

Images as Teaching Aid Materials within the History Class

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Abstract

The use of images is a method specific to art history. However, artistic analyses of images can be used in history classes as well. Knowledge of art history is indispensable to the teacher when using images, photographs or paintings. In history classes, these pictures can become priceless historical sources which help analyze a series of social, political, economic and artistic aspects or mentalities.

Portraits, images depicting certain events or scenes of everyday life, landscapes, images of cities, settlements, posters, caricatures etc. belong to this category of images. With the help of these pictures, the studied historical events are materialized, facilitating their perception and comprehension by the students. Such teaching materials deepen the understanding of historical events through the clearer perception regarding the particularities of the events they present.

Keywords:

Historic images; historic resources; portraits; caricatures; manipulation

Teaching aid materials, together with elements which ensure the content of the teaching-learning process and proper teaching materials, play an important role in the teaching-learning process of history.

Images (models) representing historical events or characters are the most important, being crucial in the process of teaching history. These images help the studied historical facts to materialize,² clarifying their meaning to the students and thus making the subject matter more approachable.³

The images mostly used in teaching history are historical pictures representing aspects of social life or historical events. They facilitate the comprehension of historical facts by allowing a clearer and more profound perception of the features they depict,⁴ while also helping the formation of specific skills.

The interpretation of historical paintings is a specific field of history, requiring compulsory knowledge in history, art history or heraldry on the part of the teacher. These images may represent historical sources which aid in the analysis of social, political, economic, artistic and conceptual aspects.

In the following section, we will briefly analyze several pictures representing the most well-known personalities of the Romanian Middle Ages in order to decipher the messages transmitted by these paintings which can be used as teaching materials.

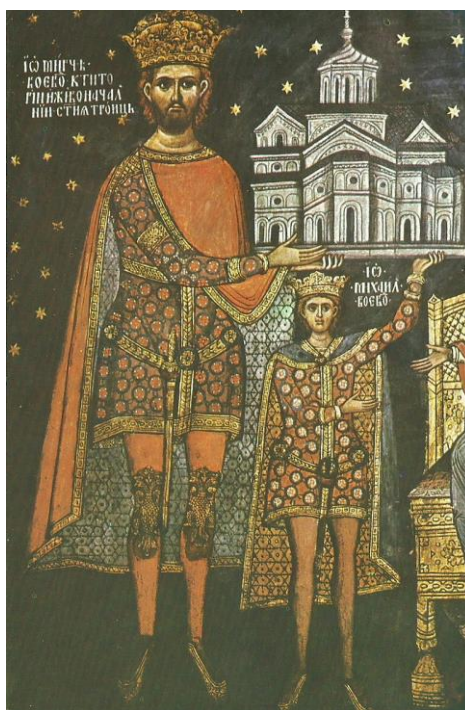


Fig. 1

Mircea cel Bătrân (Mircea the Old) (1386-1418) is represented in a painting from Cozia Monastery (Fig. 1)⁵ as a *despot*⁶ dressed as an occidental knight. The title of despot was only granted to relatives of the Byzantine imperial family. His imperial claims were the consequence of both his

² Gabriele Magull, *Sprache oder Bilde?* (Wochenschau Geschichte, Schwalbach/Ts.2000), 16.

³ Michael Sauer, *Bilder im Geschichtsunterricht* (Kallmeyer Verlag im Verbindung mit Klett, 2000), 27-31.

⁴ Nicolae Hurduzeu, *Didactica istoriei - note de curs* [The didactics of history - courses] (Timișoara: Eurostampa, 2014), 24.

⁵ Mircea cel Bătrân, image from Wikipedia, https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mircea_cel_B%C4%83tr%C3%A2n (accessed December 14, 2015)

⁶ Petre Panaitescu, *Mircea cel Bătrân* [Mircea the Old], second edition (Bucharest: Corint, 2000), 55-56.

marriage to his mother, Calinichia, a princess of Byzantine origins according to N. Iorga⁷ as well as his rule over the province of Dobruja. Mircea called himself *despot of the country of Dobrotici* which was once part of the Byzantine Empire. These claims are suggested by the two-headed eagle represented on his knee and by his red cape embroidered with gold. In this way, Mircea wanted to show himself as successor of Byzantine emperors.



