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## The idea of luxury between the history of consumption and political thought and its implications for the history of Southeastern Europe\*\*

In the last time, the word luxury is often mentioned in historical studies, as either a simple adjective or a research topic. At this point, diversity is outstanding. Some authors avoid any clarification of the concept they are using and they prefer a strictly empirical approach. From an economic perspective, luxury represents any product other than mass consumption. From a moral or philosophical point of view, luxury is seen as a form of decadence or as a symptom of frivolity and of guilty pleasures with no wider significance for politic and social developments in history. Whereas it may seem a worldly topic, luxury is difficult to approach, because it is at the same time a superlative bearing no degree of comparison and in the same time the image of profound evil; furthermore, there is no differentiation between the aspects highlighting it.

Consequently, luxury has been under-represented in historical and sociological research and for long time it was seen especially as an expression of social decadence, a view powerfully influenced by Christian morality, although later analysis attributed it an important role in the development of capitalism and of the consumer society<sup>1</sup>. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Henri Baudrillart published a history of luxury in four volumes. He has seen luxury as an important aspect of any civilization but he had to face a major difficulty: to find a unitary and secure way for analyzing luxury<sup>2</sup>. For this reason, the author introduced a distinction between public luxury and private luxury. From the same standpoint, recent approaches

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\* Conf. univ. dr., Facultatea de Istorie, Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Ia i, România; liviu.pilat@gmail.com.

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<sup>1</sup> W. Sombart, *Liebe, Luxus und Kapitalismus*, Berlin, 1913; G. Pöll, *Luxus. Eine Wirtschaftstheoretische Analize*, Berlin, 1980.

<sup>2</sup> H. Baudrillart, *Histoire du luxe privé et public depuis l'Antiquité jusqu'a nos jours*, I-IV, Paris, 1880.

mention aristocratic luxury and democratic luxury<sup>3</sup>. In both cases, the distinction is required by the necessity to conciliate the economic aspects and the ideological debate on luxury.

The works of H. Baudrillard and W. Sombart in particular have shown the need to study such aspects, stimulating research by economic historians who seek to do away with the ambiguities around the concept and establish the nature of the link between demand for luxury goods and the acceleration of economic growth. Thus there is a close connection between luxury goods and the development of a capitalist economy, whereby middle-class access to luxury leads to the appearance of the consumer society. Certainly many other aspects are involved in this process, maintaining a close link between luxury, sexuality and power and affecting ideas of beauty, elegance and sensibility, gender and women's fashion, and political thought; taken together, these offer a broader perspective on the construction of modern society.

A volume on the history of luxury in the eighteenth century has shown the connection between increased circulation of luxury commodities and debates on luxury at the time, involving such illustrious names as David Hume or Jean-Jacques Rousseau<sup>4</sup>. Maxine Berg's work on eighteenth-century England shows the role of luxury goods in forming modern consumer society<sup>5</sup>. Susan Mosher Stuard looks at the impact of luxury goods on the market in fourteenth-century Italy and consequent changes in fashion<sup>6</sup>. Although historians have paid greater attention to luxury, this has largely concentrated on the history of consumption<sup>7</sup>, even in works of cultural history<sup>8</sup>, and on the impact on economic<sup>9</sup> and political thought<sup>10</sup>. An important volume examining consumption in the Ottoman Empire concludes, among other findings, that although little-known so far, the history of consumption may serve as a bridge between economic, social and cultural history and the history

<sup>3</sup> Christopher J. Berry, *The Idea of Luxury: A Conceptual and Historical Investigation*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 30-32.

<sup>4</sup> *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*, edited by Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, Basingtoke, Palgrave, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth Century Britain*, Oxford University Press, 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Susan Mosher Stuard, *Gilding the Market: Luxury and Fashion in Forteenth Century Italy*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> *Consumption and the World of Goods*, edited by John Brewer and Roy Porter, Routledge, 1993; Daniel Roche, *Histoire des choses banales. Naissance de la consommation dans les sociétés traditionnelles (XVIIe-XIXe siècles)*, Paris, Fayard, 1997; *Luxury Trades and Consumerism in Ancien Régime Paris: Studies in the History of Skilled Workforce*, edited by Robert Fox and Anthony John Turner, Ashgate, 1998; *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe, 1650-1850*, edited by Maxine Berg and Hellen Clifford, Manchester University Press, 1999; Evelyn S. Welch, *Shopping in the Renaissance: Consumer Cultures in Italy, 1400-1600*, Yale University Press, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> *The Consumption of Culture, 1600-1800: Object, Text, Image*, edited by Ann Bermingham, John Brewer, Routledge, 1995.

