Alexandru Dimitrie Xenopol's Historical Eloquence

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Abstract: This paper focuses on historical terminology (Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiană), organised on an objective, where the historian (Alexandru Dimitrie Xenopol) attempts to communicate with his contemporary receptors, i.e. the nineteenth century, a terminology analyzed from the perspective of the scientific terminology in use nowadays. The aim of the historian, i.e. A. D. Xenopol, was, besides asserting a scientific reality addressed to his colleagues, to clear for his contemporaries the relevance of the permanence of their existence within a natural space: within this Carpathian-Danube landscape, there is a population called Romanians that evolved at the time of the events triggered by the Emperor Trajan (the conquest of Dacia). The type of scientific discourse of history in A. D. Xenopol describes, refers to, informs, and uses the linguistic symbol together with photographs, maps, tables, charts that address a reader (listener).

Keywords: history's eloquence, anthropological constant, stylistic procedures, linguistic symbol.

This paper studies historical terminology (Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiană), organized as an objective, where the historian (A. D. Xenopol) attempts to communicate with his contemporary receptors, i.e. the nineteenth century, a terminology analyzed from the point of view of the scientific terminology in use nowadays.

Besides asserting a scientific reality addressed to his colleagues, the aim of the historian, i.e. A. D. Xenopol, was to clear for his contemporaries the relevance of the permanence of their existence within a natural space: within this Carpathian - Danube landscape, there is a population called Romanians that evolved at the time of the events triggered by the Emperor Trajan (the conquest of Dacia)¹.

The events are divided in Books: "Book I, Ancient History, The Formation of the Romanian Nation, from the oldest times until the invasion of the Hungarians, 513 B.C. – 900 A.D."², (as well as with Titus Livius, Ab urbe condita); the history of Romanians refers to events that are marked with figures and identified before Christ or anno domini. "Chapter I, Pre-Roman Times, 513 B.C. – 106 A.D."³

The largest amount of the revolute information refers to wars, morals, daily life, institutions, and legends that have become laws, causes over the centuries.

The documents used by A. D. Xenopol are in French: “Revue historique,” Paris, XLVII, p. 347, Julius Klaproth⁴ self-reference, references in the text corpus,⁵ notes, referring to Herodotus and Strabo, quotations in Greek, Greek writings and translations, reference to German editions of the Latin texts (Claudius Aelian, Hippocrates),⁶ many references to German sources (Boechk, Müllenhoff),⁷ referring to the Greek texts⁸. The notes quite often appear cross-referred to determine the logic of the truth and resort to international historians, e.g. Russians - "Nadezîn,"⁹ and A. D. Xenopol's Romanian contemporaries (B. P. Hasdeu, D. Onciul, N. Densusianu, Gr. Tocilescu, I. Andreescu¹⁰, etc.)

A. D. Xenopol's interest started from the methodology of historical studies with positivist, ethnopsychological research of the European civilisations (Ranke, Mommsen, Steinthal, ¹ A. D. Xenopol, Expunere pe scurt a principiilor fundamentale ale istoriei, in A. D. Xenopol, Scrieri sociale şi politice, 1967, p. 217-231.
³ Ibid., p. 46.
⁴ A. D. Xenopol, Ibid., p. 36.
⁵ Ibid., p. 58.
⁶ Ibid., p. 44.
⁷ Ibid., p. 44.
⁸ Ibid., p. 58.
⁹ Ibid., p. 57.
¹⁰ Ibid.
Lazarus, Guizot, Buckle, Draper, Lecky. 

The study of the first historical level starts with observation, which represents the method used by the author. Observation occurs before hypothesis, induction and formulation of the laws of history and leads to their deduction. A. D. Xenopol is the first systematic thinker in the field of history to manifest starting from the system promoted by the thinking received in the contemporary historical school.

A. D. Xenopol’s historical activity contains information taken from national sources, hypotheses that he took from various documents. He checked many sources, close in time and space to the author, with a careful translation of the original, with sections rules, with applications to the cross-disciplinary horizon (archaeology, medicine, statistics, philosophy, politics), insisting on the monographic typology.