Fig. 2

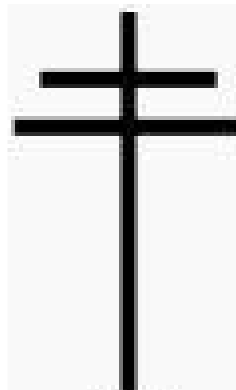


Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Fig. 1 shows Mircea as the founder of Cozia Monastery along with one of his sons, Michael, whom he associated to his reign; both are shown supporting a small scale model of the monastery. In this painting, the papal cross is represented on top of the tower of the monastery – this three armed cross usually appears on royal foundations (Fig. 2)⁸ and is different from the foundations of the high nobility. For noble foundations, the archdiocese cross or the two armed cross is represented (Fig. 3),⁹ while on other places of worship the Latin, one armed, cross appears (Fig. 4).¹⁰

Iancu de Hunedoara (John Hunyadi) (1441-1456) was voivode of Transylvania in the fifteenth century (Fig. 5).¹¹ For the analysis of the following two images we will analyze the heraldic devices present.



Fig. 5

⁷ Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria românilor* [The history of the Romanians], vol. 3 (Bucharest: Enciclopedică, 1993), p. 271.

⁸ *Tipuri de cruci* [Types of crosses], <http://www.ortodoxism.com/cuvinte-de-folos/tipuri-de-cruci.html> (accessed December 17, 2015)

⁹ *Tipuri de cruci* [Types of crosses], <http://www.ortodoxism.com/cuvinte-de-folos/tipuri-de-cruci.html> (accessed December 17, 2015)

¹⁰ *Tipuri de cruci* [Types of crosses], <http://www.ortodoxism.com/cuvinte-de-folos/tipuri-de-cruci.html> (accessed December 17, 2015)

¹¹ John Hunyadi, From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Hunyadi#/media/File:Iancu_Hunedoara.jpg (accessed December 14, 2015).

Iancu de Hunedoara was Wallachian¹² and narrative sources mention four opinions¹³ relating to his origin:

- He was a descendant of the Roman Corvina family.
- He was the natural son of King Sigismund with the daughter of a Wallachian prince from The Country of Hațeg (Țara Hațegului).
- He was the descendant of a noble family who moved from Wallachia to Țara Hațegului.
- He was the descendant of a family of princes native to Țara Hațegului.

The first two hypotheses are sustained by Antonius Bonfinius – the chronicler of Matthias Corvinus – and by Gaspar Heltai, with the aim of providing the royal family with a high-status genealogical origin, as was customary in those times. The third hypothesis was put forth by the historian Ioan de Thuróczi. The fourth is deducted from an analysis of contemporary documents.

John was probably born around 1407¹⁴ at the royal court. In 1409, his family received the Hunedoara domain with the castle where he spent his childhood and which he left in order to learn how to fight.



Fig. 6

Following the enthronement of Ladislav the Posthumus, John resigns the function of governor of Hungary and was thus named Captain General of Hungary by the young king as well as administrator of the royal incomes. He consequently receives a new coat of arms (Fig. 6)¹⁵ consisting of a shield divided in four (Fig. 7);¹⁶ in the first and fourth quarters, it depicts a raven in a sky-blue field (sky-blue

¹² *Istoria românilor* [The history of Romanians], vol. 4 (Bucharest: Enciclopedică, 2001), 338-339.

¹³ Mihail Dan, *Un stegar al luptei antiotomane. Iancu de Hunedoara* [A flag bearer of the anti-Ottoman fight. Iancu of Hunedoara] (Bucharest: Militară, 1974), 23.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ Roșu Maria, *Istoria Măruntă. Stema lărgită confirmată lui Iancu de Hunedoara, de către regele Ladislav al V-lea Postumul* [Small histories. The enlarged coat of arms confirmed to Iancu of Hunedoara by King Ladislav V], available online: <http://castelulcorvinilor.ro/2014/istorii-marunte-stema-largita-confirmata-lui-iancu-de-hunedoara-de-catre-regele-ladislav-al-v-lea-postumul/> (accessed December 14, 2015).

