrated by his public adversaries, who were centered around Cezar Bolliac’s publication, *Trompeta Carpaților*²⁹.

²⁷ Bock photographed the treasure and, accompanied by the young Odobescu and Rudolf Neumeister, a former German language professor at Saint Sava College, visited the site of its discovery; this marked Odobescu’s inaugural visit to Pietroasa.

²⁸ Regarding Odobescu’s works on the Pietroasa Treasure and his conceptual approach to the subject, see M. Babeș, *Odobescu și tezaurul de la Pietroasa (Introductory Study)*, in Al. Odobescu, *Opere (Tezaurul de la Pietroasa)*, IV, edited with an introduction, commentaries, and notes by Mircea Babeș, archaeological studies by Radu Harhoiu and Gh. Diaconu, Editura Republicii Socialiste România, București, 1976, pp. 5–40, with pertinent references to the three works reprinted in the present volume.

²⁹ Al. Odobescu, *Opere*, II, pp. 639–640.

Despite the issuance of an official denial in February 1868 regarding the alleged accusations concerning the sale of the treasure, tensions only eased in April of that year upon the repatriation of the artifacts. The controversy finally subsided in the autumn of 1869, following Odobescu's publication in the journals *Opiniunea Constituțională* (September 14) and *Traian* (September 16) of his report titled *Darea de seamă despre ducerea și expunerea Tezaurului de la Pietroasa, la Paris și la Londra, în anii 1867 și 1868*³⁰.

During his stay in Russia, from December 1867 until the summer of the following year, Alexandru Odobescu meticulously examined the barbarian metalwork within the Siberian and Cimmerian Bosphorus collections exhibited at the Hermitage. His objective was to identify potential analogies with the pieces discovered at Pietroasa; his observations, submitted to the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres in Paris (1868), received encomiastic reviews from Charles de Linas. The findings of his study on the Novocherkassk diadem were initially presented before the plenum of the Romanian Academy on August 19, 1878. The subsequent publication of the volume - in which the author argued that the Scytho-Sarmatic artistic spectrum contributed to the development of cloisonné metalwork - illustrates the scholar's efforts to integrate Romanian archaeology into the broader European scientific movement³¹,

In 1869, Odobescu accompanied Cezar Bolliac—the newly appointed president of the Archaeological Committee (following the death of Mavros)—on an excursion to the ruins of an ancient fortress overlooking the Prahova Valley, situated between Pucheni and Tinosu³². Subsequently, he traveled to Copenhagen alongside V. A. Urechia to attend the International Congress of Prehistoric Anthropology and Archaeology. On this occasion, he delivered a paper regarding the results of his research on the prehistoric antiquities within the Romanian territory; this work constituted a veritable synthesis of the monuments

³⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 351-357; 638-640. For further details regarding this episode, see L. Vlad, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-52.

³¹ The study, *Anticuități scythice. Cunun'a mare d'in thesaurulu de la Novo-Cerkask cu priviri assupr'a unoru giuvelle scythice d'in Museulu Ermitagiului de la St. Petersburgu*, printed in Latin orthography, was published in 1879 with the support of the Romanian Academy. The significance of this work attracted the attention of the French periodical *Gazette archéologique*, which, in 1879, invited Odobescu to publish a summary regarding the famous diadem. In this regard, see M. Babeș, *op. cit.*, p. 9 and note on p. 961; G. Șerban, in Al. Odobescu, *Pagini regăsite*, Editura pentru Literatură, București, 1965, p. 338; Al. Odobescu și corespondenții săi, edited by Filoteia Mihai and Rodica Bichis, Editura Minerva, București, 1983, pp. 266–267; A. Avram, *Alexandru Odobescu sau arheologia prin erudiție*, in Al. Odobescu, *Opere (Scrieri arheologice – Part I)*, V, introductory study, commentaries, and notes by Alexandru Avram, text established and variants by Marian Ciucă, Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, București, 1989, pp. 26; 34; 38; 40; 41.

³² Al. Odobescu, *Opere alese*, II, *Istorice, filologice, arheologice etc.*, edited by Al. Iordan, Editura Cugetarea Delfras, București, 1941, p. 320

themselves, which the scholar classified into three distinct categories: *Valla*, *burial mounds*, and *earthwork fortifications or strongholds*³³.