<sup>9</sup> Till Wahnbaeck, *Luxury and Public Happiness. Political Economy in the Italian Enlightenment*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Jeremy Jennings, *The Debate about Luxury in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century French Political Thought*, in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 68 (2007), no. 1, p. 79-105.

of art<sup>11</sup>. From the history of consumption view, luxury is an object of consumption, a force that drives the development of society, but we should remark that its definition remains ambiguous.

Other authors underline the fluidity and relativity of luxury. The huge difference between modern and early modern luxury is that the later was not used to describe a category of objects and desires. The early English uses of luxury tended to invoke particular processes by which moral, social and political order was corrupted. The way in which the conceptual vocabulary is used has the effect of complicating definitive moral distinctions between destructive luxury and productive luxury that emerge in the debates beginning with the 18th century<sup>12</sup>. Another opinion considers that is impossible to define luxury in a general acceptation, because the concept of luxury is an explicitly relative one, being indissolubly linked with the social and historical context in which it was elaborated. To avoid that difficulty, we shall focus not on the concept in itself, but on how it was perceived and opposed in particular context<sup>13</sup>.

This aspect emphasizes a serious methodological gap, namely the impossibility of establishing the criteria according to which a good is considered a luxury good. For our times, we have a series of criteria, such as price, quality, rarity, based on which we can assess an item as luxury. However, a historian cannot use them to index certain 16<sup>th</sup>-century goods as luxury, unless such goods are common to people of those times, too. In order to make the distinction between luxury goods and common goods, a historian cannot rely on his own consideration, but he must find out what 16<sup>th</sup>-century people thought of luxury.

Criteria are especially hard to identify when a society does not have the notion of luxury. Historians who use the notion of luxury goods for historical periods and for regions where the word luxury were not used actually commit a methodological mistake. Luxury is an idea, even a political concept<sup>14</sup>, and it cannot be reduced at a sum of goods or a socioeconomic reality. In other words, luxury is the idea that defines and creates a reality. A simple classification of certain items as luxury goods, based on price and refinement, is not even by far a history of luxury<sup>15</sup>. Also, the evolution of the idea of luxury must be correlated with the circulation of goods and with consumption. Items are very important in the reconstruction of the material culture of a historical period, but the opinion according to which objects may depict the ideas of the epoch is a vain claim.

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<sup>11</sup> *Consumption Studies and the History of Ottoman Empire, 1550-1992. An Introduction*, edited by Donald Quataert, State University of New York Press, 2000.

<sup>12</sup> Alison V. Scott, *Literature and the Idea of Luxury in Early Modern England*, Routledge, 2016, p. 4-9.

<sup>13</sup> Emanuela Zanda, *Fighting Hydra-Like Luxury: Sumptuary Regulation in the Roman Republic*, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013, p. 1

<sup>14</sup> Christopher J. Berry, *The Idea of Luxury*, p. 20.

<sup>15</sup> For a recent "very materialistic" approach to luxury and its history, centred on objects and considering that the objects reveal a great deal about the ideas and cultural practices, see *Luxury. A Rich History*, ed. Peter McNeill and Giorgio Riello, Oxford University Press, 2016.

Consequently, luxury must be regarded as a cultural construct with a strong impact upon certain economic, political and social aspects.

In an excellent writing, John Sekora emphasized that luxury is a specifically product of Western thought, a “system of discourse” which “embraces a network of fluctuating social, philosophic and theological presuppositions”<sup>16</sup>. The term luxury comes from Latin, and Romans defined as *luxuria* anything depraved and against nature<sup>17</sup>. Christianity included *luxuria* among the seven capital sins<sup>18</sup>. Lechery represents a desire of the flesh and it is different from passion, because it goes against Christian morals and it represents the control of body upon the soul. Its connotations are especially sexual, but restless desire also involves lust for knowledge and lust for power. The term has an important political component, given that it was used for defending morals and social hierarchy. On one hand, in the Middle Ages, by using *luxuria* to criticize royal courts during crisis, authors blame carnal pleasure, too much attention given to the care of the body, scandalous clothing, which lead to lechery, effeminacy and sodomitical pursuits<sup>19</sup>. On the other hand, royalty assumed the defence of Christian morals through sumptuary laws, the purpose of which was to keep the poor away from vice and to limit the excess of the rich and strong<sup>20</sup>. The physical appearance and clothing become an expression of hierarchy, meant to illustrate the social order and the stratification of the dominant pole of society. Consequently, whether the discussion concerns the criticism of royal court or social control, in both cases, *luxuria* represents a capital sin and it has a negative connotation.