A. D. Xenopol favors a philosophy of history, which involves entering the perspective of thinking, a logical-linguistic thinking of history, which develops on a cross-disciplinary basis of diverse methods to approach the issues, especially in the compartment of research on the relationship between language and history.

The phenomenology of Romanian thinking of history theory and philosophy manifests itself as a meditation on the criteria of comprehension of the historical concepts.

History’s relationships with theory represents a territory of closeness and not opposition, a space of prolonging the theory in the empirical plane, according to M. Mogoș in Cuvânt pentru deschiderea cursului de istorie națională în Academia Mihăileană, 1843.

In 1860, B. P. Hasdeu insisted on the necessity of data collection, on their understanding partly in order to erect the edifice of a general treatise of the history of Romanians. Between 1873 and 1875, he published fragments of Istoria critică a românilor (B. P. Hasdeu only published the studies on the Dacians and foundations).

Outlining B. P. Hasdeu’s methodological options, in 1874, Al. Obodescu, in Uitilea, scopul și tendințele arheologiei calls for an analytical method, a chronological system, a geographical method, and a lexicographic form, in relation to the unshaken servicing of the historical truth.

The point of view on history of the Junimea group, by stressing the critical spirit, insisted on the relationship between accidental observation, leading to assumptions, and intentional observation. The modern theory of historical sources A. D. Xenopol adopts belongs to D. Oncul.

A. D. Xenopol’s theses on historical series, which modify and stable historical series is structured on the dynamics of the terminology of relief, the toponymy obvious in the three provinces; it is outlined by toponymical references and occupational ones (shepherding, as basic occupation), all related with the source of names according to four criteria: the matter of discourse, the time of reference, the nature of the audience, and the aim of the discourse. The demonstration of the validity of historical arguments refers back to: 1. gen/gen/ (genus/ judiciale), 2. gen/ (genus deliberativum), 3. gen/ (genus demonstrativum). These historical types are not pure; they are interfering. In the strategic system of back-reference to the historical past, the present, the real life and the mental system interfere permanently to mutually propose one as the double of the other or as the double of one within the other.

"The unanimous confessions of the ancient writers are the strongest support of this opinion. They all confess that the Get-Dacians were

education started in German. The first two universities (in Iași, in 1860, and in Bucharest, in 1864). The orthographic reforms of 1852 allowed for a unique educational system for the entire Romanian territory. 

Adrian Pop, ibid. p. 20.


Al. Obodescu, in Uitilea, scopul și tendințele arheologiei. 

Therefore, for A. D. Xenopol, the referential plane of treating history is subjected to an empirical and conceptual process of investigation, after an internal organization, which refers to the linguistic code of the Romanian language and to the universal metalinguistic code, of the type of argumentation in the historical studies.\textsuperscript{25} Quite often history's causality appears to be linked to A. D. Xenopol, depending on the way of thinking. Therefore, I specified the term \textit{structure} dependent on the idea-level of feelings, passive affections (pleasure, pain, emotions) and dependent on active affections (tendencies, interests), at the compositional level, obviously on a linguistic level.

\textit{Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiană} by A. D. Xenopol is a comprehensive work (the first volume, comprising 619 pages and 100 notes, quickly sold out), which, in the nineteenth century, proposed a new scientific system, with a sequencing that gave evidence that Romanian history reached maturity and a surprising wealth of ideas.\textsuperscript{26}

We should take note of the importance of bibliography\textsuperscript{27} with A. D. Xenopol in his writing the volumes (for instance, the chapter on \textit{Imperiul valaĥ-bulgăre} (The Vlach-Bulgarian Empire contains 85 notes)\textsuperscript{28}, an extensive list of references research relies upon contains historical works, documents, chronicles, works on philosophy, literature, sociology, economics, politics, pedagogy, maps, and illustrations.

The richness of A. D. Xenopol’s sources and the lucidity of his research as well as his encyclopedic background, the presence of data based on original sources: narratives, diplomatic documents, monuments, inscriptions, numismatic collections, folkloric collections determined the author to assist entities and a bibliography necessary to national history.\textsuperscript{29}

The use of a scientifically linguistic system depends on the historian's intellectual constitution and the system of his linguistic background, described by the author\textsuperscript{30} in \textit{Istoria ideilor mele}, with reference to his intellectual activity and background, which also implies back reference to the sources in special fields, sources of the synthesis.