¹⁶ https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Familia_Huniade (accessed July 13, 2016).

was, after the fire, the noblest element symbolizing nobility and good-faith¹⁷) with its wings slightly raised and holding a gold ring in its beak, painted in natural colors. In the second and third quarters an entirely red lion was represented in a white field, standing on its hind legs and with its mouth open, who appears in a natural attack posture, supporting or offering a golden crown on one of its paws.¹⁸ The letter granting the coat of arms explains the meaning of the new heraldic figures: the red lion represented on a white field symbolizes count John injured in the many battles in which he protected the rights of the king, while the lion offering the crown symbolizes the restoration of the king's power. The red color symbolizes bravery, boldness, generosity, proving a great distinction and being worn only by princes or only with the special permission of the king, while the white color symbolizes John's sincerity.¹⁹ The shield leaning to the sinistra is protected by a golden helmet (depicted in profile) with the visor down and with a crown on it. The crest represents a golden wing.



Fig.7

Vlad Țepeș (Vlad the Impaler) (1448, 1456-1462 and 1476) is one of the most well-known voivodes of Wallachia. The nickname of Draculea (i.e. the son of Dracul) comes from his father, Vlad II Dracul, a member of the Order of the Dragon. This Order was created in 1408 by the Holy Roman Emperor and King of Hungary Sigismund of Luxemburg, primarily to defend Christian Europe against the Ottoman Empire. In 1431, Vlad II Dracul was inducted into the Order but one year later he was expelled from the Order of the Dragon because he helped the Ottomans conquer the citadels of Severin and Caransebes.

¹⁷ Marcel Sturdza-Săucești, *Heraldica* [Heraldics] (Bucharest: Ștefan Procopiu, 1974), 40.

¹⁸ Maria Roșu, *Stema lărgită confirmată lui Iancu de Hunedoara, de către regele Ladislau al V-lea Postumul* [The enlarged coat of arms confirmed to Iancu of Hunedoara by King Ladislav V], available online: http://asztrореge.blogspot.ro/2010/09/istorii-marunte_29.html?spref=fb (accessed December 14, 2015).

¹⁹ Marcel Sturdza-Săucești, *Heraldica*, 41.



Fig. 8

Fig. 8²⁰ is the most famous representation of Vlad III and dates to the second half of the sixteenth century; it is currently preserved at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. In this image, Vlad is painted in a Hungarian outfit without any symbols of power. It was most probably painted during the time in which he was held captive by Matthias Corvinus.

Manipulation is one method of influencing behavior in order to achieve a particular goal. Regarding historical context, or even historical events, such manipulation has important consequences²¹. An example of such manipulation is the dehumanization of the victims or of the enemy, in order to raise feelings of aversion, revolt or even hatred within a community. The most eloquent examples in this direction are the second and third images of Vlad III Dracula, also called the "Impaler," in which he is depicted by numerous historians or by the Transylvanian Saxon chronicles as a degenerate sadist with cannibal tendencies.



Fig. 9

²⁰ Vlad Țepeș on Wikipedia, https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vlad_%C8%9Aepe%C8%99 (accessed December 14, 2015).

²¹ Ulrich Schnakenberg, *Geschichte in Karikaturen* (Wochenschau Geschichte, Schwalbach/Ts., 2011), 5-10.

In Europe around 1450, great trials against witches accused of Satanism and causing of the plague began. In this general context, the reputation of a cruel and bloody ruler begins for Vlad the Impaler, *a vampire who is drinking human blood*, a restless and bloodthirsty spirit. He remains as such in the European mentality even today due to the vicious acts he committed during his lifetime (Fig. 10)²². The Transylvanian Saxons spread an entire history of the sadism of Vlad the Impaler by creating stories in which the Wallachian prince is depicted, as in the second image, in the infamous position of Pontius Pilate judging Jesus Christ (Fig. 9).²³ These stories were printed in Medieval Germany and spread orally even in the Slavic regions. The German stories, which appeared in Transylvania's Saxon communities, abound in such testimonials about the amazing cruelty of the Wallachian ruler. It is obvious that Vlad the Impaler was the victim of a medieval "media lynching". The Transylvanian Saxons were the ones who took revenge on the Wallachian ruler, with the support of Matthias Corvinus, king of Hungary. The Saxons forged and spread these stories precisely because the Wallachian ruler cut their commercial privileges in Wallachia.²⁴ More precisely, the Saxons who were previously relieved of custom taxes had to pay equally to other merchants. It is thus not difficult to see how and why this image of him as a vampire could be built.