Unlike in Latin Christendom, in the East European space there is no term for *luxuria* or any other word with the same meaning. The old Greek word *truph* usually translated by luxury had a different meaning than the Latin word *luxuria*<sup>21</sup>. Evagrius Ponticus brought an important contribution to the defining of lechery as a capital sin, but he preferred the term *porneia* (from which the modern word “pornography” derives); he referred strictly to the demon of sexual desire<sup>22</sup>. *Luxuria* in Slavonic is translated by *liubopi tie* (literary, love for pleasure), while *pi ta* corresponds to the Latin word *delicia* and to the Greek word *truph*. Other wishes

<sup>16</sup> J. Sekora, *Luxury. The Concept in Western Thought, Eden to Smollett*, London, 1973, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> Emanuela Zanda, *Fighting Hydra-Like Luxury*, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Simple defined as the vice opposed to the virtue of chastity. For details see *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, VIII, Thomson Gale, 2002, p. 871-876; Du Cange, *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, V, Niort, 1885, p. 157.

<sup>19</sup> C. D. Fletcher, „Corruption at Court? Crisis and the Theme of *Luxuria* in England and France, c. 1340-1422”, *The Court as a Stage. England and the Low Countries in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Steven Gunn and Antheun Janse, The Boydell Press, 2006, p. 28-31.

<sup>20</sup> J. Sekora, *Luxury*, p. 30-33.

<sup>21</sup> Robert J. Gorman, Vanessa B. Gorman, *Corrupting Luxury in Ancient Greek Literature*, University of Michigan Press, 2014, especially Chapter 5.

<sup>22</sup> Columba Stewart, *Evagrius Ponticus and the Eight Generic Logismoi*, in *In the Garden of Evil: the Vices and Culture in the Middle Ages*, ed. Richard Newhauser, Toronto, 2005, p. 18; Angela Tilby, *The Seven Deadly Sins: Their Origin in the Spiritual Teaching of Evagrius the Hermit*, London, 2009, the chapter *The thought of lust*.

covered in the Western space by the term *luxuria* are expressed through different words. Hence, lust for power is expressed using the word *liubonachialstvo*<sup>23</sup> (literary, love for power), which corresponds to the Greek *filarhias*. A significant difference from the Western space can also be noted concerning sumptuary legislation. In Byzantium, the purpose of sumptuary laws is not to keep the poor away from vices. They do not regulate the clothing of social categories, but their purpose is to preserve the purple and other clothing items for the imperial court, because the purple robe was an essential symbol of the emperor's absolute power<sup>24</sup>. Another purpose is economic protectionism. The sumptuary law of Emperor John Vatatzes forced the subjects to wear clothes manufactured in their country, thus affecting the economic interests of Venice<sup>25</sup>. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Gemistos Plethon recommended to the despot of Morea to follow the example of ancient Spartans and to restrain the imports of useless foreign goods, in order to import only iron and weapons, necessary for protection against the Ottomans<sup>26</sup>.

During the Ottoman domination, the rules imposed by sultans in terms of clothing are far from being considered anti-luxury measures. Christians and non-Muslims in general had certain sumptuary restrictions<sup>27</sup>, but the purpose was not to keep them away from vice, but to distinguish them from Muslims. The dressing code imposed by Suleyman Magnificent served a mainly administrative purpose, because it established the clothing rules for each Ottoman official. Clothes illustrated the political hierarchy of the Ottoman State, from the Sultan to minor officials. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, mostly in the Tulip Period, Ottoman sumptuary laws are motivated by social changes, but also by the need to reduce the expenses of the Ottoman court<sup>28</sup>.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Turkish products ended up on the Western markets as luxury goods; the same period brought the stereotype associating the East with decadent luxury, whether from Byzantium or from the Ottoman Empire. Confronted with the decline of land-holding aristocracy and with the emergence of a new political order based on money and financial institutions, Western society redefines the concept of luxury. In the view of traditionalists, luxury destroys the nation, while for progressives luxury is not a vice but a factor of progress, beneficial for the health of the nation, because it raises the living standards of all inhabitants<sup>29</sup>. The political, economic and religious standards of the European

<sup>23</sup> Fr. Miklosich, *Lexicon palaeoslovenico-graeco-latinum*, Vienna, 1862-1865, p. 353 and 566.

<sup>24</sup> William T. Avery, *The Adoratio Purpureae and the Importance of the Imperial Purple in the Fourth Century of the Christian Era*, *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, 17 (1940), p. 66-80.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile: Government and Society under the Laskarids of Nicaea, 1204-1261*, Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 116-117.

<sup>26</sup> N. Patrick Peritore, *The Political Thought of Gemistos Plethon: A Renaissance Byzantine Reformer*, *Polity*, 10 (1977), 2, p. 170-191.

<sup>27</sup> Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 9.

<sup>28</sup> Donald Quataert, *Clothing, Laws, State, and Society in the Ottoman Empire, 1720-1829*, in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 29 (1997), p. 406-412.