The terms of historical description that A. D. Xenopol uses to present the population, also refer to the formation of national feeling, within the international space (a creative, scientific, integrating type of terminology). He uses terms for spaces, events, personalities, systems of nations, types of leaders\textsuperscript{31} references to the legal and political demonstration, arguments concerning the addressee, \textit{ad populum}, which refers to readers. Moreover, these arguments are structured antithetically in \textit{pro} and \textit{con} arguments (hence, our resort to articles in the journal "Arhiva")

Historical demonstration refers to the past, its object is \textit{politics} to sustain a thesis, which refers to the future Union of the three principalities via the present.

The study on A. D. Xenopol's \textit{Istoriile civilizaţiunii} [Histories of Civilisation] opens a modern path to treating Romanian historiography, that began with \textit{Studii asupra stării noastre actuale}, 1871\textsuperscript{32} with elements of the dynamic sociology of history, carried out by means of arguments connected by the \textit{sender: ad personam} arguments, referring to the historian's person (A. D. Xenopol, \textit{Istoria ideilor mele}).

The historical development series, an organizing principle of the treatise is first enunciated in the study \textit{Les principes fondamentaux de l'histoire}, (Paris, 1899) and completed in \textit{La théorie de l'histoire}, (Paris, 1908), where A. D. Xenopol proposed

\textsuperscript{24} A. D. Xenopol, \textit{Istoria Românilor, Dacia anteromână, Dacia română şi năvăllile barbare}, volume I, București, 1985, p. 70.


\textsuperscript{26} Cf. Al. Zub, "A. D. Xenopol – orizont bibliologic și documentar", in \textit{A. D. Xenopol, studii privitoare la viață și opera sa}, Ibid., p. 21-34.

\textsuperscript{27} Al. Zub shows that the author's strong-will while preparing the six volumes before their publication and his bearing the mark of creativity, i.e. the historical method, appears in Miron Costa's epigraph: "It is not time under man's control, the poor man under the times." Cf. Al. Zub, \textit{Sinteza xenopoliană}, in A. D. Xenopol, \textit{Istoria Românilor, Dacia anteromână, Dacia română şi năvăllile barbare}. Ibid. volume I, București, 1985, p. 19.

\textsuperscript{28} A. D. Xenopol, \textit{Istoria Românilor, Dacia anteromână, Dacia română şi năvăllile barbare} \textit{istoria românilor}, p. 411-414.

\textsuperscript{29} Cf. Radu Vulpe, \textit{Istoria veche a României la A. D. Xenopol, in A. D. Xenopol, studii privitoare la viața și opera sa}, Ibid., p. 35-45.


dismantling history in economic, geographical, social, and individual time units. This theory also resorts to the study of implicit logical operations, specific to history.

A. D. Xenopol was aware of the exceptional mission to elaborate the first synthetic and complete history treatise of Romanians; in Precuvântare [Foreword], he asserts that Istoria românilor în Dacia Traiană [History of the Romanians in Trajan’s Dacia] represents a first written communicative synthesis. His study operates with certain instruments belonging to scientific style. The form of historical terminology manifestation also has a secant to popularized science, a tolerant form with an expressive function, constantly orienting the receptors toward a sympathetic and political knowledge:

"Should we have to wait for the entire historical material of a people to be discovered, we would never have the opportunity to present the course of life; as discoveries are done permanently; knowledge stretches and deepens, incessantly pushing the horizons of history. [...] Each time mirrors, in the historical works they present, people’s knowledge at that time on their past. Each time is thus entitled to have its history."

A. D. Xenopol refers to a way of classifying reality historically, by means of the possibility to demonstrate and to give a name to the evolution of a populace in space and time, by describing the century-old movements of a populace dependent on the stability of the location, community, which is under the sign of cosmic succession.

History manifests at the level of the individual’s existence by means of thinking, diverse present entities as mechanically and voluntarily acquired skills, while operating in work relationships, of moral adjustment, of play, out of the desire to adjust socially, structures, which are mentally projected on a truth situated in past times. They depend on historical genres, on the division of historical eloquence and on the parts of the historical discourse.