The necessity of documenting a monograph dedicated to the Pietroasa Treasure prompted Odobescu to undertake, in the spring of 1870, a scholarly journey through Turkey, Greece, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and Austria, with the purpose of researching Romano-Byzantine and medieval religious art³⁴. During this journey, owing to the unfavorable political climate in France and Italy, scholarly engagements were limited to a reunion with Franz Bock—one of the earliest commentators on the hoard, who two years prior had published a study concerning the treasure of the Visigothic King Athanaric found at “Petreosa” (emphasis added) in Greater Wallachia—and an initial meeting, also in Aachen, with A. Lambris, the artist who would subsequently execute the illustrations of the treasure's renowned pieces³⁵.

Given the scholar's dedication to establishing an institutional framework for the promotion of Romanian archaeology, his extensive museum activity over the years, the lectures delivered before the most prestigious scientific forums, and the recognition he received from eminent European specialists in the field, the Romanian Academic Society elected Odobescu as a member on September 10, 1870, following the proposal of Alexandru Papiu-Ilarian, seconded by Iosif Hodoș.

Upon his return to the country, the newly appointed academician sought to compile an archaeological repertoire of Romania; to this end, he drafted a *Cestionar* (Questionnaire) intended for distribution, via the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction, to both urban and rural primary school teachers³⁶. Based on the responses received, Odobescu compiled a report regarding the monuments in Dorohoi, which was published in the *Monitorul Oficial* in July 1871³⁷. Furthermore, he drafted a *Proiect de campanie pentru explorațiuni arheologice în districtul Buzău în vara anului 1871*, through which the scholar—with the famous treasure in mind—

³³ Idem, *Opere complete*, vol. III, București, «Minerva», Institutul de Arte Grafice și Editură, București, 1908, pp. 106-113. The text of the communication, published in *Compte-rendu de la Session du Congrès international d'Anthropologie et d'Archéologie préhistoriques, tenu en 1869 à Copenhague*, appeared in a Romanian version titled *Noțiuni preistorice din România*, in A. I. Odobescu, *Scrieri literare și istorice*, II, Editura Librăriei Socec & Comp., București, 1887, pp. 137-148.

³⁴ Idem, *Opere literare*, pp. 330-354; G. Șerban, *op. cit.*, pp. 341-345. The impressions garnered during this journey would subsequently be reflected in the pages of his erudite essay, *Pseudokinegetikos*, as well as in his *Istoria arheologiei* (History of Archaeology).

³⁵ M. Babeș, *op. cit.* pp. 9-10.

³⁶ The Questionnaire was published *in extenso* in A. I. Odobescu, *Anticuitățile Județului Romanat*, Tipografia Societății Academice Române, București, 1878, pp. V-VII. Regarding the schoolteachers' responses from Gorj County to Odobescu's Questionnaire, see also Constantin-Livian Rădoescu, Cristian-Constantin Rădoescu, *Brief Appraisal about the Odobescu Questionnaire, especially regarding the answers from Gorj county*, in *Annals of the “Constantin Brâncuși” University of Târgu Jiu, Letter and Social Science series*, 2, 2025, pp. 503-514.

³⁷ An expanded and revised version of the report in Idem, *Scrieri literare și artistice*, II, pp. 157-232; idem, *Opere*, III, pp. 118-166.

intended to conduct solely field verification excavations and to gather information by means of inquiries among the local inhabitants³⁸.

Despite his primary interest in the antiquities of the Migration Period, Odobescu demonstrated a profound commitment to archaeology by striving to systematize information—a prerequisite for any rigorous scientific exegesis, as evidenced by his authorship of the first monographs on the monuments and archaeological sites of Dorohoi and Romanați counties. Although he never engaged in field archaeology, the author of these two repertoires succeeded in surpassing his antiquarian contemporaries by introducing scientific research methods and critical inquiry into the evaluation of the field's documentary evidence.

During the session of the Historical-Archaeological Section of the Academic Society on August 24, 1871, Odobescu proposed the initiation of a scholarly competition regarding pre-Roman Dacia—a subject notably absent from Romanian historiography at the time—and the establishment of a 1,000-lei prize for the best dissertation on the topic: *Cercetări asupra popoarelor care au locuit țările române de a stînga Dunării mai înainte de conuista acestor țări de către imperatoriulu Traian*³⁹.