<sup>29</sup> J. Sekora, *Luxury*, p. 87-125.



society set luxury away from the sin of lust, but it did not eliminate its negative connotations, actually perpetuated to our days. The debate was far-reaching<sup>30</sup> and it involved names of reference in the century of the Enlightenment<sup>31</sup>. Rousseau blamed luxury but Voltaire chose to defend it<sup>32</sup>, while David Hume wrote about good luxury, seen as refinement of the arts, and vicious luxury, harmful for individuals and the society to the same degree<sup>33</sup>.

The debate on luxury is contemporary with the “industrial revolution” and the “consumer revolution”<sup>34</sup>. The transformation of European society into a society of consumers<sup>35</sup> had major implications for Southeastern Europe. The penetration of Western goods and ideas played an important role in the “Westernization” process of traditional society, among which the idea of luxury. In this respect, it is edifying that in Romanian – the only Romanic language that could have inherited the word directly from Latin – the word *lux* is a neologism included in the language at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, through translations from Western literature, especially from French<sup>36</sup>. It’s very interesting that the word was imported in the same time with the adoption of Western fashion<sup>37</sup>. Consequently, luxury as such can be used in historical studies only from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as a modern concept that corresponds to the phase of democratic luxury in Western society. In his travel notes, Dinicu Golescu considered necessary to define luxury as a word under is understood all kind of expenses, useless and which exceed the income, associated with desire and

<sup>30</sup> Simeon Monroe Wade, *The Idea of Luxury in Eighteenth Century England*, Harvard University, 1968; Alison V. Scott, *Literature and the Idea of Luxury in Early Modern England*, Routledge, 2016.

<sup>31</sup> Till Wahnbaeck, *Luxury and Public Happiness. Political Economy in the Italian Enlightenment*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2004.

<sup>32</sup> Jeremy Jennings, *The Debate about Luxury in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth- Century French Political Thought*, in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 68 (2007), no. 1, p. 79-105.

<sup>33</sup> Andrew S. Cunningham, *David Hume’s Account of Luxury*, in *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, 27 (2005), 3, p. 242.

<sup>34</sup> Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*, London, 1982, p. 9-33.

<sup>35</sup> Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 195-246.

<sup>36</sup> N. A. Ursu, Despina Ursu, *Împrumutul lexical în procesul modernizării limbii moderne literare (1760-1860)*, II, Ia i, 2006, p. 357; *Dicționarul Limbii Române*, (new series), V, Bucharest, 2008, p. 809-812. It was imported with both senses and in two forms: *lux* (from French *luxe*) corresponding to democratic luxury and *luxura* (from Latin *luxuria*) corresponding to aristocratic luxury (*DLR*, V, p. 809-812 and 814).

<sup>37</sup> Angela Jianu, *Women, Fashion and Europeanization: The Romanian Principalities, 1750-1830*, in *Women in the Ottoman Balkans: Gender, Culture and History*, Tauris, 2007, p. 201-230; Constanța Vintil-Ghiulescu, *Constructing a New Identity: Romanian Aristocrats between Oriental Heritage and Western Prestige (1780-1866)*, in *From Traditional Attire to Modern Dress: Modes of Identification, Modes of Recognition in the Balkans (XVIth-XXth Centuries)*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011, p. 104-128; Euphrosyne Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou, *From Oriental (Ottoman) to European (Frankish) Dress: Dress as Key Indicator of the Lifestyle and the Role of the Elite of Cyprus during the 18th and 19th Centuries*, in *From Traditional Attire to Modern Dress: Modes of Identification, Modes of Recognition in the Balkans (XVIth-XXth Centuries)*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011, p. 129-143.

fashion<sup>38</sup>. He was clearly influenced by Western ideas and customs and he recommended to Wallachian elite to hold values and habits quite opposed to those of preceding generations. They should repudiate luxury and traditional fashion, associating these with decadence and the acceptance of Ottoman rule, and dressed in Western styles as they cultivated notions of national revival, sobriety and economic prosperity. As examples he mentioned the difference between the sobriety of Viennese ladies dress and the addiction of fashion and luxury of Wallachian ladies, even that the first are richness than the Wallachian ladies. In the same way, Ludwig of Bavaria had an aversion toward luxury and he dressed simple clothes, without any extravaganza<sup>39</sup>. Golescu was an enthusiast of Europeanization Romanian traditional society and he sends his sons to study in Geneva<sup>40</sup>. It's obvious that Golescu was influenced by the Western thought and the idea of luxury was something new for him. Few decades later, the idea of luxury came together with consumption goods, along with liberal ideas brought especially by young people studying in Western Europe. Historians have attributed this sudden change to ideas generated by the French Revolution, and the shifts in fashion and repudiation of the old dress codes seem to support this opinion. On the other hand, the Ottoman Empire also felt the lure of Western civilization, and a number of influences permeated Ottoman culture<sup>41</sup>. Certain aspects of this change suggest a protracted process which lasted for the first half of the nineteenth century and involved changes in culture and political thought. The Balkan elites adopted Western fashion and imported books and luxury items, setting in motion the phenomenon of cultural mimicry, opening the way of democratic luxury.

