A Pilgrimage through Traditional Romania

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Memory, History, Religion: Exploring Irish-Romanian Boundaries in Peter Hurley’s THE WAY OF THE CROSSES

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Summary/Abstract: This paper will look at the manner in which Romania is perceived by an Irishman, Peter Hurley, living here for twenty years, traveling on foot from Săpânța to Bucharest (26 days, 650 kilometers) and recounting it all in a book, The Way of the Crosses (2013). The title of Hurley’s book may have been inspired by a hybrid Irish-Romanian experience, signaled to the author by another Irishman, Shaun Davey, who, in 2009, composed music triggered by the “lyrics” of the epitaphs on the crosses.
in the Merry Cemetery of Săpânța, Romania. Traveling, being inspired by Romanian landscape and culture, with the background of the Irish writer’s “sense of place”, Hurley’s account is meant to reach audiences beyond the Romanian border and enable further interaction. The project of walking the way of the crosses and the writing about it, drawing maps and showing pictures fit in the Irish author's preoccupations with bringing to the fore authentic traditional Romania. His travel writing becomes a means through which Romanian-Irish personal and collective memory are transmitted beyond boundaries, avoiding ideological perspectives, using elements such as Dacian pottery, Romanian ceramic production today and the story of the last family of potters in Maramures. The translation of aspects of Romanian culture involves recalling legends, rituals, beliefs, stories, historical accounts, which are resituated in a transnational context (for instance, haystack making in Maramures and the West of Ireland, Romanian children in popular costumes playing with plastic Chinese-made toy-guns, a Romanian peasant as the Last of the Mahicans). Hybridity also results from the author's bilingualism (e.g. praying at a troiță in Romanian and translating the prayer into English in the book or keeping the Romanian words for “traistă”, “horincă”, “zacusă”, “șindrile”).
Pilgrimages may be defined as journeys made to some place with the purpose of venerating it, or in order to ask there for supernatural aid, or to discharge some religious obligation. Origin. The hardships of the journey, the penitential garb worn, the mendicity it entailed made a pilgrimage a real and efficient penance (Beazley, "Dawn of Modern Geography", II, 139; Furnival, "The Stacions of Rome and the Pilgrim's Sea Voyage", London, 1867, 47). To quote a late text, the following is one of the canons enacted under King Edgar (959-75): "It is a deep penitence that a layman lay aside his weapons and travel far barefoot and nowhere pass a second night and fast and watch much and pray fervently, by day and by night and willingly undergo fatigue and be so The Romani people are a distinct ethnic and cultural group of peoples living all across Europe, who share a family of languages and sometimes a traditional nomadic modes of life. Their exact origins are unclear and even though their culture has been victimized by other cultures, they still found a way to maintain their heritage and society. Linguistic and phonological research has traced the Roma people's first place of origin to places in the Indian subcontinent, specifically linking Proto-Romani.