Fig. 10

Ștefan cel Mare (Stephen the Great) (1457-1504) ruled in Moldavia. The first image presents Ștefan with the symbols of ruler of the country: the crown, the scepter and the sword (Fig. 11).²⁵ The second image depicts Stephen with imperial regalia: the orb with the cross (Fig. 12).²⁶ The imperial²⁷

²² Voicu Hetel, *De la Vlad Țepeș la Dracula* [From Vlad the Impaler to Dracula], available online: <http://www.hetel.ro/index.php/2010/11/773/> (accessed December 14, 2015).

²³ Vlad Țepeș on Wikipedia, https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vlad_%C8%9Aepe%C8%99 (accessed December 14, 2015).

²⁴ Ștefan Andreescu, *Vlad Țepeș* [Vlad the Impaler] (Bucharest: Enciclopedică, 1998), 244.

²⁵ *Istoria Neștiută a României: Ștefan cel Mare și Vlad Țepeș au fost dușmani de moarte* [The unknown history of Romania. Stephen the Great and Vlad the Impaler were deadly enemies], available online: <http://www.jurnaldeoas.ro/istoria-nestiuta-romaniei-stefan-cel-mare-si-vlad-tepes-au-fost-dusmani-de-moarte/> (accessed December 17, 2015).

²⁶ Ion Moraru, *Cinstirea voievodului Ștefan cel Mare la Borzesti* [The celebration of Stephen the Great at Borzesti], available online at: <http://www.desteptarea.ro/cinstirea-voievodului-stefan-cel-mare-la-borzesti/> (accessed December 17, 2015).

claim of Stephen was justified through his very first marriage to Evdokia of Kiev. The imperial claim of Stephen was also made through his second marriage to Mary of Mangup, a princess of Byzantine origins²⁸ whose family descended – as they claimed – from the Komnenoi of Trebizond, the Palaeologoi and the Assen imperial families. He also claimed imperial heritage through his third marriage to Maria Voichița, the daughter of Radu the Fair, which gave him the right to claim the throne of Wallachia²⁹. Mary of Mangup died at December 19, 1477 and a sumptuous funeral stone was placed on her tomb at Putna Monastery. She is depicted in a life-sized embroidered effigy filled with imperial symbols – from the costume, red shoes and the crown of *Basilissas* and *Despoinas*, to the two-headed eagles and even the monogram of the last Byzantine imperial family.³⁰



Fig. 11



Fig. 12

²⁷ Dumitru Năstase, *Ștefan cel Mare împărat* [Emperor Stephen the Great], available online at: <http://www.limbaromana.md/index.php?go=articole&printversion=1&n=2139> (accessed December 14, 2015); Claudiu Padurean, *Cum a primit Ștefan cel Mare titlul de împărat* [How Stephen the Great received the imperial title], available online: <http://www.romanialibera.ro/aldine/history/cum-a-primit-%C5%9Etefan-cel-mare-titulul-de-imparat-279664> (accessed December 14, 2015).

²⁸ Dumitru Năstase, *Ștefan cel Mare împărat*; Claudiu Padurean *Cum a primit Ștefan cel Mare titlul de împărat*.

²⁹ Ion Toderașcu, *Unitatea medievală românească* [The Romanian medieval unity] I (Bucharest: Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1988), 167-169.

³⁰ Nicolae Iorga, *Bizanț după Bizanț (Byzance après Byzance)* (Bucharest: 100+1 Gramar, 2002), 20.

Stephen received all the elements of imperial legitimacy from his marriage to Mary of Mangup. Medieval history – both Western as well as Eastern – is full of such examples in which the husband retained certain rights after the death of the wife. Although the rights acquired through marriage could be seen as dubious, it was nonetheless possible to transmit them to the descendants from subsequent marriages, a practice which often led to intricate conflicts.

In the Book of the Four Gospels from Humor, the following text appears: “the well-faithful and lover of Christ tsar IO Ștefan voivode, ruler of Moldowallachia.”³¹

The two images below belong to Mihai Viteazul (Michael the Brave) (1593-1601). The first image depicts Michael the Brave with symbols of subjection to the Ottoman Empire, namely the fur hat and the mantle³² (Fig. 13).³³



Fig. 13



Fig. 14

³¹ <http://www.vistieria.ro/Istoria-romanilor-Articole/Articole-Ev-Mediu/Cu-cele-mai-inalte-ceremonii.html> (accessed December 14, 2015).

