

după citirea cărții. Dacă studiul ar fi tradus în limba engleză, oportunitatea cercetărilor viitoare ar crește și ar apărea perspective diferite despre sefarzi, migrație, identitate și alte posibile teme.

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Radu Totoianu, Călin Anghel (eds), *Troițe și cimitire cu stâlpi funerari de pe Valea și din Munții Sebeșului. Repertoriu* [Road Side Crosses and Cemeteries with Funeral Pillars in the Sebeș Valley and Mountains: Repository], Mega Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2018, 147 p.

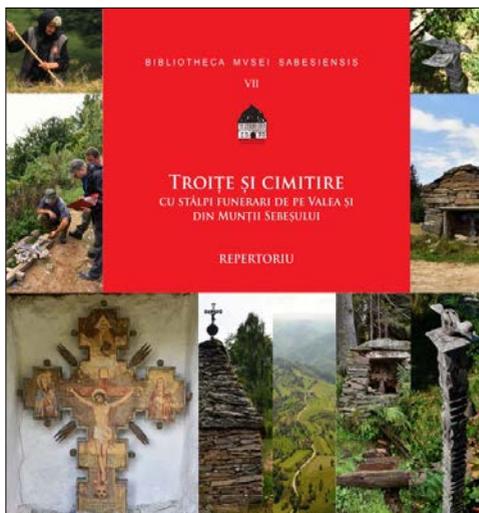
If there were nothing else good about it, the cover, the quality of the paper, and the impressive images in this book alone would tempt you to browse through it. The photos bring the subject to life with marvellous landscapes and a fascinating variety of vanishing manmade objects with their roots deep in antiquity: *aediculum* crosses and cemeteries with carved grave pillars.

The book not only looks good but is full of information based on scholarly literature and field research. The writing has an ethnographic perspective, with insights into history, folklore, mythology, geography, philology and topics that fall between the lines, even anthropology.

Its primary aim is to present a catalogue of *aediculum* crosses and traditionally decorated cemeteries that can still be found beside roads and villages in the Transylvanian region of Romania. Its focus is the Sebeș Valley and Mountains. The book's secondary aim is to raise awareness of the rarity of these objects and to encourage local people to appreciate that what they have is special.

The crosses and grave pillars are in danger of being destroyed not only by weather, but also by parishioners or handymen who replace them with new ones or repair them without respecting their unique characteristics.

The narrative starts by setting the pieces in context (p. 4–55). Known as “troițe” in Romanian, the locals call these *aediculum* crosses simply “crosses,” and I will use this word in my review. They are simple structures, often painted and



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embellished with carvings that show diverse images and ornaments. The decorations usually cover most of the surface. Some crosses have a little roof to protect them against bad weather but many are contained within an *aediculum* (small shrine) made of wood or stone. They were erected to mark and protect roads, borders, cemeteries and fountains. The crosses are an expression of the people's devotion and belief in God's power.

This inventory is the result of many years' research by keen-eyed specialists. They know how to communicate and how to use images to enhance their goals. The book is not a simple list with descriptions of what may still be found in the region, but a rich repertory, based on a large variety of pieces, each of them classified by means of a clear, logical typology that is modelled on existing categorising systems used in other areas.

The presentation of these folk monuments *in situ* is enhanced with geographical, historical, demographic, and administrative data. The authors "travel" in the book with their readers, telling them how to find each location, and combining their specialist knowledge with the enjoyment of enthusiastic travellers who can appreciate the beauty of the landscape as much as their academic goals.

There is also a panoramic view of the region, taken from the air, helping to give readers a sense of the deep integration of the cultural and geographical landscape. Some names of crosses or of places could have been explained by using the geographical location alone. But the authors were not content with such a dry approach and have added poetic descriptions that lift the whole experience of reading this lovely book to another level.

How the cemeteries are organised depends on what type of village they are connected to. The authors follow a well-known classification of settlement types that differentiates between *dispersed villages*, *elongated villages* and *compact villages*. I hope specialists will appreciate the intricacies of this system.

The book also contains a critical analysis of the existing literature on crosses and grave pillars. Typologies of crosses have been published by Tudor Pamfile, Al. Tzigara-Samurçaș, Grigore Ionescu, Tache Papahagi, George Oprescu, Romulus Vulcănescu, Ionel Opreșan, Carmina Maior, Valer Deleanu and Adrian Stoian. The authors have justified their own point of view in relation to each typology, ultimately preferring those used by Carmina Maior and Valer Delean.

Discussing the literature on grave pillars, the authors mention studies by Gheorghe Pavelescu, Romulus Vulcănescu, and Cristian Popa. Grave pillars are usually placed directly beside the graves of men. The pillars are carved from top to bottom with geometrical motifs such as "wolf's teeth" and rare floral or vegetal patterns. In most cases these sculptures are painted in red, black, green and blue, but seldom white. On the top of the pillar there is typically a carved dove made of wood ("the soul-bird"). This custom was once widespread across Europe and the Far East, occurring in such disparate regions as the Volga Valley, Japan and China. As well as this, the authors give examples of the folk poetry that often accompanied a young man's funeral rites, and cite mythology related to the carved pillar and "the soul-bird."

The second part of the book gives us a detailed list of crosses, cemeteries, and carved funeral pillars (p. 58-147), accompanied by photographs showing them from several angles. The authors group their finds in different chapters with divisions and sub-divisions numbered with Arabic and Latin numerals, and colour-coded to aid understanding. They give us: crosses marking borders (13 pieces), crosses at roadsides (25 pieces), crosses at crossroads (9 pieces), crosses showing fountains and springs (9 pieces), crosses in cemeteries (18 pieces), cenotaph crosses (3 pieces) and cemeteries with funeral pillars (16 cemeteries).

In almost each typology, other subdivisions are provided, such as the item's name, location, the materials used, the artisanal techniques involved in its construction, its origin (e.g. Celtic, Byzantine), morphological features, decoration, inscriptions, dimensions, state of conservation and other observations.

Besides this systematic presentation, the authors discuss opinions about the possible painter, modifications over time, remarks on the quality and style of recovery, comparisons with other similar crosses, and also the locals' points-of-view.

The research into crosses, cemeteries, and funeral pillars is presented from the perspective of outsiders and insiders, with critical views, as it seems that over the years, the authors have become familiar with all the changes related to these folk monuments as well as how the local people regard them. For specialists, the second part of the book needs to be digested over time. It could be a source of anthropological and philological reflections and future studies.

This research could reach a larger audience if it were translated into English, providing a basis for fascinating comparative ethnographic and mythological studies. Sections of this book can already be found on the Internet, but only in Romanian. Its publication was enabled by the financial support of the Romanian Minister of Cultural, Sebeș Town Hall, The Ioan Raica Municipality Museum, Sebeș, and the Lucian Blaga Cultural Centre, Sebeș.

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