What is important in A. D. Xenopol’s achievement refers to “the qualities of this wonderful book of the people’s history, which both educated and enchanted entire generations of readers.”

The study method of regarding the past times A. D. Xenopol uses relates to analogical relationships, adopting various criteria, such as: function, structure, placement etc.:

"It is easy to think that a balanced emperor, caring for the fate of the empire, such as Hadrian, who retreated to Asia down to the Euphrates line, when seeing the barbarians’ attacks on the lower Danube, would have said, on a second thought, that he would also leave Dacia to retreat in Europe on the Danube line."

In structuring the historical information, to A. D. Xenopol the basic function remains to establish a relationship between the present and the historical roots. The aim of the synthesis on the history of Romanians refers to the possibility to mark a crucial moment in the contemporary history, settled on historical ground, the first merit being the very writing history.

The issues regarding the structuring of the Romanians history proposed by A. D. Xenopol are promoted in inaugural lessons, related to the understanding of history’s methodology and philosophy as a cross-disciplinary territory, starting for the particular to the general. A. D. Xenopol’s historical discourse inserts diverse argumentative and aesthetic strategies:

a. the past can be regarded only through the prism of a culture contemporary to the written work, and

b. consequently, what is construed by history constitutes the reflection of contemporary interests and anxieties, which should be attributed to the immutable nature (geography), a confirmation of the metamorphosis of the community, visible in the elements of language (toponymy), which confirms the continuity of Romanians in the Carpathian-Danube space.

The object of science in Istoria românilor în Dacia Traiană is provided by the historical

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34 Ibid. p. 31.
36 Cf. Daniela Rovera-Frumuşani, Ibid. p. 27.
38 A. D. Xenopol, Istoria Românilor, Dacia anteromână, Dacia română și năvălirile barbare, Ibid. p. 196.
39 "We are light years away from the grey dipych with dates and names; the effort to study cultural elements of the past emerges in all their contexts and determinations, in a pluralistic reading, aiming not only at artistic achievement but also within the social and political framework, philosophical coordinates, and anthropological structures." Cf. Al. Zurb, Sinteza istorică, in A. D. Xenopol, Istoria Românilor, Dacia anteromână, Dacia română și năvălirile barbare, Ibid. volume I, București, 1985, p. 20.
40 Cf. Adrian Pui, Ibid. p. 15.
facts, by the events determined by the convergence of oral or written witness accounts; [first historians of humanity would be Herodotus (485-401) and Thucydides (470-401 B.C.).].

The term of structure (translated from the German word Gestalt) starts from an idea in biology that admits the impossibility to isolate a function, without modifying the ensemble, here the structure refers to the perception of form of A. D. Xenopol’s scientific approach to history in Istoria Românilor din Dacia Traiană. The author defends his ideas in various texts, as well as in Introducer.  He explains the macro-organizing system of the study (if we consider the image offered by the chapters of A. D. Xenopol’s study, we realize that the stages of history presentation are to be found a century later as well, e.g. Istoria românilor by Constantin C. Giurescu and Dinu C. Giurescu).

Most of the elements describing the past are arguments referring to message, the sources of these arguments are multiple, discussed according tradition.

In A. D. Xenopol’s historical eloquence we can distinguish five components: 1. ερεσί (inventio), the choice of the theme and arguments, visible in the historical series; 2. ἔθιμα (dispositio), ordering matter according to BOOKS; 3. λέξις (elocutio), drafting the discourse with demonstrative arguments from the documents presented in the text and notes; 4. μνημόνια (memoria), memorising the dates in the type of mental behaviour and permanence in names; 5. Ἀναλημματικία (pronomatia), i.e. public presentation of the work (not only in writing, but in oratorial lectures), contributing to perfecting the theory and practice of history closely related to the material spiritual life of society.


At times, A. D. Xenopol underlines the deeds of some personalities, who appear in titles: "From Trajan to Aurelian," or he resorts to linguistic actions: "Trajan’s remembrance in Dacian toponymy," He also insists on the models adopted implicitly or explicitly by the population: "The Property," "Romanian Nobility," "The Volvodes," or he comments possible reactions of some categories of contemporary receptors to such actions: "Geographical Argument."