The unanimous acceptance of the proposed theme prompted the erudite scholar to publish a bibliography of Dacia—initially in the pages of B. P. Hasdeu's journal, *Columna lui Traian*, and subsequently as a separate brochure—specifying that this auxiliary tool was intended to facilitate the research of the “competitors for the prize established by Mr. Alexandru Odobescu, member of the Romanian Academic Society”⁴⁰. The competition was extended until 1877, when Grigore Tocilescu was awarded the prize for his work, *Dacia înainte de romani*. He had recently presented this study, just a year prior, as his doctoral dissertation within the Historical Section of the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Prague.

Despite being an 'armchair archaeologist'—a fact for which he was reproached by his contemporaries—Alexandru Odobescu was nevertheless endowed with a vocation for grand syntheses and critical constructs; he focused on the fundamental issues facing Romanian archaeology and advocated for the necessity of their systematization by historical periods. In this regard, in 1872, he initiated a series of public lectures dedicated to the arts in Romania, titled *Răpide ochire asupra producțiunilor artistice din trecut în țara noastră și asupra instinctului artistic al poporului român*. The themes of these lectures analyzed the originality of the

³⁸ M. Babeș, *op. cit.* p. 11.

³⁹ Further details regarding this subject in Al. Dobre, *Memoriile Secției de Științe Filologice, Literatură și Arte*, 4th ser., tom VI, Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, București, 1984, pp. 110-113; idem, *Etnologia poporului român: cercetători, culegători, colecții, motive fundamentale, capodopere*, Fundația Națională pentru Știință și Artă, București, 2007, pp. 297-298.

⁴⁰ *Bibliographia Daciei. Indice de scrieri attingetore, directu séu indirectu, de vechii locuitori ai Daciei*, Typographia Curti, (Lucrătorii asociați), Bucuresci, 1872. See also *Comentariu de arheologie la Bibliografia Daciei*, in Al. Odobescu, *Opere*, V, p. 423; G. Ștrempel, *Preocupările bibliografice ale lui Alexandru Odobescu (I)*, in *Academica*, 6, 3, 1996, p. 5; Al. Dobre, *op. cit.* p. 301

aesthetic genius corresponding to each historical era: the prehistoric, Roman, barbarian, and Romanian periods⁴¹.

In his first lecture, *Considerațiuni generale asupra artei în țară la noi. Artele în periodul preistoric*, delivered at the Romanian Athenaeum on December 17, 1872, and subsequently published in *Columna lui Traian* (1874) under the title *Artele din România, în periodul preistoric*, Odobescu focused more on the Neolithic than the Bronze Age, following the tripartite division proposed by Christian Thomsen. He noted that archaeological science “scarcely ventures as yet, with the aid of anthropology, to make distinctions of race and kin among prehistoric remains; for the time being, it largely confines itself to classifying the primitive productions of mankind in a chronological order, based on the nature of the materials that successively came to the knowledge and use of man”⁴².

Given the challenges arising from the chronological classification and ethnic attribution of prehistoric and barbarian antiquities, the scholar—aware of the constraints of Romanian archaeology [...] namely, the settlement of the Romanians in Dacia in the 2nd century and the “*dismounting*”...—intercalates the Roman period between these two historical sequences, while placing before the Trajanic conquest the period which ‘we can truly call prehistoric and not merely Dacian, and which still lies submerged in profound darkness’⁴³.

Unlike Bolliac, whose enthusiasm for archaeology was universally acknowledged by those active in the field, yet whose exploratory work lacked both method and discipline, Odobescu—by virtue of his profound erudition and his contacts within the international scientific community—remained attuned to the rigors of European archaeological research. Consequently, he undertook the task of critiquing the shortcomings of local amateurism⁴⁴, advocating instead for a programmatic concreteness of the discipline, so that its results might “benefit science and serve as an indubitable basis for ethnographic comparisons and theories of primordial history”⁴⁵. His merit lies in having delineated the primary research directions for Romanian archaeology and in introducing the concept of *material culture* into the specialized lexicon; furthermore, for the interpretation of findings, he recommended several methodological approaches, such as the *chronological system*, *the analytical mode*, *the geographical method*, and so forth⁴⁶.

⁴¹ See the critical study by T. Vianu în A. I. Odobescu, *Scrieri alese*, I, pp. 60-63; G. Șerban, *op. cit.*, p. 350; A. Avram, *op. cit.*, p. 24, note nr. 80.