³² Laura Căpiță, Carol Căpiță, Mihai Stănescu, *Didactica istoriei* [The didactics of history] (Bucharest: Ministerul Educației și Cercetării, 2006), 14.

³³ Mihai Viteazul from Wikipedia, https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mihai_Viteazul (accessed December 14, 2015).

The second portrait underlines the independent status of the ruler with his head uncovered, an animal fur cloak instead of a mantle and the baton of a general (Fig. 14).³⁴

The problem with this second image (Fig. 14) is that it was less popular.

This is most likely due to the impact of the Romantic school of history (represented first of all by N. Bălcescu). It should also not be discounted that the almost rhetorical image of the hero is not aided by the presence of male-pattern baldness.

The first image represents Constantine Brâncoveanu (1688-1714) with symbols of vassalage to the Ottoman Empire – in particular, the mantle and the fur hat with feathers (Fig. 15).³⁵



Fig. 15



Fig. 16

³⁴ Flavia Nicolae, *Mitul lui Mihai Viteazul, răsturnat de un istoric din Cluj. Vezi cine a fost de fapt domnitorul care a unificat provinciile românești* [The myth of Michael the Brave, overturned by a historian from Cluj. See how was in fact the prince who unified the Romanian principalities], available online: <http://alba24.ro/mitul-lui-mihai-viteazul-rasturnat-de-un-istoric-din-cluj-vezi-cine-a-fost-de-fapt-domnul-ce-a-unificat-provinciile-romanestie-fapt-51097.html> (accessed December 14, 2015).

³⁵ Dumitru Paraschiv, *Constantin Brâncoveanu, domnul celor "25 de războaie"* [Constantin Brâncoveanu, the prince of the "25 wars"], online at: <http://www.certitudinea.ro/articole/credinta/view/constantin-brancoveanu-domnul-celor-25-de-ani-fara-razboaie> (accessed December 17, 2015).

The second image depicts him as a prince (Fig. 16)³⁶ with symbols of independence – the scepter and the crown of the imperial princes.³⁷ Leopold I - king of Hungary and Holy Roman Emperor - granted the title of Prince of the Empire to him and his family in January 1695 after Brancoveanu offered King Leopold information about the Ottomans.

The third image presents him as the founder of Hurez Monastery together with his three sons and eight daughters (Fig. 17).³⁸

The last image depicts a part of his family in which the men wearing haircuts following contemporary Turkish fashion stand out (Fig. 18).³⁹



Fig. 17



Fig. 18

³⁶ Ștefan Ionescu, *Constantin Vodă Brâncoveanu. Viața - Domnia - Epoca* [Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu. The life – the reign – the epoch] (Bucharest: Basilica, 20140, 507.

³⁷ Marcel Sturdza-Săucești, *Heraldica*, 111.

³⁸ Ștefan Ionescu, *Constantin Vodă Brâncoveanu*, 361.

³⁹ Ibidem, 360.

The information the images impart follows, in large part, the rules of the verbal or written communication.⁴⁰ Images represent a much stronger message, a more direct means of addressing issues of interpretation⁴¹. An analysis of images must be coordinated by a set of previously prepared questions. Within this framework, the statements on the studied historical facts materialize, and this in turn facilitates greater clarity and comprehension by the students⁴². At the same time, the use of these images at the appropriate moment within the lesson increases the efficiency of the instructive-educative process, facilitates the information transmission process, and accelerates comprehension by the students of the main processes encountered in the history curricula.

⁴⁰ Laura Căpiță, Carol Căpiță, Mihai Stamatescu, *Educație non – formală, comunicare și istorie* [Non-formal education, communication and history] (Bucharest: Ministerul Educației și Cercetării, 2007), 20.

⁴¹ Louis P. Masur, "Pictures Have Now Become a Necessity: The Use of Images in American History Textbooks," in *The Journal of American History* 84 (1998): 1409-1424.

⁴² Ellen Sieber, *Teaching with Objects and Photographs*, Second edition (Indiana University Press, 2002), 6.