Concerning the previous period, of aristocratic luxury, it is methodologically wrong for historical analyses to be conducted from the perspective on luxury created by and taken over from the Western consumer society. A solution to avoid such a situation and the ambiguities of luxury concept would be to study the cultural habitus

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<sup>38</sup> „Într-acest cuvânt, lux, sîc coprind toate felurimile de cheltuieli, cele de prisos, cum sîc cheltuiala cea mai mare decît veniturile. Apoi urmeazîc sîc pofta, nu numai de a face orice vede la altul, ci sîc i mai scump, nemaisocotind de i se cuvine sau nu sîc de are venit pe cît are acela pe care el va sîc -l întreac cu podoaba. Din care pricinîc, iatîc, sîc rîc ciia sîc sîngerea de familii ne-au cîc lcat, în hula gurii lumii am cîc zut, sîc condeie streine ne-au zugrîc vit. Ce ne vom folosi cîcnd noi între noi vom voi sîc le inem ascunse sîc vom crede cîc nu sunt tiute, în vreme ce toate neamurile le cetesc, fiind scrise de aceiia ce ne pismuiesc? Mai bine sîc le cunoa tem, sîc le mîc rturisim, ca prin stra nic hot rîc sîc ne îndrept m, depîc rtîcnd aceste focuri sîc pîc rjoale din patria noastrîc, cîc ci luxul sîc luarea cea fîc rîc de dreptate ne-au stîcns din fa a pîc mîntului, ridicîcndu-ne din toatîc lumea cea mai pu in cîc nste ce poate avea orice na ie” (Dinicu Golescu, *Însemnare a cîc l toriîc mele*, ed. Gheorghe Popp, Bucharest, 1964, p. 50). See also p. 91-92 and 143-144.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 60 and 150.

<sup>40</sup> Alexandru-Florin Platon, *Pe urmele fra ilor Golescu la Geneva (1826-1833): cîteva îndrept rîc i informa ii noi*, in *A UI*, (new series), LXI (2015), p. 207-227.

<sup>41</sup> Suraiya Faroqhi, *Subjects of the Sultan: Culture and Daily Life in the Ottoman Empire*, I. B. Tauris Publisher, 2005, p. 227-230. See also Anna Frangoudaki, Çalîc Keyder (ed.), *Ways to modernity in Greece and Turkey: encounters with Europe, 1850-1950*, Tauris, London, 2007; Amila Butorovi cîc, Irvin C. Schick (coord.), *Women in the Ottoman Balkans: Gender, Culture and History*, Tauris, 2007.

of power, mostly considering that – like luxury – power is considered a necessary evil. Also, the power and consumption are linked by the existence of positional goods. The identification of luxury goods as positional goods in the context of social scarcity is proposed by F. Hirsch<sup>42</sup>. The positional goods are characterized by wealth, prestige and power and by the fact that the individually jointly consume the same absolute amount in either positive or negative quantities<sup>43</sup>. In our opinion, they are a part of the cultural habitus of power, being close tied by consumption of power and political thought. The display of positional goods manifests power structures, closely bound up with political thought, where consumption goods provides a visual index to the social order enshrined in custom and law. The distribution of positional goods among members of the ruling class defines hierarchy and social segregation, as very well illustrated in the history of clothing. The manner in which power structures distribute positional goods determines the cultivation of specific aesthetic values, with major implications for the development of art and the social condition of the artist. Thus positional goods have a powerful cultural impact, visible even at the level of popular culture, where they are consumed in a negative quantity. For common people the positional goods were especially accessible through their imagination, where the humble hero of folk tales often ends up living the high life at a princely court until the end of his days. Of course, in reality, that never happened! Thus the desire for positional goods expresses an unspoken desire for access to power, without generating ideological conflict.

The cultural habitus of power represents the privilege of the dominant pole of society, of social elite, using it to show off strength and pride and to reflect hierarchy and social order visually<sup>44</sup>. Refinement and elegance extravaganza represent a power gesture and they are closely connected to political thought, defining visually the order indicated by traditions and laws. Naturally, the existence of common aspects with *luxuria* as lust for power, which leads to tyranny or State decadence, justifies a comparative approach, but the use of the term luxury considering the inexistence of the concept may generate confusion. Therefore, for Southeastern Europe history, our proposal is to use the political concept of luxury starting with the 19<sup>th</sup> century, corresponding to the phase of “democratic luxury” and the concept of “cultural habitus of power” for the previous period. It is true that the latter term is not used in period texts. Unlike luxury, however, it rules out ambiguity because it is an analytical concept, focused on the notion of power and on the extent to which power is expressed both symbolically and visually (richness and social importance). These aspects – along with the ones mentioned in texts or illustrated by images – may represent important elements for the history of political thought.