⁴² Al. I. Odobescu, *Opere complete*, III, p. 181.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, pp. 178-177.

⁴⁴ The Odobescu–Bolliac debate on the subject of *prehistoric smoking pipes*, as discussed in O. Papadima, *Cezar Bolliac*, Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, București, 1966, *passim*; Further details on the same subject in A. Oișteanu, *Narcotice în cultura română. Istorie, religie și literatură*, ediția a II-a, second edition, revised, enlarged, and illustrated, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2011, pp. 42-44, notes nr. 68, 76, 77, 78.

⁴⁵ A. I. Odobescu, *Opere alese*, II, p. 312.

⁴⁶ M. Angheliniu, *Evoluția gândirii teoretice în arheologia din România. Concepte și modele aplicate în preistorie*, Editura Cetatea de Scaun, Târgoviște, 2003, pp. 90-91.

Odobescu aspired toward a global approach to research, conferring upon the “science of the ancients” a distinct status through “which it investigates the customs and monuments bequeathed by the people of past centuries and preserved to this day—whether in written accounts, oral traditions, or, most notably, in actual plastic and graphic objects. Its task is to collect and scrutinize these remains in order to extract from their study, whether specific or comparative, the most comprehensive knowledge possible concerning the beliefs, institutions, practices, customs, industries, and arts of ancient society; that is to say, concerning the moral and intellectual state of mankind at the various stages of its development”⁴⁷. In recognition of his merits in archaeological research and the prestige he had attained within the European scientific community, the German Archaeological Institute in Rome conferred upon the Romanian scholar the title of corresponding member on December 9, 1873⁴⁸.

The following year, in 1874, Alexandru Odobescu assumed the leadership of the National Theater in Bucharest; he not only dedicated himself to the consolidation and reorganization of the institution but also advocated for the establishment of a Romanian dramatic company and a national repertoire composed of plays whose themes would reflect the country's history⁴⁹. Furthermore, in his capacity as a member of the Archaeological Committee, he contributed to the drafting of the *Regulations on the Exploration and Acquisition of Antiquities* (April 1874) and supported the establishment of the Commission for Public Monuments (August 1874)⁵⁰. In June 1874, the essay *Pseudokinegetikos* was published, a work widely regarded as his magnum opus (Odobescu was forty at the time); through its intellectual depth, stylistic uniqueness, and discursive strategy, this literary genre revealed the writer's predilection for “jovial erudition”⁵¹.

At the initiative of Titu Maiorescu, Minister of Public Instruction—who sought the support of several eminent scholars and science enthusiasts to inaugurate at the University premises a series of open and free lectures on various scientific subjects not yet included in the official faculty curricula⁵²—Odobescu was entrusted with the archaeology course, given the widespread acclaim he enjoyed within the academic community. Thus, during the 1874/1875 academic year, the scholar who was to become the first professor of archaeology at the higher education institution in Bucharest delivered a course on the history of archaeology. This work was

⁴⁷ Al. Odobescu, *Opere*, II, p. 181.

⁴⁸ G. Șerban, *op. cit.*, p. 351.

⁴⁹ On February 4, 1875, Titu Maiorescu, in his capacity as Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, appointed Odobescu as Director General of Theaters. His efforts toward revitalizing theatrical activity are exemplified by the extensive correspondence published in Al. Odobescu, *Opere*, VIII, *passim*.

⁵⁰ Al. Păunescu *et alii*, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40.

⁵¹ E. Simion, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

⁵² Al. I. Odobescu, *Istoria arheologiei ...*, p. 5.

published only in 1877 and was subsequently honored with the Năsturel-Herescu Prize of the Academy⁵³.

Alongside his academic duties, Odobescu collaborated with Dimitrie A. Sturdza, Mihail Kogălniceanu, Theodor Rosetti, and Ioan Slavici on the publication of the Hurmuzaki Archive, which Titu Maiorescu had recovered from Chernivtsi. Furthermore, as a refined scholar of Greek and Latin literature—having translated since his youth the odes of Horace, Virgil's *Georgics*, and the first cantos of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*—he was appointed in 1874 to the commission for the examination of translations from Hellenic authors, serving alongside G. Sion, I. C. Massim, and I. Caragiani⁵⁴.