From the didactic standpoint, the historical system contains a series of objects photographs, which interferes a syncretic semiotics between the planes of the content (historical series) and of the historical demonstration. It depends on the length of the reign that differ, at least in the demonstration space, and supported by national and international documents (Mirea cel Bătrân, predecesorii, epoca sa, urmaşii săi: 53 pages: Ţelean cel Mare, 1457-1504: 132 pages). The Romans history is part of the world history, with a distinct sound in its relationship with the Turks, the Greeks, the Slavs, some having a similar religion (Orthodox). The historical elements lead to the creation of a national specificity, with certain special structures, modified by the duration of the nations’ existence (hence, the necessity to note the name of the location or of the space of reference according to the system of the era or to their contemporary name):

"This is why one does not know when measures are taken, very serious strengthening measures at the mouth of the Danube. The Fifth Macedonian Legion, which took part in the Dacian expeditions, was moved to Scythia Minor (today’s Dobrogea), after Decebal’s demise, and camped at Troesmis (Ilgita), where the entire fortified camp of this legion was unearthed, scattered with many numerous."

The icon as analogy and degree of convention is structured on the dynamics of the similarity of elements construed during the 19th century by the receptors (today’s Dobrogea, Ilgita), or a

41 Cf. A. D. Xenopol, Istoria Românilor, Dacia anteromăna, Dacia romană și națiunile bărbare, in Ibid., p. 35-45.
44 Ibid., p. 200.
reference to an archaeological site (where the entire camp of this legion was unearthed). One can talk about an informative scavenging under the contemporary circumstances: “That these villages were inhabited it is also known from the names of many of them, which are clearly derived from people, e.g. Vânători [Hunters], Vorânceni [of the Magistrates], Bisericani [the churchgoers].”

The encompassing structure of A. D. Xenopol’s treating history is modified according to the fields referred to: insofar as language is concerned, the author often resorts to various branches, more or less closed. The nature of terminology determines the wording. The passing from a linguistic modality to another builds up a reversed linguistic network, with lines of gentle passage, paying close attention to chronicles:

Thus, a document from Alexandru cel Bun in 1419 bestows to Dragomir and Iaiană three villages in Dragos’s field, on the Nechid, there, among the villages where their houses lay, Pașcanii and Drăgoțești. The note referring to the publication of the document in “Arhiva istorică,” but mainly the interpretation of the phrases printed in Italics: “Showing him where his houses are sometimes this referred to the founder of the village, as every settlement should have a beginning. They must have been founded by someone. There must have been a man who first used the axe to clear a forest or the spade to dig holes to erect the posts for a house. In the beginning, that man and his family must have been the first inhabitants of the village that was named after them. This is quite obvious in the village of Mănești, county of Fălciu, situated on the Elan Valley, a village founded by Man, Duma’s father, son of Maia, mentioned in a document of 1490, but which goes back to Man’s times around 1400.”

A. D. Xenopol’s historical demonstration starts from elements concerning his personal opinion. If something would have seemed inexplicable to him, or insufficiently understood or explained, then, there is not such thing (or should not have been), true as there may seem to be a lack of evidence for one of the hypothesis. This means that another hypothesis at choice should be deemed true, in the attempt to direct the opinion toward the conclusion desired by A. D. Xenopol.

Beyond A. D. Xenopol’s monumental documentation appears the position of the author in a pictorial world, visible in the details also provided by an on-going attention to the possibility to create an imaginary space and simultaneously creative, useful to contemporaries and which has become familiar to the reader of the twenty-first century: “The Troesmis garrison found a fulcrum in the town of Tyras, an old Milietian colony at the mouth of the Dnepr (Close to today’s Akerman or Cetatea Albă).”

A. D. Xenopol’s historical creation opens the era of monographic historical analyses and crowns the historians’ effort, from Cantemir, to Hasdeu, to Șincai, and to Hurmuzachi. Some lectures in A. D. Xenopol’s ancient texts were revived and modified, but the essential element inserted in studying the historical series is roughly preserved a century on by other detailed studies and under different scientific conditions.

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