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<sup>42</sup> F. Hirsch, *Social Limits to Growth*, Harvard University Press, 1976, p. 32-36.

<sup>43</sup> Ugo Pagano, *Is Power an Economic Good? Notes on Social Scarcity and the Economics of Positional Goods*, in *The Politics and Economics of Power*, ed. S. Bowles, M. Franzini and Ugo Pagano, Routledge, London-New York, 1999, p. 53-67.

<sup>44</sup> Daniel Roche, *La culture des apparences. Une histoire du vêtement, XVII<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, Fayard, 1989.

Finally, the analysis of the cultural habitus of power may serve as a bridge between political history, economic history, social history, cultural history and history of arts, given that the item analyzed can be regarded simultaneously as a “social reality”, “power gesture”, “consumption good” and “work of art”. Hence, we avoid the risk of associating the appraisal of such aspects from the perspective of luxury history with frivolity and banality. For this reason, too, it is preferable to make a clear delimitation between the cultural habitus of power and the political concept of luxury. The latter is reserved a special place only insofar as the discussions on luxury are of interest for the political thought of a certain period and society.

In conclusion, the history of luxury is a history of an idea that influenced the life style, an aspect often ignored by historians but, in the same time, luxury cannot be used as an analytical concept. In order to eliminate any confusion we should make an obvious distinction between luxury and consumption even that they are related. For South-Eastern Europe the idea of luxury is a modern one and it should be integrated in the context of traditional society ‘Europeanization’ and the impact generated by Western thought influence and ‘consumer revolution’.

### **The idea of luxury between the history of consumption and political thought and its implications for the history of Southeastern Europe**

#### *Abstract*

*The paper insists on some methodological issues related to the use luxury as an analytical concept in historical studies. For many historians the luxury seems to be an easy and insignificant research topic, a simple history of frivolity and for others luxury represents any product other than mass consumption. It's difficult to define luxury in a broadly accepted definition, but it doesn't mean that we should not try to define it. It's very important to know what we looking for, in other words, what is and what is not luxury. The major obstacle was to find a safe method to analyze luxury and we should be very cautious, because in many works the concept of luxury is used in an empirical way. Actually, for South Eastern Europe before 18th century, it's very hard to talk about luxury, because it doesn't exist as a concept. Luxury is specifically to western thought, originated in the Latin word luxuria, which means everything who exceed the norm and which in Latin Christian tradition became one of the seven deadly sins, the sin of lechery. The languages from South-Eastern Europe have not the word luxury and they use different words for lechery and desire. Later, the luxury, good and evil in the same time, is completely transformed, being a product of western consumer society, most exactly a marketing product. That's one of the reasons why we propose a new concept, the cultural habitus of power, who cover the aspects related of positional goods for a traditional society, different by Western society. It's meaning to study luxury as an aspect of history of power, in a completely different view than that proposed by the history of consumption.*

*Keywords: luxury; consumption; positional goods; the cultural habitus of power; lust.*