Throughout the 1877/1878 academic year, the newly appointed professor delivered sixty lectures as part of a general course on pre- and protohistoric archaeology; during the 1878/1879 term, he held an equal number of sessions, this time focused on Oriental antiquities⁵⁵. In October 1879, Odobescu departed for France to assume, as of October 1881, the position of First Secretary of the Romanian Legation in Paris, a high office he held until 1885⁵⁶. During his Parisian residency (January 1880–March 1887), despite the financial hardships he encountered, the Romanian scholar labored on the monograph dedicated to the Pietroasa Treasure, benefiting from the support of G. Bengescu, the Legation's Second Secretary, who assisted him in translating several chapters of the projected work⁵⁷.

Upon his return from France in March 1887, seeking to expedite the Romanian authorities' resolution regarding the contractual amendments for the publication of his work, Odobescu presented a formal Report (*Dare de seamă*)⁵⁸ during the Academy session on March 22. Furthermore, on May 8, he addressed several memoranda to the Minister of Public Instruction, D. A. Sturdza⁵⁹, requesting

⁵³ D. Tudor, *Alexandru Odobescu ca profesor*, în *Analele Universității București*, Seria Științe sociale, istorie, XII, 30, 1963, p. 21. In 1877, the course became mandatory, and Odobescu was appointed tenured professor of the Chair of Archaeology.

⁵⁴ On Odobescu's contribution to the promotion of classical studies, cf. M. Marinescu-Himu, *Odobescu și clasicismul*, in *Studii Clasice*, VIII, București, 1966, pp. 291-296.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 22-23. The course on the *Antichitățile Egiptului și a altor neamuri din Asia* (Antiquities of Egypt and of Other Nations in Asia), conceived by Odobescu, was continued by his young colleague and “highly learned and gracious [...] substitute, Mr. Grigore Tocilescu [...], with a profound erudition and a method undoubtedly more analytical than that toward which I [Odobescu, emphasis added] am inclined...” (Al. Odobescu, *Opere*, V, p. 245).

⁵⁶ G. Șerban, *op. cit.*, p. 366 ff.

⁵⁷ G. Bengescu, *Câteva suvenire ale carierei mele: Ion Ghica, V. Alecsandri, Alexandru Lahovari*, Editura Paul Lacomblez, Bruxelles, 1899, p. 85. For information regarding the documentation process and the publishing prospects of this major work during Odobescu's residency in the French capital, see M. Babeș, *op. cit.* in Al. Odobescu, *Opere*, IV, pp. 16-18.

⁵⁸ See also *Pia desideria. Dare de seamă despre lucrarea operei „Le trésor de Pétroussa”, rostită în ședința publică din 22 martie 1887, a Academiei Române*, in Al. Odobescu, *Opere*, IV, pp. 924-930 and the related comments, pp. 991-997.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, Appendices, pp. 933-935. For further details regarding the correspondence between Odobescu and D. A. Sturdza on the publication of the monograph, see also pp. 1003–1010.

financial support for the edition, and also petitioned King Carol I in July 1887; however, the government remained unpersuaded by the scholar's arguments.

Meanwhile, Odobescu resumed his activity at the Faculty of Letters, preparing to deliver two new courses: the first concerning the *Mitologia și instituțiile religioase la greci și apoi la romani*, and the second dedicated to Emperor Trajan and the monuments pertaining to his life and era⁶⁰.

The period following 1887, marked by financial hardships, academic disputes, and family grievances, compelled Odobescu to divide his time between university lectures, various professional obligations, and the preparation of public conferences. This strain was reflected in the scholar's work, as his communications and publications began to exhibit a visible scientific decline.

On the occasion of the inauguration of the new Romanian Athenaeum building on February 14/26, 1888, Alexandru Odobescu delivered a lecture entitled *Ateneul Român și clădirile antice cu dom circular*. Well-versed in the specialist literature, the speaker demonstrated an extensive knowledge of ancient architecture and captivated the audience with his descriptive prowess regarding the monuments discussed—marking, on this occasion, his first scholarly reference to the Adamclisi monument⁶¹.

Shortly after this event, on March 25 of the same year, the scholar delivered another academic communication: *Heraldica națională. Patruperdele androcefale figurate în monumente și originea lor*. In this presentation, relying on rather fanciful explanations, he attempted to demonstrate that the presence of the “manticore” (a motif of Sumero-Assyrian origin) within the medieval bestiary was attributable to Turanian populations; furthermore, he argued that the quadrupeds identified on the walls of Saint Nicholas Church in Dorohoi had been adopted from populations that had disappeared centuries prior⁶².

During the same month, Odobescu was awarded the Great Prize of the Academy for his work *Scrieri literare și istorice*. Published in three volumes by Socec Publishing House, this collection featured a selection of literary, historical, and pedagogical texts that would later serve as the foundation for future editions of his complete works.

In April 1888, following Titu Maiorescu's return to the leadership of the Ministry of Public Instruction, initiatives for the continued publication of *Le Trésor de Pétroussa* were resumed. Consequently, the first volume of the monograph was

⁶⁰ Regarding the second course, only two lectures were published in *Convorbiri Literare: Împăratul Traian după monumentele istorice* (1886) and *Iconografia lui Traian* (1888). While in the first lecture Odobescu synthesized the data concerning the *optimus princeps*, the second—despite certain shortcomings arising from insufficient information and interpretative errors—functions as a concise repertory of Trajan's artistic representations that reflects the critical rigor of a true university course. For both studies, see Al. Odobescu, *Opere*, V, pp. 244–251 and pp. 252–267, respectively, as well as the related archaeological commentary on pp. 385 and 391–392.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 268–319.

⁶² *Ibidem*, pp. 329–342; 417–421.

released in October of that same year⁶³; meanwhile, Odobescu—having spent the entire summer in the French capital closely supervising the process—returned to Bucharest to resume his university lectures.

In July 1889, driven by financial constraints, Odobescu was compelled to accept a position at the “Sfântul Gheorghe” private high school in Bucharest, directed by Anghel Demetriescu, where he taught history. Two years later, in October 1891, he assumed the directorship of the Higher Normal School, dedicating himself to the scientific education and training of future teachers; ultimately, by 1894, he turned to authoring textbooks for primary education⁶⁴.

With his health frequently compromised, morally dejected, and disillusioned by the authorities' indifference toward his efforts for the country's cultural development⁶⁵, Alexandru Odobescu withdrew in early January 1895 to a residence on Cuza Vodă Street. There, he dedicated himself to study; however, in a final effort on October 1, he presided in Iași over the examination committee for the Chair of Medieval and Modern History at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy in Bucharest—a process which ultimately recommended Nicolae Iorga for the position⁶⁶.

Dejected and listless, forsaken by the creative energy that had established him as one of the most prominent Romanian writers of the 19th century, the aging Odobescu decided to take his own life on November 8, 1895, by an overdose of laudanum. After a two-day agony, he passed away on November 10, sparking various social speculations regarding a gesture that remained poorly understood by those who had known him and appreciated his true worth⁶⁷.

⁶³ Regarding Odobescu's intention to complete the remaining two volumes, originally scheduled for publication in the spring of 1890 and the autumn of 1891, respectively, see M. Babeș, *op. cit.*, in Al. Odobescu, *Opere*, IV, pp. 19–21. Regrettably, both volumes were published posthumously—the second in 1896 and the third in 1900—under the editorship of Professor Ionescu-Gion.

⁶⁴ T. Vianu, *op. cit.*, în A. I. Odobescu, *Scrisori alese*, I, p. 98.

⁶⁵ As early as September 1890, Odobescu had submitted a memorandum to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Instruction, requesting financial and material support for the establishment of a museum of casts. The acquisition of plaster casts after several ancient sculptural works sparked a political scandal between the Conservatives, who had championed this cultural endeavor, and the Liberals led by D. A. Sturdza; by the autumn of 1895, the latter demanded explanations from the scholar regarding the expenditure of the funds allocated by the Ministry of Instruction. For details on this episode, see A. Mihalache, *Originalul și imitația. Note istoriografice pe marginea unor documente privind muzeul de mulate înființat de Alexandru Odobescu*, in *Historia Universitatis Iassiensis*, 2, Iași, 2011, pp. 128–136; 184–210, Appendices 1–21.

⁶⁶ For further details regarding the conduct of this competition, see B. Theodorescu, *Un concurs universitar celebru (Nicolae Iorga)*, Casa Școalelor, București, 1944.

⁶⁷ Regarding the motivations that led Odobescu to resort to this gesture, see A. Mihalache, *op. cit.* pp. 121–129; A. Oișteanu, *op. cit.*, pp. 153–156.

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