## ABREVIERI

<i>AARMSI</i>	= Analele Academiei Române, Memoriile Sec iunii Istorice
<i>AARMSL</i>	= Analele Academiei Române, Memoriile Sec iunii Literare
<i>AB</i>	= Arhivele Basarabiei
<i>ACNSAS</i>	= Arhivele Consiliului Na ional pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securit ii
<i>AE</i>	= L'Année Epigraphique
<i>AIR</i>	= Arhiva Istorica României
<i>AIAC</i>	= Anuarul Institutului de Istorie i Arheologie Cluj
<i>AIIAI</i>	= Anuarul Institutului de Istorie i Arheologie „A. D. Xenopol”, Ia i
<i>AIIC</i>	= Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Cluj
<i>AIINC</i>	= Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Na ional , Cluj
<i>AIIX</i>	= Anuarul Institutului de Istorie „A. D. Xenopol”, Ia i
<i>ALIL</i>	= Anuarul de Lingvistic i Istorie Literar , Ia i
<i>ALMA</i>	= <i>Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi</i> . Genève.
<i>AMAE</i>	= Arhiva Ministerului Afacerilor Externe
<i>AmAnthr</i>	= American Anthropologist, New Series, Published by Wiley on behalf of the American Anthropological Association
<i>AMM</i>	= Acta Moldaviae Meridionalis, Vaslui
<i>AMN</i>	= Acta Musei Napocensis
<i>AMR</i>	= Arhivele Militare Române
<i>ANB</i>	= Arhivele Na ionale, Bucure ti
<i>ANDMB</i>	= Arhivele Na ionale. Direc ia Municipiului Bucure ti
<i>ANG</i>	= Arhivele Na ionale. Serviciul Jude ean Gala i
<i>ANI</i>	= Arhivele Na ionale, Ia i
<i>ANIC</i>	= Arhivele Na ionale Istorice Centrale
<i>ANRW</i>	= Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt, Berlin-New York
<i>ANSMB</i>	= Arhivele Na ionale. Serviciul Municipiului Bucure ti
<i>ANV</i>	= Arhivele Na ionale, Vaslui
<i>AO</i>	= Arhivele Olteniei
<i>AP</i>	= Analele Putnei
<i>APH</i>	= Acta Poloniae Historica, Var ovia
<i>AR</i>	= Arhiva Româneasc
<i>ArhGen</i>	= Arhiva Genealogic
„Arhiva”	= „Arhiva”. Organul Societ ii tiin ifice i Literare, Ia i
<i>ArhMold</i>	= Arheologia Moldovei
<i>ASRR</i>	= Arhiva Societ ii Române de Radiodifuziune
<i>A UI</i>	= Analele tiin ifice ale Universit ii „Al. I. Cuza”, Ia i
<i>ATS</i>	= Ancient Textile Series, Oxbow Books, Oxford i Oakville
<i>AUB</i>	= Analele Universit ii „Bucure ti”
<i>BAR</i>	= Biblioteca Academiei Române
<i>BArchB</i>	= Bundesarchiv Berlin
<i>BAR int. ser.</i>	= British Archaeological Reports, International Series
<i>BBR</i>	= Buletinul Bibliotecii Române
<i>BCIR</i>	= Buletinul Comisiei Istorice a României
<i>BCMI</i>	= Buletinul Comisiei Monumentelor Istorice
<i>BCU-Ia i</i>	= Biblioteca Central Universitar , Ia i
<i>BE</i>	= Bulletin Epigraphique
<i>BF</i>	= Byzantinische Forschungen, Amsterdam

<i>BMI</i>	= Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice
<i>BNB</i>	= Biblioteca Națională București
<i>BNJ</i>	= Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher
<i>BOR</i>	= Biserica Ortodoxă Română
<i>BS</i>	= Balkan Studies
<i>BSNR</i>	= Buletinul Societății Numismatice Române
<i>CA</i>	= Cercetări arheologice
<i>CAI</i>	= Caiete de Antropologie Istorică
<i>CB</i>	= Cahiers balkaniques
<i>CC</i>	= Codrul Cosminului, Suceava (ambele serii)
<i>CCAR</i>	= Cronica cercetărilor arheologice din România, CIMEC, București
<i>CDM</i>	= <i>Catalogul documentelor moldovenești din Arhivele Centrale de Stat</i> , București, vol. I-V; supl. I.
<i>CD R</i>	= <i>Catalogul documentelor rii Românești din Arhivele Statului</i> , București, vol. II-VIII, 1974-2006
<i>CI</i>	= Cercetări istorice (ambele serii)
<i>CIL</i>	= <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> , Berlin
<i>CL</i>	= Cercetări literare
<i>CT</i>	= Columna lui Traian, București
<i>Cv.L</i>	= Convorbiri literare (ambele serii)
„Dacia”, N.S.	= Dacia. Nouvelle Série, Revue d'archéologie et d'histoire ancienne, București
<i>DANIC</i>	= Direcția Arhivelor Naționale Istorice Centrale
<i>DGAS</i>	= Direcția Generală a Arhivelor Statului
<i>DI</i>	= Diplomatarium Italicum
<i>DIR</i>	= <i>Documente privind istoria României</i>
<i>DNT</i>	= <i>Din trecutul nostru</i> , Chișinău
<i>DOP</i>	= <i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
<i>DRH</i>	= <i>Documenta Romaniae Historica</i>
<i>EB</i>	= Études Balkaniques
<i>EBPB</i>	= Études byzantines et post-byzantines
<i>EpigrAnat</i>	= Epigraphica Anatolica, Münster
Gerión	= Gerión. Revista de Historia Antigua, Madrid
<i>GB</i>	= Glasul Bisericii
„Hierasus”	= <i>Hierasus</i> . Anuarul Muzeului Judeean Botoșani, Botoșani
<i>HU</i>	= Historia Urbana
<i>HUI</i>	= Historia Universitatis Iassensis, Iași
<i>IDRE</i>	= <i>Inscriptions de la Dacie romaine. Inscriptions externes concernant l'histoire de la Dacie</i> , I-II, Bucarest, 1996, 2000
<i>IGLN</i>	= Inscriptions grecques et latines de Novae, Bordeaux
<i>IGLR</i>	= <i>Inscripțiile grecești și latine din secolele IV-XIII descoperite în România</i> , București, 1976
<i>IILPecs</i>	= <i>Instrumenta Inscripta Latina. Das römische Leben im Spiegel der Kleininschriften</i> , Pecs, 1991
<i>IL Afr</i>	= <i>Inscriptions latines d'Afrique</i> (Tripolitaine, Tunisie, Maroc), Paris, 1923
<i>ILB</i>	= <i>Inscriptiones Latinae in Bulgaria repertae. Inscriptiones inter Oescum et Iatrum repertae</i> , Sofia, 1989
<i>ILN</i>	= <i>Inscriptions latines de Novae</i> , Poznań
<i>ILLPRON</i>	= <i>Inscriptionum Lapidarium Latinarum Provinciae Norici usque ad annum MCMLXXXIV repertarum indices</i> , Berlin, 1986
<i>ILS</i>	= <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> , 1892
<i>IN</i>	= „Ioan Neculce”. Buletinul Muzeului Municipal Iași
<i>ISM</i>	= <i>Inscripțiile din Scythia Minor grecești și latine</i> , București, vol. I-III, 1983-1999
<i>JGO</i>	= Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas

<i>JL</i>	= Junimea literar
<i>JRS</i>	= The Journal of Roman studies, London
<i>LR</i>	= Limba român
<i>MA</i>	= Memoria Antiquitatis, Piatra Neam
<i>MCA</i>	= Materiale i cercet ri arheologice
<i>MEF</i>	= <i>Moldova în epoca feudalismului</i> , vol. I-XII, 1961-2012, Chi in u
<i>MI</i>	= Magazin istoric
<i>MM</i>	= Mitropolia Moldovei
<i>MMS</i>	= Mitropolia Moldovei i Sucevei
<i>MO</i>	= Mitropolia Olteniei
<i>MOF</i>	= Monitorul Oficial al României
<i>NEH</i>	= Nouvelles études d'histoire
<i>OI</i>	= Op iuni istoriografice, Ia i
<i>OPEL</i>	= <i>Onomasticon provinciarul Europae latinarum</i> , vol. I-IV, Budapesta-Viena, 1994-2002
<i>RA</i>	= Revista arhivelor
<i>RC</i>	= Revista catolic
<i>RdI</i>	= Revista de istorie
<i>RER</i>	= Revue des études roumaines
<i>RESEE</i>	= Revue des études Sud-Est européennes
<i>RHSEE</i>	= Revue historique de Sud-Est européen
<i>RI</i>	= Revista istoric (ambele serii)
<i>RIAF</i>	= Revista pentru istorie, arheologie i filologie
<i>RIB</i>	= <i>Roman Inscriptions of Britain</i> , Londra
<i>RIM</i>	= <i>Revista de Istorie a Moldovei</i> , Chi in u
<i>RIR</i>	= Revista istoric român
<i>RIS</i>	= Revista de istorie social
<i>RIU</i>	= <i>Die römischen Inschriften Ungarns</i> , Budapest, 1972-1984
<i>RITL</i>	= Revista de istorie i teorie literar
<i>RIMH</i>	= The Romanian Journal of Modern History, Ia i
<i>RM</i>	= Revista muzeelor
<i>RMM-MIA</i>	= Revista muzeelor i monumentelor, seria Monumente istorice i de art
<i>RRHA</i>	= Revue roumaine de l'histoire de l'art
<i>RRH</i>	= Revue roumaine d'histoire
<i>Rsl</i>	= Romanoslavica
<i>SAI</i>	= Studii i Articole de Istorie
<i>SCB</i>	= Studii i cercet ri de bibliologie
<i>SCIA</i>	= Studii i cercet ri de istoria artei
<i>SCIM</i>	= Studii i cercet ri de istorie medie
<i>SCIV/SCIVA</i>	= Studii i cercet ri de istorie veche ( i arheologie)
<i>SC I</i>	= Studii i cercet ri tiin ifice, Istorie
<i>SEER</i>	= The Slavonic and East European Review
<i>SJAN</i>	= Serviciul Jude ean al Arhivelor Na ionale
<i>SMIM</i>	= Studii i materiale de istorie medie
<i>SOF</i>	= Südost-Forschungen, München
<i>RdI</i>	= Revist de istorie
<i>ST</i>	= Studii Teologice, Bucure ti
<i>StAntArh</i>	= Studia Antiqua et Archaeologica, Ia i
<i>TV</i>	= Teologie i via a, Ia i
<i>ZB</i>	= Zeitschrift für Balkanologie
<i>ZPE</i>	= Zeitschrift für Papyralogie und Epigraphik
<i>ZSL</i>	= Zeitschrift für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde